

**SUBJECT:** Exempting certain military personnel from the TASP test

**COMMITTEE:** Higher Education — favorable, without amendment

**VOTE:** 6 ayes — Rangel, F. Brown, Farabee, Goolsby, J. Jones, West  
0 nays  
3 absent — Morrison, E. Reyna, Uher

**WITNESSES:** For — James C. Nixon, Central Texas College  
Against — None

**BACKGROUND:** With certain exemptions, Education Code, sec. 51.306 requires students who wish to enroll in upper-division college course work at a public college or university to meet minimum requirements of the Texas Academic Skills Program (TASP) test. Sec. 51.3061 requires, with certain exceptions, that deaf students take the Stanford Achievement Test, which is nationally normed for the hearing-impaired.

**DIGEST:** HB 234 would create a new exemption from the TASP test for active-duty military personnel serving in the U.S. armed forces and their dependents who had accumulated less than 10 semester hours of credit at a public or private institution of higher education. Similarly, deaf students who were on active duty in the U.S. armed forces or the dependent of such a person would not have to take the Stanford Achievement Test if the student had less than 10 semester hours of credit at a public or private institution.

The bill would take immediate effect if finally passed by a two-thirds record vote of the membership of each house. Otherwise, it would take effect September 1, 2001. The changes would apply beginning with the fall 2001 semester.

**SUPPORTERS SAY:** HB 439 would eliminate the TASP hurdle for military personnel and their family members who wanted to resume or begin their college education but who would not be in Texas long enough to make it worthwhile to take the

TASP and perform any associated remedial work required by it. By eliminating this obstacle, the bill would encourage enrollment at Texas colleges and universities.

Enrolling more military personnel would help Texas schools hurt by low enrollments due to the TASP requirements. Texas community colleges located near military installations are harmed when the populations they might be expected to serve opt instead for electronic distance-learning programs and correspondence courses offered by schools in other states that do not require placement tests. HB 439 would help eliminate that problem.

The bill also would save the state the costs of developmental education because of the remedial courses that would not have to be taught. This would save schools their share of developmental education program costs.

OPPONENTS  
SAY:

TASP testing serves a useful purpose and should not be eroded by additional exemptions. Two-thirds of the students tested each year fail at least one portion of the three-part test. Many military personnel may not have graduated from high school and may be ill-equipped for higher education. It would benefit them and the schools to know in advance where they need remedial help. This information also could be useful to the military because of its emphasis on training and readiness.

HB 234 is unnecessary because TASP is not that heavy a burden. If a student is well-prepared for college, passing the TASP test should not be difficult. Most students spend no more than one semester in TASP-related remediation.

NOTES:

The companion bill, SB 179 by Fraser, et al., passed the Senate by 30-0 on March 13 and was reported favorably, as substituted, by the House Higher Education Committee on March 27, making it eligible to be considered in lieu of HB 439.

A related bill, HB 234 by Hawley, et al., which would create the same exemptions for military personnel but not for their dependents, passed the

House by 144-1 on April 18 and has been referred to the Senate Veterans Affairs and Military Installation Committee, which has scheduled a public hearing for today.