

STATE OF NEW YORK

10031

IN ASSEMBLY

January 30, 2026

Introduced by M. of A. CASHMAN -- read once and referred to the Committee on Higher Education

AN ACT to amend the education law and the state finance law, in relation to creating a volunteer firefighter scholarship program and a volunteer fire fighter scholarship fund; and making an appropriation relating therefor

The People of the State of New York, represented in Senate and Assembly, do enact as follows:

1 Section 1. The education law is amended by adding a new section 669-i
2 to read as follows:

3 § 669-i. Volunteer firefighter scholarship program. 1. Eligibility.

4 (a) A volunteer firefighter scholarship award shall be made to an applicant who:

5 (i) serves as an active volunteer firefighter as defined in subdivision one of section two hundred fifteen of the general municipal law who
6 has attended twenty-five percent of emergency calls for each year; and

7 (ii) complies with the applicable provisions of this article and all
8 requirements promulgated by the office of higher education, hereinafter
9 referred to as the "office", for the administration of the program.

10 (b) Student loans eligible for this program are:

11 (i) student loans accrued while attending a private or public institution
12 of higher education within New York state from which the recipient
13 received credits which were used to acquire a bachelor's degree at an
14 approved program; or

15 (ii) student loans accrued while attending an accredited trade school
16 or vocational program within New York state from which the recipient
17 received a certificate or license.

18 2. Amount. Within amounts appropriated therefor and based on availability
19 of funds, awards shall be granted to applicants that the office
20 has determined are eligible to receive such awards. The office shall
21 grant such awards in an amount up to four times the current tuition rate
22 at a state university of New York college. Upon notification of an award
23 under this program, the office shall pay the interest on the recipient's
24 student loans for eight years and, upon the completion of the program's
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EXPLANATION--Matter in italics (underscored) is new; matter in brackets
[-] is old law to be omitted.

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1 requirements, any remaining student loan interest and principal up to
2 four times the current tuition rate at a state university of New York
3 college. If the amount of the recipient's remaining student loan inter-
4 est and principal is less than four times the current tuition rate at a
5 state university of New York college at the end of the program, an
6 amount equal to the difference between (a) four times the current
7 tuition rate at a state university of New York college or the initial
8 principal on the recipient's student loans, whichever is less, and (b)
9 the amount of principal and interest paid at the end of the program
10 shall be issued to the recipient. In the event that a recipient fails to
11 maintain eligibility in the program, no further payments shall be made
12 until the recipient again becomes eligible for the program.

13 3. Conditions. (a) A recipient shall agree to reside exclusively in
14 New York state and shall not be employed in any other state, for eight
15 years.

16 (b) A recipient shall be an active volunteer firefighter as defined in
17 subdivision one of section two hundred fifteen of the general municipal
18 law who has attended twenty-five percent of emergency calls for each
19 year, for eight years. The recipient shall annually submit to the office
20 an affidavit signed by their chief or company director verifying the
21 recipient's participation in emergency calls is at or above twenty-five
22 percent for the prior year.

23 4. Contract. (a) A recipient shall sign a contract with the office to
24 have their full award converted to a student loan according to a sched-
25 ule to be determined by the office if such recipient fails to fulfill
26 the requirements set out in subdivision three of this section unless
27 such requirement is waived by the commissioner. The terms and conditions
28 of the contract shall be established by the rules and regulations by the
29 office. A waiver issued by the commissioner shall only be for up to one
30 year of requirements and must be renewed by the commission to waive
31 requirements for additional years. Any obligation to comply with such
32 provisions as outlined in this paragraph shall be cancelled upon the
33 death of the recipient.

34 (b) The commissioner may, in extreme circumstances including, but not
35 limited to, temporary or permanent disability, illness and family emer-
36 gency resulting in relocation or extended family leave, waive an amount
37 of the award converted into a student loan equal to the amount of the
38 award multiplied by the years the recipient fulfilled the requirements
39 under subdivision three of this section divided by eight.

40 (c) Notwithstanding any provisions of this paragraph to the contrary,
41 the office is authorized to promulgate rules and regulations to provide
42 for the waiver or suspension of any financial obligation which would
43 involve extreme hardship.

44 5. Recipient selection. The office shall establish: (a) an application
45 deadline of within two years of completing a qualifying course of study;
46 (b) a method of selecting recipients if in any given year there are
47 insufficient funds to cover the needs of all the applicants provided
48 that priority shall be given to eligible applicants; and (c) a method of
49 recording how much each recipient owes in student loans at any time, how
50 much each recipient had taken out in principal in student loans and how
51 much has been paid on each recipient's student loans by the program.

52 6. Rules and regulations. The office is authorized to promulgate rules
53 and regulations, and may promulgate emergency regulations, necessary for
54 the implementation of the provisions of this section including, but not
55 limited to, the criteria for distributing the awards, which may include
56 a lottery or other form of random selection.

1 § 2. The state finance law is amended by adding a new section 91-e to
2 read as follows:

3 § 91-e. Volunteer firefighter scholarship fund. 1. There is hereby
4 established in the joint custody of the state comptroller and the
5 commissioner of taxation and finance a fund to be known as the "volun-
6 teer firefighter scholarship fund".

7 2. Such fund shall consist of all revenues received from contrib-
8 utions, donations and all other moneys appropriated, credited or trans-
9 ferred thereto from any other fund or source pursuant to law.

10 3. Moneys of the fund, following appropriation by the legislature, may
11 be expended for the volunteer firefighter scholarship program estab-
12 lished pursuant to section six hundred sixty-nine-i of the education
13 law. Moneys shall be paid out of the fund on the audit and warrant of
14 the state comptroller on vouchers certified or approved by the commis-
15 sioner of education.

16 § 3. The sum of one million dollars (\$1,000,000), or so much thereof
17 as may be necessary, is hereby appropriated to the volunteer firefighter
18 scholarship fund as established pursuant to section 91-e of the state
19 finance law from any moneys in the state treasury in the general fund to
20 the credit of the account not otherwise appropriated for services and
21 expenses of the account for the purposes of carrying out the provisions
22 of this act. Such moneys shall be payable on the audit and warrant of
23 the comptroller on vouchers certified or approved by the commissioner of
24 education in the manner prescribed by law.

25 § 4. This act shall take effect on the one hundred eightieth day after
26 it shall have become a law.