



## 93RD GENERAL ASSEMBLY

### State of Illinois

### 2003 and 2004

Introduced 02/09/04, by James D. Brosnahan

#### SYNOPSIS AS INTRODUCED:

110 ILCS 947/31

Amends the Higher Education Student Assistance Act. Provides that an applicant for a Merit Recognition Scholarship must complete at least 40 hours of volunteer service as of the end of the 6th semester of high school in order to be eligible. Effective immediately.

LRB093 15096 NHT 45213 b

1 AN ACT concerning higher education student assistance.

2 **Be it enacted by the People of the State of Illinois,**  
3 **represented in the General Assembly:**

4 Section 5. The Higher Education Student Assistance Act is  
5 amended by changing Section 31 as follows:

6 (110 ILCS 947/31)

7 Sec. 31. Merit Recognition Scholarship program.

8 (a) As used in this Section:

9 "Eligible applicant" means a student from any high school  
10 in this State, either approved by or not recognized by the  
11 State Board of Education, (i) who is engaged in a program of  
12 study that in due course will be completed by the end of the  
13 academic year, (ii) who has completed at least 40 hours of  
14 volunteer service as of the end of the 6th semester of high  
15 school, and (iii) ~~(i)~~ whose cumulative high school grade point  
16 average is at or above the 95th percentile of his or her high  
17 school class after completion of the 6th semester of a high  
18 school program of instruction or ~~(ii)~~ whose score on a  
19 standardized examination determined by the Commission, taken  
20 before or during the 6th semester of high school, is at or  
21 above the 95th percentile of students in the State who take the  
22 standardized college entrance examination. These high school  
23 students are all eligible to receive a scholarship to be  
24 awarded under this Section.

25 "Qualified student" means a person:

26 (1) who is a resident of this State and a citizen or  
27 permanent resident of the United States;

28 (2) who, as an eligible applicant, is in good academic  
29 standing at the high school in which he or she is enrolled  
30 and has made a timely application for a Merit Recognition  
31 Scholarship under this Section;

32 (3) who has successfully completed the program of

1 instruction at any high school located in this State; and

2 (4) who enrolls or is enrolled in a qualified Illinois  
3 institution of higher learning or a Service Academy as an  
4 undergraduate student or cadet and has not received a  
5 baccalaureate degree.

6 "Merit Recognition Scholarship" means a \$1,000 academic  
7 scholarship awarded under this Section during an academic year  
8 to a qualified student, without regard to financial need, as a  
9 scholarship to any qualified Illinois institution of higher  
10 learning or a Service Academy in which the student is or will  
11 be enrolled as an undergraduate student or cadet.

12 "Service Academy" means the U.S. Air Force Academy, the  
13 U.S. Coast Guard Academy, the U.S. Military Academy, or the  
14 U.S. Naval Academy.

15 (b) In order to identify, encourage, promote, and reward  
16 the distinguished academic achievement of students from every  
17 high school located in this State, each qualified student shall  
18 be awarded a Merit Recognition Scholarship by the Illinois  
19 Student Assistance Commission to any qualified Illinois  
20 institution of higher learning or to any Service Academy.

21 (c) No Merit Recognition Scholarship provided for a  
22 qualified student under this Section shall be considered in  
23 evaluating the financial situation of that student or be deemed  
24 a financial resource of or a form of financial aid or  
25 assistance to that student, for purposes of determining the  
26 eligibility of the student for any scholarship, grant, or  
27 monetary assistance awarded by the Commission, the State, or  
28 any agency thereof pursuant to the provisions of any other  
29 Section of this Act or any other law of this State; nor shall  
30 any Merit Recognition Scholarship provided for a qualified  
31 student under this Section reduce the amount of any  
32 scholarship, grant, or monetary assistance that that student is  
33 eligible to be awarded by the Commission, the State, or any  
34 agency thereof in accordance with the provisions of any other  
35 Section of this Act or any other law of this State.

