

BILL ANALYSIS

C.S.H.B. 2557
By: Schaefer
Higher Education
Committee Report (Substituted)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

It has been suggested that since the time that educational benefits under the Hazlewood Act, which provides qualified veterans up to 150 credit hours of tuition exemption at a public institution of higher education, were extended to veterans' surviving spouses and children, the value of tuition lost has increased significantly. As such, there have been calls for these institutions to collect and report more data with regard to individuals receiving benefits under the act. C.S.H.B. 2557 seeks to address these calls by requiring the Legislative Budget Board to collect certain information from institutions of higher education regarding tuition and fee exemptions granted to veterans and their family members.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE IMPACT

It is the committee's opinion that this bill does not expressly create a criminal offense, increase the punishment for an existing criminal offense or category of offenses, or change the eligibility of a person for community supervision, parole, or mandatory supervision.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

It is the committee's opinion that this bill does not expressly grant any additional rulemaking authority to a state officer, department, agency, or institution.

ANALYSIS

C.S.H.B. 2557 amends the Government Code to require the Legislative Budget Board (LBB), using existing resources, to collect from each public institution of higher education, for each semester, the following information regarding tuition and fee exemptions granted by the institution to veterans and family members:

- the age of each individual attending the institution and receiving benefits for the semester;
- for each individual receiving benefits, the number of credit hours for which the individual received an exemption for the semester;
- for each individual receiving benefits at the institution during the semester, the total cumulative number of credit hours for which the individual has received an exemption at the institution;
- for each individual receiving benefits, whether the person is a veteran or the family member of a veteran;
- in a manner that does not identify the person receiving benefits and as indicated by official documentation from the U.S. Department of Defense, for a veteran who is eligible for benefits or whose service allows another person to be eligible for benefits:
 - whether the veteran served as an active duty member or a member of a reserve component of the armed forces; and

- the veteran's length of service; and
- any other information required by the LBB.

The bill requires the LBB, not later than November 1 of each year, to submit a report to the legislature regarding the data collected for the most recent academic year and requires the LBB to submit the initial report not later than November 1, 2020.

C.S.H.B. 2557 amends the Education Code to require the governing board of each public institution of higher education to electronically report the required information to the LBB. The bill includes the LBB among the agencies required to coordinate to provide each respective agency with any information required to ensure the proper administration of provisions relating to tuition and fee exemptions granted to veterans and family members and the proper execution of each agency's statutory responsibilities concerning those provisions.

C.S.H.B. 2557 applies beginning with tuition and fee exemptions granted for the 2019 fall semester.

EFFECTIVE DATE

On passage, or, if the bill does not receive the necessary vote, September 1, 2019.

COMPARISON OF ORIGINAL AND SUBSTITUTE

While C.S.H.B. 2557 may differ from the original in minor or nonsubstantive ways, the following summarizes the substantial differences between the introduced and committee substitute versions of the bill.

The substitute includes provisions relating to the collection and reporting of certain data by the LBB regarding tuition and fee exemptions for veterans and family members and does not include any provisions from the original version, which requires the electronic system developed by the Texas Veterans Commission to monitor such exemptions to electronically receive information on the length of service of each individual receiving benefits as indicated by official documentation from the U.S. Department of Defense.

The substitute changes the bill's effective date.