

STATE OF OKLAHOMA

1st Session of the 60th Legislature (2025)

SENATE BILL 242

By: Pugh

AS INTRODUCED

An Act relating to higher education; creating the Veterans Entering Teaching (VET) Act; providing short title; defining terms; creating the Veterans Entering Teaching (VET) Program to provide tuition and mandatory fee assistance to certain eligible students; providing for eligibility; requiring eligible students to execute certain agreement; providing contents of agreement; providing eligibility retention requirements; providing for amount of assistance; prohibiting assistance for certain courses or units; directing assistance to be allocated from certain fund; prohibiting individuals who accept certain assistance from also being eligible for certain program; directing certain federal benefits to be exhausted first; establishing assistance cap for each academic year; allowing funds to be set aside for full commitment; requiring repayment of assistance for failure to meet certain requirement; providing for calculation of repayment amount; providing for deposit of repayment amounts in certain fund; allowing for application of hardship waiver; providing for promulgation of rules; creating the Veterans Entering Teaching (VET) Revolving Fund; specifying source of fund; providing for expenditures; providing purpose of fund; providing for codification; providing an effective date; and declaring an emergency.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF OKLAHOMA:

SECTION 1. NEW LAW A new section of law to be codified in the Oklahoma Statutes as Section 3234 of Title 70, unless there is created a duplication in numbering, reads as follows:

1 A. This act shall be known and may be cited as the "Veterans  
2 Entering Teaching (VET) Act".

3 B. As used in this act:

4 1. "Eligible student" means a student who was discharged under  
5 honorable conditions from the United States Armed Forces who enrolls  
6 in an Oklahoma educational institution regardless of the home of  
7 record for the student;

8 2. "Home of record" means the place where a student was living  
9 when he or she enlisted or was commissioned into the United States  
10 Armed Forces or reenlisted in the United States Armed Forces;

11 3. "Oklahoma educational institution" means an institution of  
12 higher education within The Oklahoma State System of Higher  
13 Education; and

14 4. "Program" means the Veterans Entering Teaching (VET)  
15 Program.

16 C. There is hereby created the Veterans Entering Teaching (VET)  
17 Program to provide tuition and mandatory fee assistance to eligible  
18 students to earn a degree from an approved teacher preparation  
19 program at an Oklahoma educational institution if they agree to  
20 teach in a school district in this state for three (3) consecutive  
21 years.

22 D. To be eligible to participate in the program during the  
23 2025-2026 academic year and thereafter, an individual shall:

24 1. Enroll in an Oklahoma educational institution;

1           2. Submit an application on a form prescribed by the Oklahoma  
2 State Regents for Higher Education;

3           3. Declare a major in an approved Oklahoma teacher preparation  
4 program leading to a standard teaching certificate; and

5           4. Execute an agreement pursuant to subsection E of this  
6 section.

7           E. An eligible student who meets the criteria of subsection D  
8 of this section shall execute an agreement stating that he or she  
9 shall:

10           1. Agree to earn a bachelor's degree from an approved teacher  
11 preparation program at an Oklahoma educational institution leading  
12 to a standard teaching certificate;

13           2. Agree to meet the requirements of Section 6-187 of Title 70  
14 of the Oklahoma Statutes to earn a standard teaching certificate;  
15 and

16           3. Agree to teach in a school district in this state for three  
17 (3) consecutive years. The individual shall not be required to  
18 teach at the same school district for three (3) consecutive years.

19           F. To retain eligibility for the program, an eligible student  
20 shall:

21           1. Maintain good academic standing and satisfactory academic  
22 progress while enrolled in an Oklahoma educational institution  
23 according to the institution's standards; and

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1           2. After earning a bachelor's degree from an approved Oklahoma  
2 teacher preparation program, submit annual proof of employment with  
3 a school district in this state to the Oklahoma State Regents for  
4 Higher Education.

