

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center

C.S.H.B. 2347
By: Thibaut, Guillen (Whitmire)
Higher Education
5/22/2009
Committee Report (Substituted)

AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

Currently, firefighters are exempt from the payment of tuition and fees to state institutions of higher education for courses that are part of a fire science curriculum. There is no similar exemption for peace officers who are enrolled in courses related to a criminal justice or law enforcement management curriculum. In an effort to improve the law enforcement profession, many believe that Texas peace officers should be encouraged to receive a college education. Providing a tuition exemption would enable more officers to obtain better training and education.

C.S.H.B. 2347 amends current law relating to tuition and laboratory fee exemptions at public institutions of higher education for certain peace officers enrolled in criminal justice or law enforcement management-related course work.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

Rulemaking authority is expressly granted to the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board in SECTION 1 (Section 54.208, Education Code) of this bill.

SECTION BY SECTION ANALYSIS

SECTION 1. Amends Section 54.208, Education Code, as follows:

Sec. 54.208. New heading: FIREFIGHTERS AND PEACE OFFICERS ENROLLED IN CERTAIN COURSES. (a) Creates this subsection from existing text. Requires the governing board of an institution of higher education, rather than the governing boards of the state institutions of collegiate rank supported in whole or in part by public funds, to exempt from the payment of tuition and laboratory fees a student who is employed as a firefighter by a political subdivision of this state, rather than any person who is employed as a fireman by any political subdivision of the state, and who enrolls in a course or courses offered as part of a fire science curriculum.

(b) Requires the governing board of an institution of higher education to exempt from the payment of tuition and laboratory fees charged by the institution for a criminal justice or law enforcement course or courses an undergraduate student who meets certain criteria.

(c) Prohibits a student, notwithstanding Subsection (b), from receiving an exemption under that subsection for any course if the student has previously attempted a number of semester credit hours for courses taken at any institution of higher education while classified as a resident student for tuition purposes in excess of the maximum number of those hours specified by Section 61.0595(a) (relating to prohibiting the board from certain funding activities) as eligible for funding under the formulas established under Section 61.059 (Appropriations).

(d) Prohibits the governing board of an institution of higher education, notwithstanding Subsection (b), from providing exemptions under that subsection to students enrolled in a specific class in a number that exceeds 20 percent of the maximum student enrollment designated by the institution for that class.

(e) Creates this subsection from existing text. Provides that an exemption provided under this section does not apply to deposits that may be required in the

nature of security for the return or proper care of property loaned for the use of students. Makes nonsubstantive changes.

(f) Requires the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board to adopt rules governing the granting or denial of an exemption under this section, including rules relating to the determination of a student's eligibility for an exemption and a uniform listing of degree programs covered by the exemption under this section.

(g) Requires the governing board of the institution of higher education to report to the Senate Finance Committee and the House Appropriations Committee the cost to the institution of complying with this section for that semester if the legislature does not specifically appropriate funds to an institution of higher education in an amount sufficient to pay the institution's costs in complying with this section for a semester.

SECTION 2. Provides that this Act applies beginning with the 2011 fall semester.

SECTION 3. Effective date: January 1, 2011.