**A** **BILL**

TO AMEND SECTION 59‑114‑30, AS AMENDED, CODE OF LAWS OF SOUTH CAROLINA, 1976, RELATING TO THE NATIONAL GUARD COLLEGE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM, SO AS TO CLARIFY THAT EACH ACADEMIC YEAR’S ANNUAL MAXIMUM GRANT MUST BE BASED ON THE AMOUNT OF AVAILABLE PROGRAM FUNDS; TO AMEND SECTION 59‑114‑40, AS AMENDED, RELATING TO THE NATIONAL GUARD COLLEGE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM QUALIFICATION REQUIREMENTS, SO AS TO PROVIDE THAT NATIONAL GUARD MEMBERS BECOME ELIGIBLE FOR COLLEGE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM GRANTS UPON COMPLETION OF BASIC TRAINING AND ADVANCED INDIVIDUAL TRAINING; AND TO AMEND SECTION 59‑114‑65, RELATING TO GRANT AVAILABILITY, SO AS TO ALLOW APPROPRIATIONS TO THE NATIONAL GUARD COLLEGE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM TO BE CARRIED FORWARD TO A SUBSEQUENT FISCAL YEAR AND EXPENDED FOR THE SAME PURPOSE, AND TO EXEMPT APPROPRIATIONS TO THE NATIONAL GUARD COLLEGE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM FROM MIDYEAR BUDGET REDUCTIONS.

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of South Carolina:

SECTION 1. Section 59‑114‑30 of the 1976 Code, as last amended by Act 40 of 2007, is further amended to read:

“Section 59‑114‑30. Qualifying members of the National Guard may receive college assistance program grants up to an amount equal to one hundred percent of college tuition and fees, provided, however, the total of all grants received may not exceed eighteen thousand dollars. A member may not qualify for college assistance program grants for more than one hundred thirty semester hours or related quarter hours. Grants are not to be awarded for graduate degree courses. A new application must be submitted for each separate academic year prior to the beginning of the academic year. The annual maximum grant must be determined for each academic year based on the amount of available program funds.”

SECTION 2. Section 59‑114‑40(B) of the 1976 Code, as last amended by Act 40 of 2007, is further amended to read:

“(B) Individuals joining the National Guard become eligible for college assistance program grants ~~on the day of enlistment~~ upon completion of basic training and Advanced Individual Training (AIT). Enlisted personnel shall continue their service in the National Guard during the term of the courses covered by the grant received. Officers shall continue their service with the National Guard for at least four years after completion of the most recent grant awarded or degree completion.”

SECTION 3. Section 59‑114‑65 of the 1976 Code, as added by Act 40 of 2007, is amended to read:

“Section 59‑114‑65. Grants provided pursuant to this chapter are subject to the availability of funds appropriated by the General Assembly. Funds appropriated for the college assistance program may be carried forward and expended for the same purpose. If a midyear budget reduction is imposed by the General Assembly or the State Budget and Control Board, the appropriations for the college assistance program are exempt. Up to five percent of the amount appropriated to the college assistance program may be used to defray administrative costs incurred by the commission associated with the implementation of this chapter.”

SECTION 4. This act takes effect upon approval by the Governor.

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