

(H. B. 273)

(No. 116)

(Approved September 23, 2005)

AN ACT

To add a subsection (24) to Section 7 of Act No. 17 of June 16, 1993, as amended, known as the “Council on Higher Education of Puerto Rico Act,” in order to authorize the Council to coordinate with the authorities of public and private institutions of higher education the policy regarding the situation of student reservists that are called into active military service.

STATEMENT OF MOTIVES

Approximately thirty percent of the members of the Puerto Rico National Guard and the Military Reserves of the United States are university students. If it is indeed true that in relation to the scholarships and economic assistance programs provided, federal legislation provides the policy for reimbursing and giving credit to those students who have been called into active military service, it is no less true that there is a persistent need for coordinating and supervising the establishment of and compliance with said guarantees, among other extreme matters related to the problems those students called into active military service must face because of being unable to complete their courses and credit hours.

In certain cases some of these students have no absolute guarantee that they will receive a reimbursement for the registration fees or other charges they have paid for the semester or term they have been unable to complete or that they will receive partial credit for the work completed or an incomplete

in the course, or even more so whether they will be granted the right to be reinstated to the institution once they have finished their active military service. Furthermore, in those cases in which reservist or National Guard students or are called to serve for long periods of time there is no guarantee that the expiration date of their university credits will be interrupted.

The Legislature believes that perpetuating this situation would constitute a serious injustice for those brave and generous Puerto Rican young men and women who answer to the call to defend the nation ready to sacrifice even their lives for our freedoms and rights as well as those of our brothers and sisters from around the world.

The main purpose of this legislation is to obtain the voluntary support of higher education institutions so that student reservists who are called into active military service when the national defense so requires, do not lose the investment they have made in money, time and efforts to obtain a university degree which is so indispensable today.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF PUERTO RICO:

Section 1.-A subsection (24) is hereby added to Section 7 of Act No. 17 of June 16, 1993, as amended, to read as follows:

“Section 7.-Powers, duties and attributions of the Council on Higher Education.-

The Council shall have the following powers, duties and attributions:

- (1) . . .
- (24) Coordinate with the authorities of public and private institutions of higher education accredited in Puerto Rico, in harmony with the standards of each institution, the policy regarding the situation of student members of the Military Reserve of the United States in Puerto Rico and

of the Puerto Rico National Guard that are called into active military service. To this end, the institutions shall establish the requirements and procedures for applying for the proportional reimbursement or the credit for the registration fee, other charges or room and board expenses in boarding houses of the institution itself, for reintegrating the right to scholarships, if previously granted, or the credit for work completed in a course or the opportunity to complete the same, after having completed their active military service, and any other measure which the institutions determine to be necessary to be eligible for the credit or reimbursement of the registration fee or other charges and for the reinstallation or concession of other benefits to said students by the higher education institution.”

Section 2.-This Act shall take effect immediately after its approval.

CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify to the Secretary of State that the following Act No. 116 (H.B. 273) of the 2nd Session of the 15th Legislature of Puerto Rico:

AN ACT to add a subsection (24) to Section 7 of Act No. 17 of June 16, 1993, as amended, known as the “Council on Higher Education of Puerto Rico Act,” in order to authorize the Council to coordinate with the authorities of public and private institutions of higher education the policy regarding the situation of student reservists that are called into active military service,

has been translated from Spanish to English and that the English version is correct.

In San Juan, Puerto Rico, today 1st of February of 2006.

Francisco J. Domenech
Director