

***POLICY POSITION
OF THE
SOUTHERN LEGISLATIVE CONFERENCE***

**REGARDING LAST-DOLLAR SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAMS FOR COMMUNITY AND
TECHNICAL COLLEGES**

BACKGROUND

On May 12, 2014, Governor Bill Haslam of Tennessee signed the Tennessee Promise Scholarship Act of 2014, creating the first program in the nation that completely covers the cost of tuition and fees for high school graduates entering a community or technical college. Specifically, Tennessee will provide students a last-dollar scholarship, meaning the scholarship will cover tuition and fees not covered by any federal or state grants, scholarships, awards, or other financial aid for which the student is eligible.

A critical component of Tennessee Promise is the engagement of local, nonprofit partnering organizations, selected by each county mayor, which will provide individual guidance for each participant through a personalized mentor. These organizations also will work with high school guidance counselors to target at-risk students who otherwise would not pursue any education beyond high school.

The program will launch with the high school graduating class of 2015. Students can use the Tennessee Promise at any of Tennessee's 27 colleges of applied technology, 13 community colleges or any in-state independent or four-year public university offering an associate's degree. Program participants are required to complete eight hours of community service per term enrolled and must maintain satisfactory academic progress.

RECOMMENDATION

The Southern Legislative Conference of The Council of State Governments encourages its member states to examine the feasibility of introducing a similar last-dollar scholarship program for graduating high school seniors to attend community and technical colleges in order to:

- Strengthen the future workforce of the region and provide them with the skills necessary for high skill, high pay jobs;
- Provide a potential avenue for success to at-risk students who otherwise would not pursue any education beyond high school;
- Make the region a more attractive location for national and local industries, one with a solid supply of properly trained workers to staff the increasingly complex positions of 21st century manufacturing operations; and
- Ensure that the Southern region remains competitive and takes full advantage of the recent resurgence in U.S. manufacturing enterprises.

The Southern Legislative Conference of The Council of State Governments requests that a copy of this policy position be forwarded to the governors, lieutenant governors, and legislative presiding officers of its member states.