



Bill to Expand College Scholarships Progressing through Senate

JEFFERSON CITY — A proposed bill that would expand scholarships to Missouri students through two state scholarship programs and make college tuition more affordable for Missouri families looks very promising following the Missouri Senate's approval of [Senate Bill 558](#) on April 6.

The proposed legislation would create the Missouri Promise Program. The program seeks to extend the current A+ Schools scholarship program to all eligible high school students and would no longer require program participation through an A+ designated high school. The proposed scholarship program would also provide funding for an additional two years for qualifying graduates who go onto a four-year public university.

If approved, the proposed scholarship expansion would provide two years of free community college tuition to an estimated 17,500 Missouri students and additional free tuition for as many as 6,560 students at public four-year universities who meet the requirements.

Under the proposed program, scholarship requirements would include attendance at a Missouri public high school for at least three years prior to graduation, a good faith effort to secure other sources of funding, a 2.5 grade point average, full-time enrollment at a public community college or public or private vocational or technical school, and maintaining a 2.5 grade point average while receiving the scholarship. Students vying for a scholarship beyond a two-year degree would be required to have a 3.0 grade point average and all scholarship recipients must avoid discipline issues to maintain the award.

As an amendment to the bill, I was able to forward a proposal to expand the scholarship eligibility for the merit-based Bright Flight Scholarship program to individuals who have received a General Education Development diploma (GED) or who have completed a homeschooling program of study. Also, under my proposals, a student scoring in the top 3 percent of Missouri ACT test-takers would receive a stipend of \$4,000, with those scoring in the top 5 percent receiving a \$1,000 award.

In addition, I was able to include a provision that would allow a scholarship recipient who enters military service to receive the scholarship when he or she returns to full-time student status within six months after satisfactorily completing military service. This would ensure that those individuals can resume their college studies without the risk of losing their scholarship.

Awarding scholarships to students with good grades, who are good citizens, is a step forward to increasing the number of students who can realize their dreams of a higher education while at the same making our state a place where companies locate because of our educated workforce.

If you have comments or questions about this week's column or any other matter involving state government, please do not hesitate to contact me. You can reach my office by phone at (866) 271-2844.

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