



Wisconsin GI Bill

Prepared by: Emily Hicks and Abby Gorzlancyk, Staff Attorneys

Wisconsin statutes provide tuition and fee remission for qualifying veterans and their family members at University of Wisconsin System (UWS) and Wisconsin Technical College System (WTCS) institutions. This state educational benefit, commonly referred to as the “Wisconsin GI Bill,” is in addition to any [federal education benefits](#) veterans and their family may be eligible for, namely the [Post-9/11 GI Bill](#) and the Montgomery GI Bill for [Active Duty](#) and [Selected Reserve](#). This issue brief will summarize the eligibility requirements and benefits under the Wisconsin GI Bill for veterans and their family members.¹

VETERAN ELIGIBILITY

To qualify for Wisconsin GI Bill benefits, a veteran must meet certain residency and service requirements. First, the veteran must be verified by the Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs (WDVA) as being a resident of Wisconsin for purposes of receiving state veteran benefits. The WDVA must also certify that the veteran either: (1) was a resident of Wisconsin at the time of entry into service; or (2) has been a resident of Wisconsin for at least five consecutive years immediately preceding his or her enrollment in an institution of higher education.²

Additionally, a veteran must be certified by the WDVA as meeting one of the following service criteria:

- Served on active duty for at least one qualifying term of service under honorable conditions in the U.S. armed forces or in forces incorporated as part of the U.S. armed forces during a war period or in a crisis zone. A qualifying term of service includes any of the following:
 - Active duty service for two continuous years or more, or the full period of his or her initial service obligation, whichever is less.
 - Active duty service for 90 days or more under honorable conditions in the U.S. armed forces or in forces incorporated in the U.S. armed forces during a war period or for any period of service under section 1 of Executive Order 10957, dated August 10, 1961.
 - A term of service in the U.S. armed forces or in forces incorporated as part of the U.S. armed forces under honorable conditions which entitled the person to receive any of the following: the Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal, the Vietnam Service Medal, the Navy Expeditionary Medal, the Marine Corps Expeditionary Medal, or an equivalent expeditionary or service medal.
- Was honorably discharged from the U.S. armed forces or from forces incorporated in the U.S. armed forces for a service-connected disability, for a disability subsequently adjudicated to have been service connected, or for reasons of hardship.
- Was released under honorable conditions from the U.S. armed forces or from forces incorporated in the U.S. armed forces due to a reduction in the U.S. armed forces.³

FAMILY MEMBER ELIGIBILITY

A spouse, unmarried surviving spouse, or child (family member)⁴ of an “eligible veteran” may also qualify for education benefits under the Wisconsin GI Bill. An “eligible veteran” is either: (1) a veteran that died while on active duty in the U.S. armed forces or forces incorporated as part of the U.S. armed forces, National Guard, or a reserve component, died as a result of a service-connected disability, or died in the line of duty while on active or inactive duty for training purposes; or (2) a veteran that is awarded at least a 30 percent service-connected disability rating by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.⁵

The eligible veteran must also meet certain residency requirements. Namely, the eligible veteran must have been a resident when entering the service or resided in this state for at least five consecutive years

after turning 18.⁶ However, if the eligible veteran died while in service or due to a service-connected disability and does not meet the residency requirement, the family member may still qualify if the family member has resided in this state for at least five years immediately preceding enrollment.⁷

TUITION AND FEE REMISSION

The Wisconsin GI Bill guarantees a qualified student (whether a veteran or family member) full remission of tuition, academic fees, and segregated fees at UWS institutions and full remission of fees at WTCS institutions.⁸ The benefit lasts for a total of 128 credits or eight semesters, whichever is longer, and to maintain the benefit, the student must maintain a cumulative grade point average of at least 2.0.⁹

Before a qualified student can utilize Wisconsin GI Bill benefits, the student must apply all federal education benefits he or she is entitled to or that have been transferred to the student under the Post-9/11 GI Bill.¹⁰ If the student's Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits cover 100 percent of the student's tuition and fees for a credit or semester, that credit or semester does not count toward the student's credit or semester limit. If the student's Post-9/11 GI Bill education assistance covers less than 100 percent of the student's tuition and fees for a credit or semester, the credit or semester proportionally counts against the student's credit or semester limit.¹¹

Under all federal GI education assistance programs, beneficiaries receive financial assistance for costs beyond just tuition, including a stipend for living expenses. The amount of the stipend is different between the Post-9/11 GI Bill and the Montgomery GI Bill. Because the Wisconsin GI Bill requires qualified students to utilize their Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits instead of their Montgomery GI Bill benefits, if the student would have received a larger stipend under the Montgomery GI Bill, HEAB must reimburse the student the difference.¹²

Statutes provide that HEAB must reimburse certain tuition and fee remissions to UWS and WTCS. Specifically, HEAB reimburses the Board of Regents for all tuition, academic fees, and segregated fees remitted for veterans and for all academic and segregated fees remitted for family members. District Boards are reimbursed for all fees remitted for both veterans and family members.¹³

APPLYING FOR TUITION AND FEE REMISSION

Obtaining remission involves two steps. First, [WDVA](#) must verify the veteran's eligibility, then the specific school must determine whether the specific student qualifies. Each school in [UWS](#) and [WTCS](#) has a Veteran Certifying Official who students can contact for school-specific information.

¹ Wisconsin statutes also provide for a tuition grant program administered by the Higher Educational Aids Board (HEAB) to provide eligible veterans and the spouses and dependents of eligible veterans with grants to use toward tuition at private institutions of higher education in Wisconsin. [See s. [39.49](#), Stats.] That grant program is not discussed in this issue brief.

² See [WDVA Form 2030](#).

³ ss. [36.27\(3p\)\(a\)1r.](#) and [38.24\(8\)\(a\)1r.](#), Stats.

⁴ ss. [36.27\(3n\)\(b\)](#) and [38.24\(7\)\(b\)](#), Stats. To qualify for benefits, the child of an eligible veteran must be between 17 and 26 years old. Child is not defined for purposes of the Wisconsin GI Bill specifically, but see s. [45.01\(4\)](#), Stats., for a definition of a child for purposes of other state veterans' benefits.

⁵ ss. [36.27\(3n\)\(a\)](#) and [38.24\(7\)\(a\)](#), Stats.

⁶ ss. [36.27\(3n\)\(a\)](#) and [38.24\(7\)\(a\)](#), Stats.

⁷ ss. [36.27\(3n\)\(bd\)](#) and [38.24\(7\)\(bd\)](#), Stats.

⁸ WTCS fees means the amount charged to a resident student to enroll in a course leading to an associate degree, collegiate transfer, or vocational diploma. [s. [38.24\(7\)\(a\)1p.](#), Stats.]

⁹ ss. [36.27\(3n\)\(b\)](#) and [\(3p\)\(b\)](#) and [38.24\(7\)\(b\)](#) and [\(8\)\(b\)](#), Stats. Included in this total are credits and semesters earned under the tuition grant program for veterans to attend private institutions of higher education. [See s. [39.49](#), Stats.]

¹⁰ ss. [36.27\(3n\)\(bg\)](#) and [\(3p\)\(bg\)](#) and [38.24\(7\)\(bg\)](#) and [\(8\)\(bg\)](#), Stats. [33 U.S.C. s. 3319](#) grants eligible members of uniformed services to transfer their Post-9/11 GI Bill education assistance to an eligible spouse or dependent(s).

¹¹ ss. [36.27\(3n\)\(bg\)](#) and [\(3p\)\(bg\)](#) and [38.24\(7\)\(bg\)](#) and [\(8\)\(bg\)](#), Stats. For example, if a student takes 18 credits in a semester, and the student's Post 9/11 GI Bill education assistance covers 50 percent of the cost of tuition and fees, then only nine credits (or half of a semester) count against the student's Wisconsin GI Bill benefits limit.

¹² ss. [36.27\(3n\)\(bm\)](#) and [\(3p\)\(bm\)](#) and [38.24\(7\)\(bm\)](#) and [\(8\)\(bm\)](#), Stats.

¹³ ss. [36.27\(3n\)\(c\)](#) and [\(3p\)\(c\)](#) and [38.24\(7\)\(c\)](#) and [\(8\)\(c\)](#), Stats. Reimbursement is funded through a general purpose revenue (GPR) appropriation. The cost of amounts remitted in excess of the GPR appropriation is absorbed by UWS and WTCS. For more information, see Legislative Fiscal Bureau, [Student Financial Aid, Informational Paper 38](#) (Jan. 2023) pp. 21-24.