

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 97

BY SENATOR NEVERS

A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

To urge and request the Board of Regents to establish a group to review the core curriculum and other eligibility requirements currently established for the TOPS-Tech Award and to make recommendations regarding any changes deemed appropriate or necessary to ensure maximum utilization of the award by eligible students.

WHEREAS, seventy-two percent of the more than four hundred top demand occupations in Louisiana, as identified by the Louisiana Workforce Commission, do not require a four year university degree, yet ninety-five percent require additional training beyond a high school diploma; and

WHEREAS, it is critical to the state's economic future that Louisiana's students have access to training and educational opportunities that will allow them to obtain the skills set needed to fulfill the requirements of hundreds of well-paying jobs that do not require a bachelor's degree; and

WHEREAS, the TOPS-Tech Award, designed by the legislature to provide encouragement and financial assistance to academically qualified high school students to pursue postsecondary vocational or occupational training and education, could and should be a primary vehicle to provide the state's workforce with the skilled labor essential to a thriving economy; and

WHEREAS, current data indicate that the vast majority of students who qualify for the TOPS-Tech Award do not accept the award; and

WHEREAS, Louisiana's workforce needs, coupled with changes in admission standards to our institutions of higher education, the ongoing implementation of the initial recommendations of the High School Redesign Commission, and the current low utilization rate of the TOPS-Tech Award, indicate a need for a comprehensive review of the eligibility requirements for the TOPS-Tech Award.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby urge and request the Board of Regents to establish a group to review the core curriculum and other eligibility requirements currently established for the TOPS-Tech Award and to make recommendations regarding any changes deemed appropriate or necessary to ensure maximum utilization of the award by eligible students.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the study group shall be convened by the Board of Regents and shall be comprised of members representing the Louisiana Community and Technical College System, the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, the state Department of Education, the Louisiana Office of Student Financial Assistance, the Louisiana Workforce Investment Council, and other pertinent stakeholder groups as deemed appropriate.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Board of Regents, on behalf of the study group, shall submit a written report of all findings and recommendations to the Senate and House committees on education not later than March 1, 2009.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this Resolution be transmitted to the commissioner of higher education, to the president of the Louisiana Community and Technical College System, to the president of the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, to the state superintendent of education, to the executive director of the Louisiana Office of Student Financial Assistance, and to the chairman of the Louisiana Workforce Investment Council.

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PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE

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SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES