



KANSAS ADJUTANT GENERAL'S DEPARTMENT
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Testimony on House Bill 2123
Amending the Kansas National Guard Education Assistance Act
Presented to the House Committee on Veterans and Military
February 14, 2019

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony regarding HB 2123. I would like to begin by thanking the members of the committee for your continued support of our Guardsmen and veterans across the state.

As I discussed with the committee last week, the legislature took action last year to restructure and fully fund our State Tuition Assistance program, bringing Kansas' National Guard educational benefits on par with the benefits Guardsmen earn in our surrounding states. This past fall semester 311 Guardsmen participated in the program and 407 are currently enrolled for the spring semester.

In an extremely challenging recruiting environment, this program is playing a vital role in helping the Department meet its missions while promoting higher education and service to our state and nation. Since the legislature took action last year, the Kansas Air National Guard has increased their personnel strength from 89% to 94% of their requirement and last month the Kansas Army National Guard won a national award for the highest year over year improvement in recruiting across the country. We still face significant challenges in meeting our personnel strength goals but are making positive strides that would not be possible without the State Tuition Assistance program and the legislature's support.

Last month Representative Dietrich was contacted by a constituent who noted the need to again adjust the law due to an unintended consequence of restructuring the program last year. That restructure required a Guardsman to have at least one year remaining on their current enlistment contract to participate in the program. While members of the Army National Guard can reenlist 365 days prior to the end of their enlistment, members of the Air National Guard can only reenlist 90 days prior to the end of their term of enlistment. This means some Air Guardsmen would never be able to get in the 90 day window and would be forced to choose between signing a one year extension to participate in State Tuition Assistance and forgoing a semester (or two) in the program to get themselves in the 90 day window to reenlist for a longer term.

HB 2123 corrects this unintended consequence by eliminating the requirement to have one year remaining on a Guardsman's current contract. This change does not change the requirement to serve in the Kansas National Guard for two years following the last semester of participation in the program and would not increase the cost of the program. Participating Air Guardsmen would simply have the option to extend for a longer term and potentially qualify for a bonus from the Air Force for their continued service.

For these reasons, the Adjutant General's Department would like to express support for HB 2123. On behalf of the men and women of the Department, thank you again for the opportunity to join you today and your continued support.

Respectfully submitted by:

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