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## DIGEST

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Berthelot

HB No. 382

**Abstract:** Creates a Volunteer Firefighters' Tuition Reimbursement program to provide tuition reimbursement to volunteer firefighters for attendance at a public college, university, or vocational or technical school.

Proposed law creates a Volunteer Firefighters' Tuition Reimbursement program to provide tuition reimbursement to eligible volunteer firefighters attending a public college, university, or vocational or technical school.

Proposed law creates the Volunteer Firefighters' Tuition Reimbursement Fund in the state treasury for the deposit of state general fund monies if available and appropriated by the legislature and any federal funds, donations, or other monies that may be provided. Requires that state general fund monies be used first to pay all obligations owed from the Bond Security and Redemption Fund and remaining monies be paid into the fund and used solely for providing tuition reimbursement as provided in proposed law. Requires the state treasurer to invest the monies in the fund in the same manner as monies in the state general fund. Further provides that no monies from the state general fund (direct) can be deposited or appropriated into the fund unless and until two-thirds of the elected members of each house of the legislature consent to such deposit or appropriation.

Proposed law creates the Volunteer Firefighters' Tuition Reimbursement Board within the Dept. of Public Safety and Corrections, office of state fire marshal. Provides that the board shall be composed of seven members who will serve without compensation as follows:

- (1) The state fire marshal or his designee.
- (2) The president of the Senate or his designee.
- (3) The speaker of the House or his designee.
- (4) One member appointed by the governor.
- (5) One member appointed by the La. State Firemen's Association
- (6) Two members appointed by the La. Fire Chiefs Association, one of whom shall be the chief of a predominantly volunteer fire department.

Proposed law requires the board to adopt rules and regulations for the governance of the board. Further requires the board to create an application and develop application procedures, determine applicant eligibility, disburse tuition reimbursements, require status reports on voluntary firefighter status, and require education progress reports.

Proposed law requires eligible applicants to, at a minimum, reside in the state for at least one year prior to application, complete a two-year associate degree program or two years of a four-year degree program or one year of a vocational or technical school, and volunteer for at least two years with a fire department and at the time of application serve as a volunteer firefighter. Disqualifies a recipient from receiving the tuition reimbursement if the board determines that the recipient has failed to maintain good standing with the attending school or has discontinued service as a volunteer firefighter.

Proposed law requires the board to adopt, in accordance with the APA, rules and regulations necessary to implement the program.

(Adds R.S. 36:409(C)(6) and R.S. 40:1558.1-1558.7)

#### Summary of Amendments Adopted by House

Committee Amendments Proposed by House Committee on Municipal, Parochial and Cultural Affairs to the original bill.

1. Specifies that the board is placed within the Dept. of Public Safety and Corrections under the provisions of the Executive Reorganization Act and retains all of the powers, duties, functions, and responsibilities as provided in proposed law.
2. Authorizes rather than requires the state to reimburse eligible volunteer firefighters from the fund established by proposed law.
3. Removes provisions that authorize the reimbursement of board members for expenses.

Committee Amendments Proposed by House Committee on Appropriations to the engrossed bill.

1. Provides that no monies from the state general fund (direct) can be deposited or appropriated into the fund unless and until two-thirds of the elected members of each house of the legislature consent to such deposit or appropriation.

House Floor Amendments to the reengrossed bill.

1. Makes technical changes only.