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# SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Senator Carol Liu, Chair  
2015 - 2016 Regular

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**Bill No:** AB 1361  
**Author:** Burke  
**Version:** May 20, 2015  
**Urgency:** No  
**Consultant:** Olgalilia Ramirez  
**Hearing Date:** June 24, 2015  
**Fiscal:** Yes

**Subject:** Student financial aid: Cal Grant Program: veterans

## SUMMARY

This bill exempts a current or former member of the Armed Forces of the United States, unless the individual received a dishonorable discharge, from the age limitations of the California Community College (CCC) Transfer Cal Grant Entitlement Program.

## BACKGROUND

Existing law establishes the Cal Grant program, administered by the California Student Aid Commission (CSAC), to provide tuition and access cost assistance to eligible students attending qualified institutions. The CCC Transfer Entitlement Awards provide Cal Grant A and B awards to every student who graduated from a California high school after June 30, 2000, was a California resident at the time of high school graduation, transferred to a qualifying baccalaureate-degree granting institution from a CCC during the award year, was under the age of 28 at the time of the transfer, and had a minimum California Community College grade point average (GPA) of 2.4. (Education Code § 69432)

Additionally, maximum award amounts for California State University (CSU) and University of California (UC) are established in the annual Budget Act and have traditionally covered all system wide tuition and fees. The maximum tuition award for Cal Grant A and B for students attending private for-profit colleges is \$4,000 (commencing 2013-14), and for students attending non-profit or Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC)-accredited for-profit institutions is \$8,056 (commencing 2015-16). (EC § 69432)

## ANALYSIS

This bill:

- 1) Exempts a current or former member of the Armed forces of the United States, unless the individual received a dishonorable discharge, from the age limitations of the California Community College (CCC) Transfer Cal Grant Entitlement Program.
- 2) Requires an institution to ensure that it does not accept award funds under both this section and United States Code Title 38 in the same award year for a current or former member of the Armed Forces of the United States who is 28 years of age or older.

**STAFF COMMENTS**

- 1) ***Need for the bill.*** Current law requires a student to be under the age of 28 years old in order to be eligible for the California Community College Transfer Entitlement (Transfer Entitlement). According to the author, this age eligibility requirement presents a barrier for veterans who as a result of their time in the service, attend college later in life, tend to be older and are more likely to support a family while enrolled in school. The California Community College Chancellor's Office reports that approximately 27,000 of veterans attending California Community Colleges (CCC) are over the age of 30. This bill seeks to allow veterans greater access to higher education by removing the age requirement in order to qualify for the Transfer Entitlement Award.
- 2) ***The Community College Transfer Entitlement Program.*** The Transfer Entitlement award was structured to provide the same guarantee of the Cal Grant eligibility to California students who start at community college and transfer to a four year college or university some years later, as the Cal Grant Entitlement program provides high school students entering directly into four year college or university maximum award amounts.

The Transfer Entitlement award provides for full fees at CCC, California State University (CSU) and the University of California (UC), as well as tuition support at private California colleges and universities. For veterans 28 years or older this bill would provide a new education benefit that otherwise would not have been available. Particularly for veteran students who have exhausted GI bill eligibility.

- 3) ***Other tuition benefits for veterans.*** Veterans may access various education benefit programs through the federal government. Most commonly known, the federal Montgomery GI Bill provides active-duty service members and veterans a monthly tax-free benefit to be used for tuition, books, fees, and living expenses while earning an undergraduate or graduate degree, or attending trade school. The GI bill could provide veteran students up to \$20,000 (approximately) in education benefits for the 2015-16 academic year.

The federal government is the last payer if the state offers an equivalent tuition benefit to veterans. As such, this bill specifies that a veteran cannot use both sources within the same academic year. A student would need to choose when to use either award in order to maximize the expanded benefit provided by provisions in this bill.

- 4) ***Prior Legislation.***

AB 303 (Calderon, 2014) would have entitled an otherwise eligible veteran to a Cal Grant A Entitlement Award or a Cal Grant B Entitlement Award. AB 303 was pulled from the Assembly Higher Education committee at the request of the chair.

**SUPPORT**

California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office  
California School Employees Association  
California Student Aid Commission  
Community College League of California

**OPPOSITION**

None received.

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