5           G. 1. The amount of assistance shall be equivalent to the  
6 amount of tuition and mandatory fees for courses in which the  
7 eligible student enrolls for completion of a bachelor's degree from  
8 an approved Oklahoma teacher preparation program. Assistance shall  
9 not be allowed for courses or other postsecondary units taken in  
10 excess of the requirements for completion of a bachelor's degree or  
11 taken more than five (5) years after the individual's first semester  
12 of enrollment in an Oklahoma educational institution.

13           2. Assistance provided pursuant to this subsection shall be  
14 allocated to the Oklahoma educational institution from the Veterans  
15 Entering Teaching (VET) Revolving Fund created pursuant to Section 2  
16 of this act.

17           H. An eligible student who accepts assistance pursuant to this  
18 section shall not also be eligible for the Inspired to Teach Program  
19 created in Section 698.1 of Title 70 of the Oklahoma Statutes.

20           I. An eligible student seeking tuition and fee assistance  
21 pursuant to this section who is eligible for federal education  
22 benefits shall exhaust all available federal benefits first.

23           J. Subject to the availability of funding, the amount of  
24 assistance provided to eligible students shall not exceed Two

1 Million Dollars (\$2,000,000.00) for the 2025-2026 academic year and  
2 every academic year thereafter. Assistance shall be provided on a  
3 first-come, first-served basis and shall be granted without any  
4 limitation other than the amount of funds available for the program  
5 and the number of eligible students who apply. The State Regents  
6 may, at the time assistance is provided on behalf of an eligible  
7 student, set aside funds in the Veterans Entering Teaching (VET)  
8 Revolving Fund created pursuant to Section 2 of this act for the  
9 full commitment made to the student.

10 K. An individual who has received program assistance pursuant  
11 to this section and who fails to comply with the agreement executed  
12 pursuant to subsection E of this section shall be required to repay  
13 an amount to be calculated as follows:

14 1. Determine the total amount of program assistance provided  
15 pursuant to the provisions of this section;

16 2. Divide the amount determined in paragraph 1 of this  
17 subsection by twelve (12); and

18 3. Multiply the amount determined in paragraph 2 of this  
19 subsection by the number of months the individual did not fulfill  
20 the requirements of the agreement executed pursuant to subsection E  
21 of this section. Repayments shall be deposited into the Veterans  
22 Entering Teaching (VET) Revolving Fund created pursuant to Section 2  
23 of this act.

1 L. An individual who has received program assistance pursuant  
2 to this section and who fails to comply with the agreement executed  
3 pursuant to subsection E of this section due to hardship  
4 circumstances may request a waiver from repayment from the Oklahoma  
5 State Regents for Higher Education.

6 M. The Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education shall  
7 promulgate rules to implement the provisions of this section.

8 SECTION 2. NEW LAW A new section of law to be codified  
9 in the Oklahoma Statutes as Section 3235 of Title 70, unless there  
10 is created a duplication in numbering, reads as follows:

11 There is hereby created in the State Treasury a revolving fund  
12 for the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education to be designated  
13 the "Veterans Entering Teaching (VET) Revolving Fund". The fund  
14 shall be a continuing fund, not subject to fiscal year limitations,  
15 and shall consist of all monies received by the State Regents from  
16 legislative appropriations provided for the purpose of implementing  
17 the Veterans Entering Teaching (VET) Program created in Section 1 of  
18 this act. All monies accruing to the credit of the fund are hereby  
19 appropriated and may be budgeted and expended by the State Regents  
20 for the purpose provided for in this section. Expenditures from the  
21 fund shall be made upon warrants issued by the State Treasurer  
22 against claims filed as prescribed by law with the Director of the  
23 Office of Management and Enterprise Services for approval and  
24 payment.

1 SECTION 3. This act shall become effective July 1, 2025.

2 SECTION 4. It being immediately necessary for the preservation  
3 of the public peace, health, or safety, an emergency is hereby  
4 declared to exist, by reason whereof this act shall take effect and  
5 be in full force from and after its passage and approval.  
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