



Legislative Fiscal Bureau

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October 28, 2003

TO: Members
Joint Committee on Finance

FROM: Bob Lang, Director

SUBJECT: Summary of Major Changes under Senate Substitute Amendment __ to 2003 Senate Bill 170 [LRBs0207/2]

This memorandum summarizes the principal changes made by proposed Senate Substitute Amendment __ to 2003 Senate Bill 170 [LRBs0207/2]:

- *National Guard Tuition Grants.* LRBs0207/2 would revise the basis for determining the reimbursement rates for National Guard Tuition Grants. Under current law, reimbursements are the lesser of either 100% of the actual tuition charged or 100% of the arithmetic average of the resident undergraduate charged by the four-year UW-System institutions. Under LRBs0207/2, the reimbursement rate would be changed to the lesser of either 100% of the actual tuition charged or 100% of the tuition for a UW-Madison resident undergraduate. Based on projections developed as part of biennial budget deliberations, the estimated fiscal impact of this change would be \$241,300 GPR in 2003-04 and \$300,600 GPR in 2004-05. LRBs0207/2 does not provide any additional funding for this program; however, the Department of Military Affairs has now estimated that any additional costs resulting from this reimbursement rate change could be absorbed during the current biennium, due to a reduction in education program costs due to an increased number of National Guard call-ups to active duty.

- *Veterans Status for Iraq War Participants.* LRBs0207/2 would classify service in connection with Operation Iraqi Freedom as a "war period" for determining an individual's status as a veteran. LRBs0207/2 would also include such veterans as eligible users of Camp American Legion in American Legion State Forest. LRBs0207/2 would specify that persons who serve in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom or a successor operation and who are subject to individual income tax filing extensions under federal law would not be subject to late filing interest charges of 12% per year for Wisconsin individual income tax returns filed for 2003 and 2004 tax years. LRBs 0207/2 would authorize individuals in the U.S. armed services who were held as a prisoner of war

in the Iraq War to request a "prisoner of war" special license plate. LRBs 0207/2 would require the Department of Transportation to issue such a license plate upon having the request certified by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

- *Elimination of Tuition Reimbursement Payments for Military Experience Courses.* LRBs0207/2 would delete provisions in SB 170 that would have eliminated education grant reimbursements to eligible veterans under the Academic Credit for Military Experience Program. Currently, these types of courses are typically offered through the technical college system, and participants in such courses are currently eligible for tuition reimbursement grants for such courses.

- *Direct Application to the Department for Benefits.* LRBs0207/2 would delete the grant of blanket authority for the Department of Veterans Affairs to accept applications for any benefit program administered by the agency. Instead, LRBs0207/2 would include the Department among the entities that may accept direct applications for the veterans housing loan program.

- *County Veterans Service Officer Payments.* LRBs0207/2 would authorize counties that have a part-time county veterans service officer to submit a request for a full-time grant, if the county board has adopted a resolution in support of a full-time officer and submits a plan to the Department for implementing the resolution. LRBs0207/2 would also authorize the Board of Veterans Affairs to approve a partial grant based upon the plan's compliance with the criteria established by the Board. The treatment of this provision would take effect on the first day of the seventh month following publication.

- *Health Care Aid Grants.* LRBs0207/2 would incorporate the language contained in Senate Amendment 1 to SB 170 that would authorize retroactive payments under the Health Care Aid Grants for emergency care, provided the request for funding was submitted within 90 days of the time when the emergency care ended.

Prepared by: Darin Renner