

**LEGISLATIVE EDUCATION STUDY COMMITTEE  
BILL ANALYSIS**

**Bill No:** SB 627

**49th Legislature, 1st Session, 2009**

**Short Title:** Expand NMMI Scholarships

**Sponsor(s):** Senators Timothy Z. Jennings and Rod Adair

**Analyst:** Eilani Gerstner

**Date:** February 24, 2009

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**Bill Summary:**

SB 627 amends the program administration provisions of the General Richard T. Knowles legislative scholarship program at the New Mexico Military Institute (NMMI) to provide that,

“[i]n the event no applicant is available by July 1 of each year from either the legislator’s district or a contiguous district, the scholarship may be awarded to any of the qualified nominees from any state legislative district.”

SB 627 also updates this section of law to use gender-neutral language.

**Fiscal Impact:**

SB 627 makes no appropriation.

**Issues:**

According to the Higher Education Department (HED) analysis of SB 627, NMMI reports that this amendment would open up the scholarship process to additional qualified candidates and make the most of the scholarship funding during difficult economic times.

HED also reports that:

- this scholarship program covers the cost of tuition, fees, and other expenses for a total of approximately \$3,600 per year;
- the scholarship may be renewed for up to four years contingent upon satisfactory academic progress toward graduation and acceptable performance in the NMMI Corps of Cadets, among other requirements; and
- the scholarship program is funded through an institutional endowment to NMMI.

**Technical Issues:**

According to HED’s analysis, NMMI reported to HED that this provision would have a sunset date and therefore would only affect candidates for school year 2009-2010; however, SB 627 does not contain such a provision.

## **Background:**

Current law provides that, in order to maintain geographical diversity and afford a greater opportunity for New Mexicans to receive scholarships,

- annually, each state legislator may nominate four prospective scholarship recipients to the Board of Regents of NMMI; and
- if a legislator has no applicant from his or her district, that senator or representative may nominate an applicant from a senate or representative district contiguous to his or her district.

The law requires the board of regents to establish 112 scholarships, one for each legislative district, and to establish criteria for awarding the scholarships, which are awarded for a maximum of four years.

According to NMMI, students must meet the following criteria to be eligible for the legislative scholarship:

- for students entering the ninth or tenth grade, a 2.5 or higher grade point average (GPA);
- for students entering eleventh or twelfth grade, a 2.25 or higher GPA; and
- for students entering junior college, a 2.0 or higher GPA for all high school core courses and a 18+ ACT score or a 870+ SAT score.

The General Richard T. Knowles legislative scholarship program was enacted as the “Legislator Scholarship Program” in 1989. In 1998, the law was amended to rename the scholarship program after General Richard T. Knowles.

## **Related Bills:**

None as of 02-24-2009.