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Ethics Law Harms Students

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An ethics law in the state of Connecticut has banned gifts to state agencies from corporate donors and from those who spend \$2,000 or more per year on lobbying. The new law may disallow state educators from receiving donations in the form of equipment, scholarship money, machinery, computers, lab equipment, and secondhand cars for auto-repair classes.

While the Department of Education is still analyzing what can be received as donations and what cannot, State Representative Christopher Caruso, (D-Bridgeport), co-chair of the Government Administration and Elections Committee, says that he was willing to consider a revision of the law to allow scholarship donations.

Changes Benefit MI Students

Effective July 1, a change in financial-need calculations stands to benefit thousands of students with Michigan Education Trust contracts, a pre-paid tuition plan. The change, which was mandated by the Deficit Reduction Act of 2005, will make the balances of pre-paid tuition accounts exempt from calculations of financial need. The change in law sees the prepaid tuition plans as parents' assets; and now, less than 6 percent of the amount of the contract will be used to determine financial need.

Though the financial aid packages for fall have already been completed, Michigan State University has mailed letters to about 200 MET-contract students who had earlier applied for financial aid in an attempt to help them take advantage of the new legislation.

FL Students Save

Florida Gov. Jeb Bush recently signed into law a change in the state scholarship program. Now, students in the Bright Futures Medallion scholarship program can receive up to 100 percent of tuition and fees instead of the earlier 75 percent. The move is likely to steer more students into two-year community colleges, which would also help ease the rush at state universities.

The average per-credit hour tuition at state universities in Florida is \$108 for Florida residents, and community colleges charge about \$70 per credit hour in tuition and fees.

The new measure would help students save more than \$1,000 on the 60 credit hours needed to complete an associate's degree.

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Grants For AZ Private Schools

Likely beginning this year, students at Arizona's private colleges will be eligible to receive new \$2,000 grants on a first-come, first-served basis.

Also, this year's recipients will be among the first considered for identical grants next year.

The program was included in a budget bill and approved last weekend by the state legislature. It was sponsored by Rep. Laura Knaperek (R-Tempe)

A total \$4.8 million will be made available to these students. Applications have not yet been printed, and no timetable for administration has been set; although officials have said that the program will most likely be implemented in the fall semester.

Rep. Ted Downing (D-Tucson) criticized the program, stating that for needy students, "\$2,000 isn't going to help them go through a major expensive private university. A very wealthy person (who) gets the money didn't need it in the first place."

CA Immigrants To Receive Aid?

Dozens of undocumented-immigrant students descended on the California state capitol recently to support the lawmakers who have sponsored Senate Bill 160. The new bill would allow them to apply for financial aid at the state's colleges and universities.

The measure has cleared the Senate and is being reviewed and amended by the Assembly Higher Education Committee. SB 160 is scheduled to be signed into law by Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger later this summer. The governor's office says he supports the law that allows illegal immigrants who attended a California high school for three years and received a diploma to pay in-state tuition.

Schwarzenegger has not taken an official position on SB 160, which is almost guaranteed to become a significant election-year issue as it deals with immigration reform.

California is one of just 10 states that allow undocumented immigrants to pay in-state tuition. However, state Republicans have sponsored bills to repeal that particular law.