

# TICUA Policy Update

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February 19, 2015

## SARA Legislation Moves Forward in Senate

On Wednesday the Senate Education Committee unanimously passed the State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement bill. If ultimately successful, the bill will allow Tennessee to apply to become a member of NC-SARA which promises to significantly reduce the administrative burden and cost of offering online programs in other states. The bill will now go to the Senate Finance, Ways, and Means Committee. The bill has yet to be heard in the House Education Administration and Planning Subcommittee.

## Firearms Bills Filed

Senator Janice Bowling has filed a bill which restricts an employer's ability to enforce firearm policies on private property. As stated in the bill caption (SB168) "extends liability for civil damages to public and private employers who take an adverse employment action against an employee who lawfully transports and stores a firearm in a motor vehicle." Thus, it creates special class protection for employees lawfully carrying weapons. The House companion bill is sponsored by Representative Kelly Kiesling. The bills have been assigned to committees in both chambers but have yet to be calendared for a hearing.

There are a number of other bills addressing firearm possession that TICUA is tracking. They range from prohibiting localities from issuing restrictive rules related to firearm possession to creating a "tax free holiday" for firearms and ammunition purchases.

## Tennessee Promise Bill Passes Senate Education

Senator Mark Green's bill (SB56) which allows Tennessee Promise eligible students who cannot enroll in college the fall semester immediately following their high school due to military commitments to be granted flexibility. Instead, the students will be expected to enroll in college the semester immediately following the completion of their military obligation.

## Haslam Files Bill to Amend Tennessee Promise

Governor Bill Haslam's administration has filed a clarification bill for the Tennessee Promise. The key clarification for TICUA members is the definition of "gift aid." The bill defines "gift aid" as restricted to the Federal Pell Grant, TELS, and the TSAA. Other minor clarifications are related to the Tennessee Colleges of Applied Technology and enrollment exceptions for programs requiring less than full-time enrollment.

## Free Adult Community College Bill Filed

Governor Bill Haslam recently filed his Adult Community College Reconnect Pilot bill. This bill provides last-dollar scholarship aid for adult students who meet certain criteria. The pilot is currently restricted to students who choose to attend the public community colleges. To be eligible the students must be considered "independent" as defined by the FAFSA, file the FAFSA by March 1<sup>st</sup> preceding the fall semester to be enrolled, apply for the Reconnect Grant by June 1<sup>st</sup> preceding the fall semester, have not been enrolled for the past 24 months, have already completed 30 semester hours, have an adjusted gross income of \$36,000 or less. To continue eligibility the student must be enrolled for at least 9 semester hours, maintain a 2.0 GPA, and annually file the FAFSA and Reconnect Grant applications by March 1 and June 1 respectively.

The program is limited to \$1.5 million and will be awarded on a first-come-first-serve basis. TICUA has engaged the administration suggesting that a four-year campus with an eligible Associates degree program be included in the Pilot but no decision has been made.