

The Corps takes on Bloody Cross



Tim Lai — THE BATTALION

The annual Corps competition, Bloody Cross, took place Saturday. Cadets ran 2.6 miles with their units. Results should be announced later this week.

OPINION CONTINUED

The Hazlewood Act is a Texas benefit providing veterans, their spouses or their dependent children with up to 150 hours of tuition exemption at public Texas institutions. To qualify, the veteran must have served at least 180 hours of service, received honorable discharge and must have lived in Texas at the time of entry into active duty.

On Jan. 26, the District Court for the Southern District of Texas ruled unconstitutional the requirement that veterans must have lived in Texas when they enlisted. The judge, Ewing Werlein Jr., argued the provision violated the 14th Amendment's Equal Protection Clause.

The state's appeal is pending, but in the meantime the eligibility requirements remain the same.

Public university leaders in Texas are concerned in particular with one ramification of this court ruling — money.

The Hazlewood Act brings with it significant economic implications for public universities in Texas. More than \$169 million were waived in tuition and fees due to the Hazlewood Act in 2014, covering around 39,000 recipients, according to the Legislative Budget Board.

Texas university officials argue that if the benefit were to be available to people who were not Texas residents at the time of ac-

tive duty enrollment, it would cost universities much more than it already does, and it already costs a lot. And that cost grows more each year, even with the residence requirement.

But Werlein Jr. doesn't think that's what matters. In his ruling, he wrote, "Texas may not discriminate against its more recent residents in favor of more established residents simply to control costs."

And I concur. Keith Harris, the plaintiff in this case, joined the army at 18 when he was living in Georgia, but he moved to Texas in 2004 and received his bachelor's degree from the University of Houston in 2011. He's been in Texas for more than 10 years. That length of residence, along with his service, should justify him to be more than deserving of receiving the educational benefits Hazlewood has to offer. And I would put my money on the fact that Keith Harris, like my dad, wouldn't hesitate to be ready to go if called.

The Hazlewood Act was not created to benefit universities. It was created to benefit the people who serve the country. And if benefiting our veterans by allowing them to get an education nearly free of charge means costing public Texas universities some money, so be it.

Katy Stapp is an English junior and assistant news editor for The Battalion.

HAZLEWOOD CONTINUED

January, however, ruled this part of the act unconstitutional, stating that veterans and dependents should be able to qualify no matter what state they were in when they enlisted.

So far the ruling only applies to plaintiff Keith Harris' individual case for the payment of his tuition at the University of Houston. Harris enlisted in the military in 1996 while living in Georgia, but has been a Texas resident since 2004. Harris' argument said under the Equal Protection Clause of the U.S. Constitution's 14th Amendment, the line restricting the Hazlewood Act to Texas-enlisted veterans should be unconstitutional.

If the decision is upheld it could lead to an expansion on the act that would make the exemption more expensive for Texas universities. The state's appeal is pending, most likely until a federal appellate court weighs in.

Joe Pettibon, associate vice president for academic services in the Office of the Provost, said no money from Hazlewood goes to the university, unlike a scholarship. Those who qualify for Hazlewood simply don't have to pay for tuition and fees.

"With some programs, there's money that would be appropriated for them, like with Texas Grant, we get the money from the state and then we actually award that to the students in the form of financial aid," Pettibon said. "In the case of Hazlewood, there's no money coming from the state, it's just no revenue."

Pettibon said universities have tracked the appellate case since the ruling, because if the ruling stands, veterans from other states who move to Texas could be eligible for tuition exemptions.

In 2014, Texas public universities spent \$169 million in Hazlewood benefits. *The Houston Chronicle* predicted that the new exemption policy would jump that figure to \$750 million per year, and if veterans began to move to Texas from out of state, the number could rise to as high as \$2 billion annually. Pettibon said A&M is in a state of waiting for a ruling.

Pettibon said universities and legislators are always looking for better ways to sustain the Hazlewood exemptions. The Texas Legislature granted \$30 million in the 83rd session toward Hazlewood, although Pettibon said this was a one-time fix to help offset a small portion of the cost.

