

1 AN ACT relating to higher education.

2 Be it enacted by the People of the State of Illinois,
3 represented in the General Assembly:

4 Section 5. The Higher Education Student Assistance Act
5 is amended by adding Section 45.5 as follows:

6 (110 ILCS 947/45.5 new)

7 Sec. 45.5. Firefighter grant program.

8 (a) As used in this Section:

9 "Active paid on-call firefighter" means a member of an
10 active volunteer fire department who has had basic training
11 as defined in subsection (f) of Section 2 of the Illinois
12 Fire Protection Training Act and in the past 12 months has
13 (i) participated in all required training exercises, (ii) has
14 responded to a fire or other emergency call, and (iii) has
15 received a form of monetary compensation for each emergency
16 situation he or she has responded to.

17 "Active volunteer fire department" means a fire
18 department that is staffed by volunteers for the purpose of
19 combating fires.

20 "Active volunteer firefighter" means a member of an
21 active volunteer fire department who has had basic training
22 as defined in subsection (f) of Section 2 of the Illinois
23 Fire Protection Training Act and in the past 12 months has
24 (i) participated in all required training exercises and (ii)
25 has responded to a fire or other emergency call.

26 "Fees" means matriculation, graduation, activity, term,
27 or incidental fees. Exemption shall not be granted from any
28 other fees, including book rental, service, laboratory,
29 supply, and union building fees, hospital and medical
30 insurance fees, and any fees established for the operation
31 and maintenance of buildings, the income of which is pledged

1 to the payment of interest and principal on bonds issued by
2 the governing board of any university or community college.

3 "State-controlled university or community college" means
4 those institutions under the administration of the Chicago
5 State University Board of Trustees, the Eastern Illinois
6 University Board of Trustees, the Governors State University
7 Board of Trustees, the Illinois State University Board of
8 Trustees, the Northeastern Illinois University Board of
9 Trustees, the Northern Illinois University Board of Trustees,
10 the Western Illinois University Board of Trustees, the
11 Southern Illinois University Board of Trustees, the
12 University of Illinois Board of Trustees, or the Illinois
13 Community College Board.

14 "Tuition and fees" does not include expenses for any
15 sectarian or denominational instruction, the construction or
16 maintenance of sectarian or denominational facilities, or any
17 other sectarian or denominational purposes or activity.

18 (b) Subject to the limitations provided in this Section,
19 any person who has served at least 3 years as an active
20 volunteer, paid on-call, or full-time firefighter with a fire
21 department in a municipality with a population of less than
22 5,000 and who possesses all necessary entrance requirements
23 shall, upon application and proper proof, be awarded a grant
24 to the State-controlled university or community college of
25 his or her choice, consisting of exemption from tuition and
26 fees for not more than the equivalent of 4 years of full-time
27 enrollment in relation to his or her course of study at that
28 State-controlled university or community college while he or
29 she serves as an active volunteer, paid on-call, or full-time
30 firefighter with that fire department. However, not more
31 than 2 grants per year may be awarded to firefighters within
32 the same fire department. If the recipient of any grant
33 awarded under this Section ceases to serve as an active
34 volunteer, paid on-call, or full-time firefighter with the

1 fire department that he or she was with to qualify for the
2 grant while enrolled in a course of study under that grant,
3 the grant shall be terminated as of the date service as an
4 active volunteer, paid on-call, or full-time firefighter with
5 that fire department ended, and the recipient shall be
6 permitted to complete the school term in which he or she is
7 then enrolled only upon payment of tuition and other fees
8 allocable to the part of the term then remaining.

9 Before receiving grant assistance under this Section for
10 any academic year, each grant recipient shall be required by
11 the Commission to sign an agreement under which the recipient
12 pledges that he or she (i) shall remain an active volunteer,
13 paid on-call, or full-time firefighter with the fire
14 department that he or she was with to qualify for the grant
15 for a period of not less than one year for each year of grant
16 assistance that he or she receives under this Section and
17 (ii) shall, upon request by the Commission, provide the
18 Commission with evidence that he or she is fulfilling or has
19 fulfilled this obligation. If the recipient fails to fulfill
20 this obligation, then the Commission shall require the
21 recipient to repay the amount of the grant assistance
22 received, prorated according to the fraction of the
23 obligation not completed, at a rate of interest equal to 5%,
24 and, if applicable, to pay reasonable collection fees. A
25 recipient who is enrolled in an institution of higher
26 learning shall not be required to commence repayment so long
27 as he or she remains enrolled in an institution of higher
28 learning on a full-time basis or if he or she can document
29 for the Commission special circumstances that warrant
30 extension of the time before repayment is required. The
31 Commission is authorized to establish rules relating to its
32 collection activities for repayment of grant assistance under
33 this Section. All repayments collected under this Section
34 shall be forwarded to the State Comptroller for deposit into

1 the General Revenue Fund. A recipient shall not be
2 considered in violation of the agreement entered into
3 pursuant to this subsection (b) if the recipient (i) is
4 serving as a member of the armed services of the United
5 States, for a period of time not to exceed 3 years, (ii) is
6 temporarily totally disabled, for a period of time not to
7 exceed 3 years, as established by sworn affidavit of a
8 qualified physician, or (iii) becomes permanently totally
9 disabled, as established by sworn affidavit of a qualified
10 physician.

11 A grant awarded under this Section shall be considered an
12 entitlement that the State-controlled university or community
13 college in which the holder is enrolled shall honor without
14 any condition other than the holder's maintenance of minimum
15 grade levels and a satisfactory student loan repayment record
16 pursuant to subsection (c) of Section 20 of this Act.

17 (c) Subject to a separate appropriation for such
18 purposes, the Commission may reimburse the State-controlled
19 university or community college for grants authorized by this
20 Section.