

SUBJECT: Licensing nonrenewal, continuing education for certified court reporters

COMMITTEE: Judiciary — committee substitute recommended

VOTE: 7 ayes — Thompson, Hartnett, Alonzo, Duncan, Nixon, Solis, Zbranek

0 nays

2 absent — Goodman, Willis

WITNESSES: For — Bill Carroll, Texas Court Reporters' Association

Against — None

BACKGROUND: The Higher Education Code prohibits executive branch agencies that issue state occupational and professional licenses from renewing the licenses of persons who are in default on student loans from the Texas Guaranteed Student Loan Corporation. Government Code sec. 82.022 authorizes the Texas Supreme Court to make rules for nonrenewal of law licenses for persons in default on loan payments, but the court has not done so.

DIGEST: CSHB 637 would permit the Supreme Court to authorize the Court Reporters Certification Board to adopt rules for the nonrenewal of the licenses of certified court reporters who are in default on educational loans guaranteed through the Texas Guaranteed Student Loan Corporation. The court also would be permitted to authorize the board to adopt rules requiring court reporters to attend professional continuing education classes. Rules for professional education for court reporters could include:

- annual reporting by court reporters or continuing education providers;
- the content of the classes and the minimum number of continuing education hours required annually; and
- exemptions from the education requirement for certain persons, including the disabled and those who have retired.

The bill would take effect September 1, 1995.

**SUPPORTERS
SAY:**

CSHB 637 would help professionalize the field of certified court reporting. Like many other professional groups that are required to attend continuing education classes in order to retain professional licenses, court reporters should be encouraged to become more knowledgeable about changes in their profession. Continuing education, and a firm policy on payment of student loans, would help court reporters take greater pride in their work.

Most court reporters already work hard at keeping up-to-date on changes in court rules, statutes and new technologies, but some reporters need additional encouragement and a formal structure of continuing education classes. A court reporter's failure to follow applicable rules and statutes may seriously affect the legality of deposition transcripts, subpoenas and other official court records.

Rules on payment of student loans, if authorized by the Supreme Court and promulgated by the Court Reporters Certification Board, would give court reporting graduates a heightened awareness and sense of responsibility about meeting their educational loan obligations. Such a rule also would help court reporting schools, because if more graduates repay their loans, lenders will consider the schools and their students good credit risks. Schools with high default rates among their students may become ineligible to participate in federal student loan programs. Lenders become reluctant to make loans to students who attend schools whose graduates have high default rates.

**OPPONENTS
SAY:**

Court reporters as a group have a good record for loan repayment and need not be singled out for new rules on loan repayment. Most court reporters find work easily after graduation and are paid good wages for their expertise. They also are generally diligent about keeping their skills updated.

Specifically urging the Supreme Court to promulgate special rules relating to court reporters who default on loans is unfair. The Supreme Court has this same authority over attorneys, but the court has opted not to promulgate any rules.

The bill fails to specify who would run a continuing education program for court reporters and keep records of completed continuing education course work. If a state agency, such as the Court Reporters Certification Board is to run such training, funds should be appropriated for the purpose.

NOTES: The original bill would have authorized the Supreme Court, instead of the Court Reporters Certification Board, to adopt rules on loans and education requirements.