Psychology junior Ashley Girod qualifies as a dependent of her stepfather, who served in the Navy and Army.

Girod said the sacrifice made by the veteran in her life should not go unnoticed.

"I can confidently say that the hard work that my stepfather put into the military deserves to

be rewarded, and as he says, seeing me go to one of the best colleges without worry of paying for tuition is the best reward he could get," Girod said.

Andrew Liu, an out-of-state student veteran from California, said he liked the idea of the new policy, as it would open new resources to student veterans. He said he did not think the cost would have a negative effect in the long term.

"It may drive up the cost in the short term, but I think it would level out over their years," Liu said.

Jeremy Williams, graduate student at the Bush School, is receiving benefits under Hazlewood. He served three tours in Iraq from 2003 to 2006 in the Marine Corps. He said he disagrees with the potential new policy change.

"I think it is an asinine approach because the regulation explicitly states and enumerates that you must have served honorably for a minimum of 180 days and enlist as a bonafide Texas resident," Williams said. "How much more clear can the law state?"

Even with the appellate case in process, Williams said those who use the Hazlewood exemption will continue to receive benefits.

Joshua Sutton, an out-of-state student veteran from Pennsylvania, also expressed concern with the new policy.

"The Hazlewood Act is a piece of Texas legislation meant to benefit those of Texas residence or origin," Sutton said. "As an out-of-state student veteran, never once have I thought the Hazlewood Act is unfair because I'm ineligible for it."

Liu disagreed, stating all student veterans in Texas, whether from out-of-state or in-state, are pursuing similar goals of gaining an education from Texas.

"All veterans attending schools in Texas should have the same access to these benefits as the Texas veterans because we're all veterans, and we're all trying to get the same education from the same institution," Liu said.

Sutton said if the new policy is established there will likely be an influx of out-of-state student veterans coming to Texas, something he is concerned may lead some to label student veterans as "freeloaders."

"Regardless of their own state loyalty [or] affiliation, I feel the benefit of free tuition and fees would be too big of one to pass by," Sutton said. "I feel that Texas would see an increase in the number of veterans that return to institutions of higher education because there would essentially no longer be a consequence of failing."

Smith said, for now, the university is providing the answers it can and keeping an eye on the appellate case.

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Newsday Crossword

ACROSS

- Couch or bench
- California wine valley
- Honking bird
- Medal of Honor recipient
- Poems of praise
- Cupid's weapon
- Neck of the woods
- Fluctuate
- Movie excerpt
- Large sailing vessel
- Large pigs
- Tenant's contract
- Look without blinking
- Black paving material
- "The deal's off!"
- Medical insurance grps.
- Letter after ceo
- Neighbor of Lithuania
- Large military vessel
- Rise in anger
- Use scissors
- Calculates a total
- Join the military
- Lion of the zodiac
- Cab-fare calculator
- Slight odor
- Unwanted email
- Large passenger vessel
- From the neighborhood
- Apex
- Husband or wife
- Expenditure
- Feels sorry about

DOWN

- Sleeveless shoulder wrap
- Spooky
- Sports complex
- Frog cousins
- Scotia, Canada
- Dad of Cain and Abel
- Long-lasting hairdos
- So far
- Car-tank fuel
- Philharmonic music group
- Three-layer cookie
- Vocal tune
- Lamb's moms
- Boeing 787, for one
- Was behind schedule
- Lion sound
- Learn to live with
- Touchdown caller, for short
- Enthusiastic
- Wasn't honest
- Portions of corn
- Rabbit relative
- Demeanor
- Word-of-mouth
- First part of a play
- Prayer conclusion
- Sparrow's home
- Angeles, CA

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TAR	NOSALE	
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AIRCRAFT	CARRIER	
REARUP	CUT	ADDS
ENLIST	LEO	
METER	WHIFF	
SPAM	OCEAN	LINER
LOCAL	ACME	MATE
OUTGO	RUES	ONES
TRIES	DENT	MESH

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