



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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Senator Pearce's College Scholarship Bill Signed into Law

JEFFERSON CITY—The governor today signed a bill sponsored by Sen. David Pearce (R-Warrensburg) that among other provisions, equalizes Access Missouri scholarships for public and private universities and protects Bright Flight scholarships for military members.

For the Bright Flight Scholarship Program, which is a merit-based scholarship that encourages top-ranked Missouri high school seniors to attend approved Missouri colleges and universities, [Senate Bill 733](#) states that if a scholarship recipient cannot attend an approved institution because of military service, the student will still be able to receive the scholarship if he or she returns to full-time status within six months of completing military service.

“Our military members make so many sacrifices on our behalf, and it just wasn’t fair to take away their scholarships because they couldn’t attend college like traditional students,” Sen. Pearce said. “The changes to the law will ensure that as long as they fulfill the other Bright Flight requirements, their service will not stand in the way of receiving a scholarship to help pay for school.”

In addition, the bill specifies that a student must be a Missouri resident to be eligible for a Bright Flight scholarship, and it expands scholarship eligibility to those who have received a GED, or completed a homeschooling program of study, secondary coursework through Missouri’s Virtual Public School, or any other academic program that satisfies the compulsory attendance law. Senate Bill 733 also provides that all students in the top 3 percent of Missouri ACT or SAT test-takers will receive awards prior to any student in the top 4 or 5 percent receiving an award.

The bill also changes and equalizes the financial aid amounts available through the Access Missouri Financial Assistance Program, which is a need-based program designed to increase accessibility to a student’s school of choice. It maintains current aid amounts through the 2013–2014 school year, and adds new financial assistance amounts for the 2014-2015 academic year and beyond. Under the new aid amounts, a student attending a public two-year school would receive between \$300 and \$1,300, while a student attending a public four-year school, or an approved private school, would be eligible for an award of \$2,850 maximum and \$1,500 minimum.

“Missouri has top-notch public universities, and without the passage and signing of SB 733, we were essentially discouraging students from attending them,” Sen. Pearce said. “This bill is about fairness and leveling the playing field for all institutions of higher learning in our state. In these difficult times, it is crucial that we do what we can to make college affordable for all Missouri families, and I deeply appreciate the work of the many people who made passage of SB 733 possible.”

Most of the provisions in SB 733 take effect Aug. 28.

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