

SESSION OF 2025

SUPPLEMENTAL NOTE ON HOUSE BILL NO. 2185

As Amended by House Committee on Education

Brief*

HB 2185, as amended, would expand the Kansas National Guard Educational Assistance Act (Act) to include dependents of National Guard members and expand the Kansas National Guard Educational Master's for Enhanced Readiness and Global Excellence (EMERGE) Program to include other advanced degrees.

***Kansas National Guard Education Assistance Act
(Sections 1–5)***

Under continuing law, the Kansas National Guard Educational Assistance Program provides for the payment of tuition and fees by the State of Kansas for eligible members of the Kansas National Guard enrolled at Kansas educational institutions. The bill would amend the Act to also include eligible dependents of Kansas National Guard members. The bill would allow eligible guard members to either personally participate or sponsor a dependent to participate in the Kansas National Guard Educational Assistance Program.

Qualifications for Assistance (Section 5)

Eligible guard members. To qualify for assistance under the Act, the bill would require an eligible guard member to:

- Hold a high school diploma or high school equivalency credential;

*Supplemental notes are prepared by the Legislative Research Department and do not express legislative intent. The supplemental note and fiscal note for this bill may be accessed on the Internet at <https://klrd.gov/>

- Be enrolled at a Kansas educational institution; and
- Not hold a baccalaureate or higher academic degree.

The bill would limit an eligible guard member to sponsor only one dependent to participate in the Kansas National Guard Educational Assistance Program during the member's service.

Dependents. To qualify for assistance as a dependent under the Act, the bill would require a dependent to:

- Hold a high school diploma or high school equivalency credential;
- Be enrolled at a Kansas educational institution;
- Not hold a baccalaureate or higher academic degree; and
- Complete and submit the Kansas student aid application with the Kansas Board of Regents (KBOR).

Limitations on Assistance (Section 4)

The bill would provide that assistance available to a dependent under the program would be subject to the availability of funds after educational benefits are fully funded for all participating eligible guard members.

The bill would clarify that the Kansas National Guard Educational Assistance Program would not pay for any repeated courses or courses taken in excess of degree requirements.

Definitions (Section 2)

The bill would define “dependent” as an individual who is registered as an eligible dependent of the sponsoring eligible guard member in the Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System (DEERS). The bill would also modify the definitions of “Kansas educational institution” and “eligible guard member.”

Rules and Regulations (Section 3)

The bill would allow, but not require, KBOR to adopt rules and regulations to administer the Act.

EMERGE Program (Sections 6–9)

Under continuing law, the EMERGE Program provides for the payment of tuition and fees by the State of Kansas for eligible members of the Kansas National Guard enrolled in master’s degree programs at Kansas educational institutions. The bill would expand the EMERGE Program to include other advanced degree programs.

Definitions (Section 7)

The bill would define the following terms:

- “Advanced degree” would mean a master’s degree, professional degree, or doctorate awarded to an eligible guard member upon satisfactory completion of the course work requirements of such degree program offered or maintained by a Kansas educational institution;
- “Doctorate” would mean a degree requiring three or more academic years of full-time academic study or the equivalent in part-time attendance that follows the successful completion of a baccalaureate or master’s degree. A “doctorate”

may be either a research or a professional practice degree;

- “Master’s degree” would mean a degree requiring no less than one year of academic work or the equivalent in part-time attendance and follows the successful completion of a baccalaureate degree; and
- “Professional degree” would mean a degree that requires no less than three years of full-time study or the equivalent in part-time attendance that follows the successful completion of a baccalaureate degree, such as a juris doctor degree or a physician’s assistant degree.

The bill would also modify the definition of “eligible guard member” to include non-concurrent guard members accepted into an eligible professional degree program if they are qualified to join the Kansas National Guard.

Participation Requirements (Section 9)

Continuing law requires National Guard members participating in the EMERGE Program to agree, in writing, to serve actively and in good standing for no less than 48 months following the completion of the program. The bill would modify the service requirement to require active service for no less than 48 months for a master’s degree and active service for no less than 72 months for a doctorate or professional degree.

Continuing law requires participating National Guard members to remain in good standing at their Kansas educational institution, make satisfactory progress toward completion of the requirements of their degree, and maintain a grade point average (GPA) of no less than 2.75 in order to continue their participation in the EMERGE Program. The bill would modify the GPA requirements to require a GPA of no

less than 2.75 for a master's degree and a GPA of no less than 3.0 for a doctorate or professional degree.

Limitations on Assistance (Section 8)

The bill would clarify that the EMERGE Program would not pay for any repeated courses or courses taken in excess of degree requirements.

Technical and Conforming Amendments

The bill would make technical and conforming amendments.

Background

The bill was introduced by the House Committee on Education at the request of a representative of the Adjutant General's Department.

House Committee on Education

In the House Committee hearing, **proponent** testimony was provided by representatives of the Adjutant General's Department and KBOR. The proponents generally stated the bill would update the programs to bring them in line with similar programs offered at the federal level and by other states. The proponents explained the bill would allow members of the Kansas National Guard to delegate their tuition benefit to one dependent by sponsorship and expand eligible degree programs under the EMERGE Program to include professional and doctorate degrees.

No other testimony was provided.

The House Committee amended the bill to:

- Modify the definition of “Kansas Educational Institution” in the Act;
- Change the requirement for KBOR to adopt rules and regulations for the administration of the Act from “shall” to “may”; and
- Clarify that the Kansas National Guard Educational Assistance Program and the EMERGE Program would not pay for repeated courses or courses taken in excess of degree requirements.

Fiscal Information

According to the fiscal note prepared by the Division of the Budget on the bill, as introduced, the Adjutant General’s Department indicates enactment of the bill would not have a fiscal effect on agency operations. KBOR states enactment of the bill would increase time spent by staff to implement the bill’s provisions and could be absorbed within existing resources. Any fiscal effect association with the bill is not reflected in *The FY 2025 Governor’s Budget Report*.

Education; military; dependents; Kansas National Guard Educational Assistance Act; EMERGE Program; postsecondary education; financial aid