36 (d) The Illinois Student Assistance Commission is

1 designated as administrator of the Merit Recognition  
2 Scholarship program. Each high school located in this State  
3 shall certify to the Commission the names of its students who  
4 are eligible applicants, specifying which of the students  
5 certified as eligible applicants have completed the program of  
6 instruction at that high school and the graduation date fixed  
7 for their high school class and specifying for each of the  
8 other eligible applicants whose names appear on the  
9 certification the semester of high school last completed by  
10 them. The Commission shall promptly notify those eligible  
11 applicants so certified who are reasonably assured of receiving  
12 a Merit Recognition Scholarship in accordance with the annual  
13 funding levels recommended in the Governor's budget of their  
14 eligibility to apply for a scholarship under this Section,  
15 other than any eligible applicant named on any such  
16 certification who, as an eligible applicant, has previously  
17 made application to the Commission for a Merit Recognition  
18 Scholarship under this Section. An otherwise eligible  
19 applicant who fails to make a timely application (as determined  
20 by the Commission) for a Merit Recognition Scholarship under  
21 this Section shall no longer be deemed an eligible applicant  
22 and shall not qualify for the award.

23 (e) All applications for Merit Recognition Scholarships to  
24 be awarded under this Section shall be made to the Commission  
25 on forms that the Commission shall provide for eligible  
26 applicants. The form of applications and the information  
27 required to be set forth therein shall be determined by the  
28 Commission, and the Commission shall require eligible  
29 applicants to submit with their applications such supporting  
30 documents as the Commission deems necessary.

31 (f) The names and addresses of Merit Recognition  
32 Scholarship recipients are a matter of public record.

33 (g) Whenever an eligible applicant who has completed the  
34 program of instruction at any high school located in this State  
35 thereafter makes timely application to the Commission for a  
36 Merit Recognition Scholarship under this Section, the

1 Commission shall promptly determine whether that eligible  
2 applicant is a qualified student as defined in subsection (a)  
3 of this Section. Each such eligible applicant so determined by  
4 the Commission to be a qualified student shall be awarded a  
5 Merit Recognition Scholarship in the amount of \$1,000,  
6 effective exclusively during the academic year following the  
7 qualified student's high school graduation, subject to  
8 appropriation by the General Assembly.

9 (h) Subject to a separate appropriation for purposes of  
10 this Section, payment of any Merit Recognition Scholarship  
11 awarded under this Section shall be determined exclusively by  
12 the Commission. All scholarship funds distributed in  
13 accordance with this subsection (h) shall be paid to the  
14 qualified Illinois institution of higher learning or Service  
15 Academy and used only for payment of the educational expenses  
16 incurred by the student in connection with his or her  
17 attendance as an undergraduate student or cadet at that  
18 institution or Service Academy, including but not limited to  
19 tuition and fees, room and board, books and supplies, required  
20 Service Academy uniforms, and travel and personal expenses  
21 related to the student's attendance at that institution or  
22 Service Academy. Any Merit Recognition Scholarship awarded  
23 under this Section shall be applicable to 2 semesters or 3  
24 quarters of enrollment. Should a qualified student withdraw  
25 from enrollment prior to completion of the first semester or  
26 quarter for which the Merit Recognition Scholarship is  
27 applicable, the student shall refund to the Commission the  
28 amount of the scholarship received.

29 (i) The Commission shall administer the Merit Recognition  
30 Scholarship program established by this Section and shall make  
31 all necessary and proper rules, not inconsistent with this  
32 Section, for its effective implementation.

33 (j) When an appropriation to the Commission for purposes of  
34 this Section is insufficient to provide scholarships to all  
35 qualified students, the Commission shall allocate the  
36 appropriation in accordance with this subsection (j). If funds

1 are insufficient to provide all qualified students with a  
2 scholarship as authorized by subsection (g) of this Section,  
3 the Commission shall allocate the scholarships to qualified  
4 students in order of decreasing relative academic rank, as  
5 determined by the Commission using a formula based upon the  
6 qualified student's grade point average, score on the  
7 appropriate statewide standardized examination, or a  
8 combination of grade point average and standardized test score.  
9 All Merit Recognition Scholarships awarded shall be in the  
10 amount of \$1,000.

11 (k) The Commission, in determining the number of Merit  
12 Recognition Scholarships to be offered pursuant to subsection  
13 (j) of this Section, shall take into consideration past  
14 experience with the rate of merit scholarship funds unclaimed  
15 by qualified students. To the extent necessary to avoid an  
16 over-commitment of funds, the Commission may allocate  
17 scholarship funds on the basis of the date the Commission  
18 receives a completed application form.

19 (Source: P.A. 91-128, eff. 7-1-00.)

20 Section 99. Effective date. This Act takes effect upon  
21 becoming law.