

SUBJECT: Higher Education Fund allocations for Lamar Institute of Technology

COMMITTEE: Higher Education — favorable, without amendment

VOTE: 9 ayes — Branch, Castro, Alonzo, Berman, Cohen, D. Howard, McCall, Patrick, Rose

0 nays

SENATE VOTE: On final passage, April 27 — 31-0

WITNESSES: No public hearing

BACKGROUND: The Lamar Institute of Technology (LIT) currently is defined as an educational center of Lamar University, a separate state entity within the Texas State University System. It was established to teach technical and vocational courses and related supporting courses. LIT received separate regional accreditation status from the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) in 2000.

LIT is eligible to receive funding from the Higher Education Fund (HEF), created by the Legislature to provide general revenue appropriations to institutions that do not share in Permanent University Fund (PUF) income. The HEF is used for many of the same purposes as the PUF. Institutions can acquire land, construct, repair, and rehabilitate buildings, and purchase capital equipment and library materials with HEF funds. They may also use HEF allocations for debt service on HEF bonds.

Since LIT is statutorily defined as an “educational center of Lamar University,” its HEF funding is not allocated directly to LIT. Clarifying that LIT is a separate, lower division institution of higher education would align the statute with what is considered to be current practice.

DIGEST: SB 2045 would require the Texas State University System board of regents to establish and maintain the Lamar Institute of Technology as a lower-division institution of higher education. It would repeal the

authority of the board of regents to use Lamar University as an agent to receive and expend funds on behalf of LIT.

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, 2009.

NOTES:

SB 2146 by Duncan, which would update the HEF formula for fiscal years 2009 through 2014. Among other things, the bill would specify that starting in fiscal 2011, the Lamar Institute of Technology would receive separate HEF allocations. SB 2146 was reported favorably, as substituted by the House Higher Education Committee on May 19.