

SUBJECT: Imposing a recreational facility fee at the University of North Texas

COMMITTEE: Higher Education — favorable, without amendment

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

WITNESSES: For — Dustee Tucker, University of North Texas Student Government; *Registered but not testify*: Michael McClendon, University of North Texas Student Government; Israel D. Reyes, Association of Latin American Citizens, League of United Latin American Citizens, and Hispanic Business Students Association; Andrew Wilborn II, National Association of Black Accountants; Shandria Willis, North Texas Forty Student Foundation and National Pan Hellenic Council  
  
Against — None  
  
On — Sue Delmark, University of North Texas Recreational Sports; Dr. Norval F. Pohl, University of North Texas; *Registered but not testify*: Phil Diebel and Dr. Bonita C. Jacobs, University of North Texas

DIGEST: HB 461 would authorize the board of regents of the University of North Texas to impose a student fee at the university to fund a recreational facility or program if students approved the fee in a general election. The fee could not exceed \$75 per student in each regular semester or 12-week summer session. It could not exceed \$37.50 per student in each six-week or shorter term of the summer session. The fee could be used only be to build, operate, maintain, improve, and equip a recreational facility or program.  
  
Fee revenue would be deposited into an account under the control of the student fee advisory committee. The committee would have to submit to the board of regents an annual itemized budget for the recreational facility, including a report of all expenditures made in connection with recreational facility activities in the past year. The board could change the budget as it deemed necessary. After approving the budget, the board could impose fees for that year based on the facility's budgetary needs. If the budget contained

an expenditure for construction of a facility, the board could contract for the construction.

The board could not increase the fee by more than 10 percent in any academic year unless students approved the increase in a general election. This fee would be in addition to any other authorized fee and could not count toward the maximum amount of student-services fees (currently \$150 per semester) allowed under Education Code, sec. 54.503(b).

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. It would apply beginning with the fall 2001 semester.

**SUPPORTERS  
SAY:**

HB 461 would allow University of North Texas regents to impose a beneficial fee at the university, subject to approval of the student body. Money from the fee would allow the university to build a much-needed student recreation center.

The student population at the University of North Texas is growing. Available recreation space on campus decreases each year as more classes, athletic programs, and students must share the existing facilities. A 2000 survey of freshman students found that 93 percent exercise each week and that 78 percent do so for three hours or more. Current facilities cannot support the growing demand for recreation space on campus.

This fee is a student-driven initiative. In an October 2000 election, 70 percent of participating students supported the fee. Voter turnout was double the turnout in spring 2000 elections.

An on-campus recreational facility would provide more opportunities for student involvement in campus life and help foster a sense of community among students. University studies show that resident student involvement is a highly influential factor in retention. Commuting students also would have more opportunities for involvement in campus life.

**OPPONENTS  
SAY:**

The new student fee proposed by HB 461 would increase the cost of an education at the University of North Texas. Some students already have difficulty paying for their education, and all would have to pay the new fee regardless of whether they would use the recreational facility.