A bill for an act

relating to veterans; clarifying and slightly extending eligibility for educational benefits for certain surviving military spouses and children under the War Orphans Act; amending Minnesota Statutes 2006, section 197.75.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF MINNESOTA:

Section 1. Minnesota Statutes 2006, section 197.75, is amended to read:

197.75 EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE, WAR ORPHANS AND VETERANS.

Subdivision 1. **Definitions.** (a) The definitions in this subdivision apply to this section.

(b) "Commissioner" means the commissioner of veterans affairs.

(c) "Deceased veteran" means a veteran who was a Minnesota resident at the time of the person's entry into the United States armed forces and who has died as a result of that service, as determined by the United States Veterans Administration.

(d) "Eligible child" means a person who:

(1) is the natural or adopted son or daughter of a deceased veteran; and

(2) is a student making satisfactory academic progress at an eligible institution of higher education.

(e) "Eligible institution" has the meaning given in section 136A.101, subdivision 4.

(f) "Eligible spouse" means the surviving spouse of a deceased veteran.

(g) "Eligible veteran" means a veteran who:

(1) is a student making satisfactory academic progress at an eligible institution of higher education;

(2) had Minnesota as the person's state of residence at the time of the person's enlistment or any reenlistment into the United States armed forces, as shown by the

person's federal form DD-214 or other official documentation to the satisfaction of the commissioner;

(3) except for benefits under this section, has no remaining military or veteran-related educational assistance benefits for which the person may have been entitled; and

(4) while using the educational assistance authorized in this section, remains a resident student as defined in section 136A.101, subdivision 8.

(h) "Satisfactory academic progress" has the meaning given in section 136A.101, subdivision 10.

(i) "Student" has the meaning given in section 136A.101, subdivision 7.

(j) "Veteran" has the meaning given in section 197.447.

Subd. 2. **Benefits; eligibility.** (a) The commissioner of veterans affairs shall spend a biennial appropriation ~~for tuition of veterans, and for tuition, fees, board, room, books, and supplies of the children of veterans who have died as a result of their service in the armed forces of the United States as determined by the United States Veterans Administration or other instrumentality of the United States, in the University of Minnesota, a state university, a community college, a technical college, or any other university of higher learning within the state accredited by the North Central Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools, a law college approved by the Supreme Court, a nursing school approved by the state Board of Nursing, or in a trade, business, or vocational school in the state approved by the state Department of Education, or in a theological seminary, for any course which such veteran or child may elect. Not more than $750 shall be expended for the benefit of any individual veteran, and not more than $750 in any fiscal year shall be expended for the benefit of any child under this section. No child of any veteran shall make application for the benefits provided in this section unless the child resided in Minnesota for at least two years immediately prior to the date of the application.~~ to provide an educational assistance stipend of $750 each year for each eligible child and each eligible spouse, and a single payment of $750 for each eligible veteran. This stipend is not available for any person who has attained a bachelor's or equivalent degree.

~~Children of veterans eligible for benefits according to this section~~ (b) Each eligible child and each eligible spouse shall be admitted to ~~state institutions of university grade~~ any Minnesota public eligible institution free of tuition until ~~they receive~~ the person has attained a ~~bachelors~~ bachelor's or equivalent degree.

(c) Payments of benefits authorized under this section shall be made directly to the ~~institution in which the course of instruction is given~~ participating eligible institutions or to ~~the individual on forms prescribed~~ eligible individuals, as determined by the commissioner.

~~Subd. 2. **Limitations.** The benefits in subdivision 1 are not available to a veteran who is entitled to the same or similar benefits under a law or regulation of the United States, except that a veteran who has been eligible for and has used up the benefits the veteran is entitled to under the laws of the United States is entitled to the benefits provided for by subdivision 1.~~

Subd. 3. **Proof of eligibility.** Approval for benefits under this section shall require submission of the following evidence: application, proof of military service, and where applicable, proof of residency and ~~where applicable~~, a statement from the United States Veterans Administration that the veteran has exhausted entitlement to federal educational benefits through use thereof or that the veteran died of service connected disabilities. Upon submission of satisfactory proof of eligibility, benefits shall be provided from the date of application and notification of approval shall be sent to the educational institution and applicant.

Subd. 4. **Reimbursement form.** ~~Reimbursement to such institution or eligible individual authorized under subdivision 1 shall be on forms prescribed by~~ The commissioner shall establish policies and procedures for determining eligibility and payment under this section.

Subd. 5. ~~**Definition of veteran**~~ **Participation by eligible institutions.** ~~The word "veteran" as used in this section shall have the same meaning as defined in section 197.447 except that it shall include service persons that died while on active duty.~~ (a) Each Minnesota public postsecondary institution must continue to participate in the educational assistance program authorized in this section during both peacetime and times of war.

(b) Any participating eligible institution not described in paragraph (a) may suspend or terminate its participation in the program at the end of any academic semester or other academic term.

~~Subd. 6. **Residence required.** Veterans under this section shall have been a resident of the state of Minnesota at the time of induction into the armed forces and six months immediately preceding the induction.~~

EFFECTIVE DATE. This section is effective July 1, 2007, and applies to applications for coursework taken on or after that date.