

SPECIAL

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REPORT

May 27, 2003

No. 03-6

NEW QUINN BILL REFORM DEPENDS ON SENATE

If any new reform of the Quinn Bill (Police Career Incentive Pay Program, PCIPP) is to be achieved this year, it will have to be approved first as part of the Senate's fiscal 2004 budget. At this time of heightened security and tightened finances, the Senate should take this opportunity to control the soaring costs of the Quinn Bill and broaden the eligible academic degrees. The issue of standards for degree programs eligible for Quinn Bill benefits has been addressed successfully, primarily due to the support of the Legislature in the fiscal 2003 budget. Now is the time for the Legislature to take the next step to address the cost and broadening of degrees issues. The Research Bureau issued a *Special Report* in April 2003, *Time to Replace the Quinn Bill*, that recommended replacement of the Quinn Bill with a whole new police educational incentive program that would progressively tie educational attainment to higher job responsibilities and compensation. Absent that overhaul, the incentive payments in the Quinn Bill should be changed from a percent of salary to a fixed dollar amount by degree. Academic degrees covered by the Quinn Bill should be expanded to include other disciplines appropriate for today's police services.

Quinn Bill Standards

Reacting to the criticism of the quality of the Quinn Bill program, last summer the Legislature approved an amendment in the fiscal 2003 state budget that authorized the Board of Higher Education to establish "quality guidelines" for criminal justice programs, including standards and review processes. The Board was also given the authority to conduct periodic reviews of criminal justice and law degree programs and to certify pay increases earned only through programs that met the Board's standards. Having begun its own review before this legislative authorization, the Board, in February 2003, did approve a strong set of guidelines for criminal justice and law enforcement degree programs eligible for Quinn Bill benefits. The guidelines establish clear standards for undergraduate and graduate programs for curriculum, faculty, admissions and articulation agreements with other institutions. Awarding credits for life experiences or for military, police academy or other training is prohibited. The process to implement these guidelines started on May 1, 2003.

Following-up on its initiative of a year ago, the Legislature will include in its fiscal 2004 budget an amendment to the Quinn Bill that will codify the process for the implementation and management of the new guidelines established by the Board of Higher Education. The House has approved such an amendment in its fiscal 2004 budget and the Senate Ways and Means Committee has recommended a similar provision, with minor variations, in its budget. The final amendment will give legal weight to the Board's guidelines but does not break new ground for reform of the Quinn Bill.

Controlling Quinn Bill Costs

Quinn Bill costs have become increasingly expensive for the Commonwealth, Boston and other municipalities. Paying police officers a fixed percentage above the pay scale of their position over an entire career is an exceptionally generous benefit that is not aligned with the services received by the public and the taxpayers. Since 1970, 250 communities have adopted the Quinn Bill, including Boston, which signed on in 1998. The total state and local cost of Quinn Bill salary supplements in fiscal 2002 was approximately \$101 million and is expected to reach \$110 million in fiscal 2003. Municipalities will spend approximately \$91 million in fiscal 2003, half of which will be reimbursed by the state in fiscal 2004. In addition, the Quinn Bill expenses for State Police officers will cost the Commonwealth about \$22.9 million this year. Boston's Quinn Bill tab is expected to reach \$15.6 million this fiscal year, with half reimbursed by the state and payments made to 1,353 officers or 64.2% of the force.

Establishing prudent control over soaring Quinn Bill spending in this tight fiscal climate will prove more challenging than the establishment of high standards. The Governor's fiscal 2004 budget is silent on any change to the existing Quinn Bill and the final House budget offers no new modifications to the financial incentives of the current program. The Senate Ways and Means Committee has recommended that the Quinn Bill career incentive bonus be changed from a percent of salary to a

fixed dollar amount by degree. This change would take effect for officers who receive a career annual incentive bonus starting on January 1, 2004. This proposal would not limit the growth of the Quinn Bill costs for those officers who already qualify for Quinn Bill benefits or who would be eligible for an incentive bonus before January 1, 2004. The fixed amounts recommended are high and this plan may have a limited effect on containing the liability municipalities and the Commonwealth will assume in the coming years for new participants.

The Legislature has placed a moratorium on new communities accepting the Quinn Bill beyond the current 250 by approving an amendment in the fiscal 2003 budget that municipalities that accept the Quinn Bill after July 1, 2002, will not receive state reimbursement for 50% of the costs before fiscal 2005. The House budget for fiscal 2004 extends the moratorium through fiscal 2009, while the Senate Ways and Means Committee's budget extends it through fiscal 2005.

Degree	Current Bonus Level	Senate W & M Level
Associate's	10% of Base Salary	\$6,000
Bachelor's	20% of Base Salary	\$7,500
Master's	25% of Base Salary	\$8,500
Law	25% of Base Salary	\$8,500

Expand Eligible Degrees

Academic degrees eligible for Quinn Bill benefits, since 1970, have been limited to criminal justice and law enforcement. However, police services have become more demanding and technology has evolved to require police officers to specialize to provide a broader array of collective skills to meet today's public safety needs. With the improvement of physical and academic training in the police academies, other academic disciplines such as sociology, computer science, public administration, business and human services can be equally useful in today's delivery of police services.

Recommendations

The current Quinn Bill program is extraordinarily expensive for the Commonwealth and participating municipalities and the benefits are not aligned with the services provided to the public and the taxpayers. The Research Bureau believes that the Quinn Bill should be replaced with a whole new police educational incentive program that would require all new police officers to hold associate's degrees and would progressively tie educational attainment to higher job responsibilities and compensation. Moving towards that goal, the Bureau makes the following recommendations.

1. The Senate should approve its Ways and Means Committee's recommendation to change the career incentive bonus from a percent of salary to a fixed dollar amount by degree for officers who become eligible for the bonus on or after January 1, 2004. The fixed amounts proposed are high and should be reduced to bring them in line with other education incentive bonus levels in both the public and private sectors. The top amount of \$8,500 is only slightly less than the \$10,978 average Quinn Bill bonus paid to Boston police officers in fiscal 2002. At \$8,500, an officer would be able to recoup the cost of a Master's degree from a private institution in three years and be paid the annual bonus for the rest of his or her police career with no change in responsibilities. This proposal is a minimal step and will not affect officers who currently qualify for Quinn Bill benefits or those who would be eligible for an incentive bonus before January 1, 2004.
2. Academic degrees eligible for Quinn Bill benefits should be expanded to include other disciplines such as sociology, computer science, public administration, business and human resources that can be useful in today's delivery of expanded police services. Today's police services require a broader array of skills than provided by criminal justice and law enforcement programs. Expanding the eligible degrees should not create an increase in Quinn Bill costs since the percent of officers who pursue degrees would remain fairly constant.
3. Officers who are within five years of retirement should not be able to become eligible for Quinn Bill benefits. Police officers who receive Quinn Bill pay should be expected to serve the public for a minimum number of years. Boston will soon see a wave of retirements of police officers whose last three years of salary were boosted by Quinn Bill pay and who will retire with higher pension benefits but with limited time served after having received a degree.
4. The Senate should approve a fiscal 2004 budget for the Board of Higher Education that provides sufficient resources to ensure effective implementation of the new Quinn Bill standards. The new guidelines, authorized by the Legislature in 2002, require the Board to evaluate each institution's application and to perform any external review or inspection deemed necessary as part of the application process or as part of any review for possible non-compliance with the Board's guidelines. Funds also are needed to maintain an accurate database to facilitate the review and establish accountability.