

Brown v. Board of Education Scholarship Awards Committee

June 1, 2005

The first meeting of the interim of the joint subcommittee was held to review and implement the amendments established by Senate Bill 1034 / House Bill 2588 (2005), as well as to receive recommendations from the subcommittee charged to review recipient applications for the Brown v. Board of Education scholarship awards for the 2005-2006 academic year. Legislative members of the Committee are Benjamin J. Lambert, III (chairman), Floyd H. Miles, Sr. (vice-chairman), Henry L. Marsh, III, Thomas C. Wright, Jr., Clarke N. Hogan, and Watkins M. Abbitt, Jr. Citizen Members appointed by the Governor are Patricia Johnson Brown, Andrew I. Heidelberg, Donald E. Martin, Phyllistine Ward Moseley, and Tameka Ferrell.

Background

As part of Virginia's two-year commemoration of the 50th anniversary of Brown v. Board of Education, the 2004 General Assembly enacted Senate Bill 230 establishing the Brown v. Board of Education Scholarship Program and Fund (Program). The Program is designed to assist persons who were enrolled in Virginia public schools during Massive Resistance (1954 to 1964 when public schools were closed to avoid complying with the Supreme Court decision) to obtain a high school diploma, a General Education Development certificate, career and technical education and training, or an undergraduate degree from a Virginia public institution of higher education.

Initially, the scholarship program was funded at \$50,000 during the 2004 Session; however, a benefactor donated \$1 million to the scholarship fund on the condition that the General Assembly would match their donation. The General Assembly appropriated the funds, increasing the scholarship fund to \$2 million.

Senate Bill 1034 / House Bill 2588

The members reviewed the bill, which provides several technical amendments and substantive changes, including prohibiting the use of funds to pay for a theological education, as well as requiring the State Council of Higher Education to assist the Committee in an advisory capacity rather than to administer the Program.

Scholarship Application and Review Process

During the 2004 Interim, the Scholarship Awards Committee met several times for the purpose of implementing the Program. The Committee conducted a comprehensive review of the historical facts leading to the Brown decision, including Virginia's role, as well as the provisions of Senate Bill 230 (2004), which established the Program. The Committee conferred with representatives of the Department of Education, the State Council of Higher Education, the Virginia Community College System, public and private institutions of higher education, and received testimony from citizens who were affected by the school closings during Massive Resistance.

Applications for the 2005-2006 academic year were distributed throughout the Commonwealth by the Awards Committee during winter 2004.

Eligibility for the scholarship is limited to current domiciled residents of Virginia. For a complete listing of scholarship requirements and specific educational programs that qualify, see the Committee website. A scholarship award may be used only to pay the costs of tuition for:

- GED Program in one year
- High school diploma in one year
- Two-year degree program in two years
- Four-year undergraduate degree program in four years
- Recognized five-year undergraduate degree program in five years

Approximately 90 persons applied by the March 1, 2005, deadline for the 2005-2006 academic year. To assist the Committee in reviewing the applications, the Chairman appointed a subcommittee composed of legislative and nonlegislative citizen members of the Committee, as well as representatives of affected state agencies and public and private institutions of higher education with expertise in academic counseling, college admissions, public and higher education, adult education and literacy, career and technical education, and student financial aid. The Committee voted to approve 48 applications initially, and to grant preliminary approval to 42 applications contingent upon satisfying the eligibility criteria as established by law.

The Committee also agreed that applicants seeking a two-year degree, four-year degree, career and technical education and training at approved institutions would be awarded a scholarship to cover the costs of tuition for the 2005-2006 academic year and \$5,500 was set as the maximum award. Applicants seeking the GED certificate would be awarded a scholarship sufficient to cover the costs of the GED test. Applicants seeking a high school diploma would be awarded a scholarship to cover the cost of their enrollment in an adult education program.

Other Business

The Committee decided that applicants completing the GED will be advised of their eligibility to receive a scholarship to continue their education at an accredited public or private two-year or four-year institution of higher education. A counseling and technical advisory team was established composed of representatives of the Department of Education, the Virginia Community College System, and public and private institutions of higher education to (i) counsel and assist applicants, as well as interface with GED programs, public schools, and institutions of higher education concerning the admission and enrollment of scholarship recipients in order to ensure successful transition and academic success. All scholarship recipients will be contacted by the Committee's counseling and technical advisory panel for assistance in setting educational goals and selecting an appropriate program.

March 1, 2006, was established as the scholarship application deadline for the 2006-2007 academic year with applications to be available by October 2005.

Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Committee will be held in July to approve the remaining applications for the 2005-2006 academic year, receive testimony from private career schools and other interested parties, and complete the plans for the next application cycle. The date of the next meeting will be posted on the Committee website when available.

Chairman:

The Hon. Benjamin J. Lambert

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