

# HOUSE RESEARCH

## Bill Summary

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**Authors:** Brod, Rhodes, Anderson, B., Sviggum, Newman

**Subject:** Military Affairs

**Analyst:** Jim Cleary

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### Overview

This bill increases the support level - from 80 to 100 percent - for the National Guard Tuition Reimbursement Program for Guard members enrolled in postsecondary education. It also appropriates the additional amount of funding needed for this increase in the support level.

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- 1** **Increases authorized reimbursement rate.** The authorized rate is increased from 80 percent to the 100 percent level, pegged to the cost of tuition for lower division programs in the College of Liberal Arts at the Twin Cities campus of the University of Minnesota in the most recent academic year.

Note: Minnesota Statutes contain an error in indicating that the current support level is 75 percent (or 50 percent for medical students). The 2003 Legislature enacted a bill that would have prevented a sunset on the 80 percent support level that it established in 2001. However, due to a drafting error, the effective date on the bill was omitted and the sunset occurred anyway, reverting the support level to 75 percent. That error is being fixed in the 2004 Revisor's Bill, expected to be enacted soon. Thus, the fiscal note, when completed, should reflect an increase from 80 to 100 percent (not 75 to 100 percent) for HF1820.

- 2** **Appropriation.** Provides a blank appropriation amount, and stipulates that this amount can be added to the base funding level for each year of the FY 06/07 biennium. Program funding would need to increase by one-fourth or 25 percent in FY 05 to accommodate the increase in

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support level from 80 to 100 percent. The 2003 Legislature appropriated \$4,857 million for this program each year of the current biennium; thus, a permanent increase of \$1.2 million would be needed to accommodate the support level increase at full funding, beginning in FY05.

### **Background:**

Nearly all states have some form of education assistance program to induce recruits into their state National Guard. Approximately 30 states offer full (100%) tuition reimbursement or tuition support, though the state programs differ widely in their structure and actual support levels.

Since its inception about a decade ago, Minnesota's National Guard Tuition Reimbursement Program has been the primary recruiting tool for the Guard. Each year, approximately one-fourth - or about 3,000 of the more than 12,000-member Minnesota National Guard - participate in this program. Members of other military Reserves are not eligible for this state program, since they do not have a state mission in addition to their federal mission.

Currently, approximately 3,000 to 4,000 members of the Minnesota Army and Air National Guard are serving in active military service in more than 15 different nations. Nationally, in fiscal year 2002, Army National Guard soldiers deployed to 85 countries. Currently, 120,000 of the nation's 350,000 national guard members are serving in active duty.

Currently, most Army National Guard deployments are for 18 months of active service, with 12 months of that time being spent in a designated war zone. Deployments are generally 60 days to 6 months for members of the Air National Guard, though they may be more frequent.

Federal support for the Minnesota National Guard is totals approximately \$285 million annually, versus approximately \$12 million state appropriations (a federal/state ratio of 24:1). The state appropriation is broken down as follows:

- \$5.590 m Maintenance and training facilities (armories)
- \$4.857m Tuition Assistance Reimbursement Program
- \$1.757 m General Support
  
- \$0.075 m Emergency Services

There are roughly 6,000 other Reserve forces in Minnesota (not National Guard), including those who are currently deployed into active service. Nationally, about 65,000 of the total of 211,000 Army Reserve members are currently serving in active service.

National Guard and other Reserve forces comprise a significant proportion of U.S. soldiers serving within Iraq in Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF), as follows:

- OIF-I 2003 22% of 130,000+ total troops
- OIF-II 2004 40% of 110,000 total troops
- OIF-III 2005 30% (est.) of an unannounced troop strength

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As of February 18, 2004, 543 American soldiers have died in Operation Iraqi Freedom, and 111 have died in Operation Enduring Freedom (Afghanistan), while another 3,087 have been wounded in OIF. (Statistics for Americans wounded in OEF are not available.) These data include both hostile and non-hostile (accidental and/or disease) casualties.