

- SUBJECT:** TASP exemption for National Guard members and military reservists
- COMMITTEE:** Defense Affairs and State-Federal Relations — favorable, without amendment
- VOTE:** 5 ayes — Campbell, Berman, Mabry, Merritt, Noriega
0 nays
4 absent — Corte, Delisi, P. Moreno, Seaman
- WITNESSES:** For — Marco Montoya
Against — None
- BACKGROUND:** Under Education Code, sec. 51.306, most students at Texas' public colleges and universities must take the three-part Texas Academic Skills Program (TASP) examination, or a correlated alternative test instrument, to measure their reading, writing, and mathematics skills before enrolling in upper-level courses. Students may not enroll in any upper-division course (one that would cause them to accumulate 60 or more semester credit hours upon its completion) until their TASP results equal or exceed the maximum standards in each skill area for which developmental education is required, or until they earn a grade of "B" or better in a freshman-level credit course in the subject matter in which they fell short on the test.
- Students who have achieved a minimum score on the Scholastic Aptitude Test, the American College Test, or on high school exit-level assessment tests are not required to take the TASP. In addition, sec. 51.306®) exempts from the TASP requirement seven categories of students, including students in active military service who were exempted from the TASP requirement by the 77th Legislature.
- DIGEST:** HB 564 would exempt from the TASP requirement current members of the Texas National Guard, members of the armed forces reserves who had served at least three years, and prospective students who were honorably discharged,

retired, or released from the National Guard or armed forces reserves on or after August 1, 1990.

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, 2003.

**SUPPORTERS
SAY:**

HB 564 would eliminate a barrier facing current and former National Guard and armed forces reservists pursuing higher education. Reservists who have been out of school for years might have difficulty passing the TASP and might decide not to complete their educations as a result. These students have demonstrated by their enlistment and continued service that they have qualities for succeeding in college that cannot be measured by a standardized test. Current and former reservists should be afforded the same TASP exemption that was extended to active military personnel by the 77th Legislature.

Texas cannot afford to lose these students, who have made significant contributions to their country and should not be discouraged from pursuing higher education. Without this barrier to enrollment, more veterans likely would take advantage of their GI benefits and seek higher education.

**OPPONENTS
SAY:**

TASP testing serves a useful purpose and should not be eroded with additional exemptions. Mandatory assessment gives students and educators an idea of where students might need additional preparation in order to succeed in higher-level courses. Military reservists, while performing laudable services, would not necessarily benefit from this exemption. There already are a number of alternatives to taking the TASP, including earning a grade of "B" or better in a related lower-level course. A student who could not meet any of these alternative requirements probably would benefit from the remedial courses required in connection with the TASP.

**OTHER
OPPONENTS
SAY:**

Exempting these students from the TASP would not necessarily preclude them from placement testing or remediation. Many schools conduct their own placement tests, so HB 564 might not solve all the problems it seeks to address.

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NOTES: HB 796 by Delisi, which would abolish the TASP requirement entirely, is currently pending in the House Higher Education Committee.