

**SUBJECT:** Revising the Texas State Technical College System

**COMMITTEE:** Higher Education — favorable, as amended

**VOTE:** 7 ayes — Rangel, Solis, Bailey, Cuellar, Dunnam, Rabuck, E. Reyna  
0 nays  
1 absent — Kamel

**SENATE VOTE:** On final passage, April 3 — voice vote (Fraser registered nay)

**WITNESSES:** For — None  
Against — Bert V. Massey II

**BACKGROUND :** The Texas State Technical College System is a statewide system of campuses offering occupationally oriented programs in specialized advanced and emerging technical and vocational areas. The system has campuses in Amarillo, Harlingen, Sweetwater and Waco, extension centers in Marshall, Brownwood and Abilene, and an extension program in Breckenridge.

**DIGEST:** SB 1577 would revise operations of the Texas State Technical College System. The bill would allow system institutions to continue offering programs that were offered at a particular campus during the 1996-1997 school year, but would prohibit them from expanding the programs by adding new degree tracks.

Before an extension center, extension program, or system campus could offer a new program within the tax district of a junior college operating a vocational and technical program, the Higher Education Coordinating Board would have to determine that there was sufficient demand for the program, and that the system could offer the program at appropriate levels of quality and cost. The system could not create an extension program or establish an extension center after September 1, 1997.

The system would coordinate its activities with those of a public junior college offering technical or vocational programs in the same region to ensure that state and local resources were efficiently used. The Marshall campus could not offer course work duplicating that of Panola College, unless Panola College agreed or the coordinating board determined that the course work was essential for the campus' accreditation.

Upon approval from the governing bodies of the institutions, the governance, operation, management, and control of certain extension centers of the Texas State Technical College System could be transferred to nearby junior or community colleges. The coordinating board would review and approve the transfers.

The bill would allow the coordinating board to establish a grants program to assist public technical institutes or junior colleges in covering the costs of the start-up or expansion of programs in a highly specialized advanced or emerging technical field to the extent funds are appropriated.

The bill would require the coordinating board to establish an advisory committee equitably composed of representatives of the system, public junior colleges, and business and industry to provide advice, counsel, and recommendations to it for carrying out the bill's provisions.

SB 1577 would take effect September 1, 1997.

**SUPPORTERS  
SAY:**

SB 1577 would institute a number of much needed revisions to the Texas State Technical College System that would allow for better coordination of its programs with community colleges. The state provides the same level of funding for technical education programs at both types of institutions; the competition for dollars has caused several of the technical colleges to stray from their high-tech mission to the detriment of established programs.

With SB 1577, the state would be required to take a long, hard look at the status of its technical education programs and make necessary adjustments to provide high quality yet efficient services to students. The bill would not authorize any drastic measures but would require that any actions be preceded by careful study.

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**OPPONENTS SAY:** SB 1577 would sell off the technical college system precisely when Texas is poised to take a national leadership role in high technology. System campuses should not be merged with community colleges, which are oriented to business and liberal arts studies. Funding for technical studies has admittedly been inadequate, and the proper response is to enhance it for a program that has a demonstrated track record, not to eliminate it.

**NOTES:** Committee amendments would allow for the transfer of extension centers to unspecified junior colleges, instead of to specific ones; provide that transfers would be optional and would first have to be approved by the coordinating board; and stipulate that formula funding could not be reduced or eliminated for technical institute classes with at least five students.