1 State of Arkansas

2 95th General Assembly

A Bill

3 Regular Session, 2025   SENATE BILL 391

4

5 By: Senator J. Dismang

6 By: Representative Eaves

7

8 **For An Act To Be Entitled**

9   AN ACT TO CREATE THE ROBOTICS COMPETITION GRANT

10   PROGRAM FOR ELIGIBLE ROBOTICS TEAMS IN PUBLIC OR

11   PRIVATE SCHOOLS FOR THE PURPOSE OF ENCOURAGING STUDY

12   IN THE FIELDS OF SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, ENGINEERING,

13   AND MATHEMATICS; AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

14

15

16   **Subtitle**

17   TO CREATE THE ROBOTICS COMPETITION GRANT

18   PROGRAM FOR ELIGIBLE ROBOTICS TEAMS IN

19   PUBLIC OR PRIVATE SCHOOLS FOR THE

20   PURPOSE OF ENCOURAGING STUDY IN THE

21   FIELDS OF SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY,

22   ENGINEERING, AND MATHEMATICS.

23

24 BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ARKANSAS:

25

26   SECTION 1. Arkansas Code Title 6, Chapter 16, is amended to add an

27 additional subchapter to read as follows:

28   Subchapter 20 — Robotics Competition Grant Program

29

30   6-16-2001. Creation — Purpose.

31   (a) There is established a Robotics Competition Grant Program.

32   (b) The purpose of the program is to provide grants to expand

33 opportunities that increase interest and improve skills in science,

34 technology, engineering, and mathematics through participation in robotics

35 competitions that:

36   (1) Provide hands-on learning experiences;

1   (2) Establish community partnerships to increase awareness of

2 local workforce and postsecondary opportunities;

3   (3) Highlight career opportunities through adult mentors;

4   (4) Prioritize a connection to manufacturing, machining, and

5 fabrication skills for students in grades six through twelve (6-12);

6   (5) Prepare students for future career opportunities through

7 industrial proficiency; and

8   (6) Develop students' skills through problem solving, design,

9 programming, teamwork, critical-thinking abilities, communication,

10 collaboration, time management, perseverance, and leadership.

11

12   6-16-2002. Definitions.

13   As used in this subchapter:

14   (1) "Allowable expense" means:

15   (A) Robotics competition fees, kits, and supplies required

16 to:

17   (i) Establish or maintain a robotics team; and

18   (ii) Participate in a robotics competition;

19   (B) Event registration fees, materials, transportation and

20 travel costs, and other expenses associated with attendance at and

21 participation in a robotics competition; and

22   (C) The payment of a stipend for a robotics team mentor,

23 coach, or sponsor;

24   (2) "Eligible school" means:

25   (A) A public school within a public school district;

26   (B) An open-enrollment public charter school; or

27   (C) A nonpublic school that is accredited by the Arkansas

28 Nonpublic School Accrediting Association, Inc., or another organization

29 identified by the State Board of Education;

30   (3) "Eligible team" means a robotics competition team that

31 consists of:

32   (A) Students in grades six through twelve (6-12) who are

33 enrolled in an eligible school; and

34   (B) At least one (1) adult who is a team mentor, coach, or

35 sponsor; and

36   (4) "Robotics competition" means a competition that:

1   (A) Requires participating teams to design, construct,

2 program, and operate a robot;

3   (B) Is sponsored by a nonprofit corporation under Section

4 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as it existed on January 1,

5 2025, that is exempt from taxation under Section 501(a) of the Internal

6 Revenue Code of 1986, as it existed on January 1, 2025, and that has a

7 purpose or goal of encouraging young people to develop an interest in

8 science, technology, engineering, and mathematics; and

9   (C) Is hosted by a program provider that includes without

10 limitation:

11   (i) For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and

12 Technology (FIRST) Robotics Competition;

13   (ii) For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and

14 Technology (FIRST) Tech Challenge; or

15   (iii) VEX V5 Robotics Competition High Stakes,

16 hosted by the Robotics Education & Competition Foundation.

17

18   6-16-2003. Administration.

19   (a) The Robotics Competition Grant Program shall be administered by

20 the Department of Education.

21   (b) A grant awarded under this subchapter shall be subject to an

22 eligible team obtaining a matching contribution from other sources, which

23 shall be equivalent to at least twenty-five percent (25%) of the total grant

24 amount awarded to the eligible team under this subchapter.

25   (c) The department shall award a grant under this subchapter in a

26 manner that maximizes the number of eligible teams that receive a grant and

27 expands the geographical distribution of eligible teams.

28   (d) A grant awarded under this subchapter shall be distributed by the

29 department to an eligible school on behalf of an eligible team.

30   (e) The availability of grants under this subchapter is subject to

31 appropriation by the General Assembly for the administration of the program.

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33   6-16-2004. Eligibility.

34   (a) An eligible team may apply for a grant from the Robotics

35 Competition Grant Program under this subchapter through the process

36 established by the Department of Education.

1   (b) In order to receive a grant under this subchapter, an eligible

2 team shall show proof of the following in its application:

3   (1) A partnership for the purpose of a robotics competition with

4 at least one (1) sponsor, business entity, institution of higher education,

5 or technical school;

6   (2) An adult robotics team mentor, coach, or sponsor;

7   (3) A proposed budget, which shall include without limitation

8 estimated allowable expenses of the eligible team for the school year in

9 which the eligible team is applying for a grant under this subchapter;

10   (4) A commitment to compete in at least one (1) robotics

11 competition within one (1) year from the date the award under this subchapter

12 is granted;

13   (5) A commitment to create an original, iteratively designed

14 robot; and

15   (6) The ability to meet all program requirements.

16   (c) An eligible team may apply for more than one (1) grant per school

17 year if the eligible team participates in more than one (1) robotics

18 competition, including without limitation the advancement to a regional,

19 state, or national competition.

20   (d) Allowable expenses under this subchapter may include a stipend for

21 a robotics team mentor, coach, or sponsor, which shall not exceed one

22 thousand five hundred dollars ($1,500) per school year.

23

24   6-16-2005. Rules.

25   The Department of Education shall promulgate rules for the

26 administration of the Robotics Competition Grant Program established by this

27 subchapter, which shall include without limitation the process for applying

28 for a grant under this subchapter.

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31   **APPROVED: 4/8/25**

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