

- SUBJECT:** Adding Granbury to the Weatherford College District service area
- COMMITTEE:** Higher Education — committee substitute recommended
- VOTE:** 6 ayes — Morrison, F. Brown, Chavez, Giddings, J. Jones, Mercer
0 nays
2 absent — Nixon, Smithee
- WITNESSES:** For — Larry Brockman, Lake Granbury Economic Development Foundation;
Don Huff, Weatherford College

Against — Louis N. Allen, William R. Auvenshine, Mary Ann Grams, Hill
College; Rey Garcia, Texas Association of Community Colleges
- BACKGROUND:** Education Code, Chapter 130 regulates junior college districts. In 1995, the 74th Legislature defined service areas for each community college district. Hood County is one of 15 counties that is not included in a community college district. Sec. 130.209 stipulates that the Weatherford College District includes territory within Parker, Wise, Jack and Palo Pinto counties. Sec. 130.181 stipulates that the Hill College District service area includes territory within Hill, Johnson, Bosque, and Somervell counties, as well as the Hillsboro, Itasca, Covington, Whitney, Abbott, and Bynum independent school districts.

Historically, Hood County informally has been included in the Hill College District service area. Since 1993, a memorandum of understanding has existed between the service areas of the Hill College District and the Weatherford College District under which Hill College has provided vocational/technical courses leading to certificates or degrees while Weatherford College has provided academic courses to meet the general education component of vocational/technical certificates or degrees.
- DIGEST:** CSHB 577 would add the municipality of Granbury into the Weatherford College District service area.

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 577 would benefit students in Hood County who wished to obtain vocational or technical degrees. For more than 30 years, Weatherford College has offered classes in the Hood County community of Granbury. In the past five years, the number of students from Hood County that take classes at a Weatherford College campus has increased by more than 26 percent. More than 74 percent of Hood County students enrolled in two-year colleges in the fall of 2002 attended Weatherford College.

Yet Weatherford College offers only courses toward the general education component of most vocational or technical degrees. Students at the Granbury campus currently must enroll at another college to take other vocational and technical courses required for their degrees or certificates, which is costly and inefficient. While this role traditionally has been filled through an agreement with Hill College, the memorandum of understanding between the two institutions no longer is sufficient to meet the needs of a rapidly growing Hood County. This bill would help meet these needs by allowing Weatherford College's Granbury campus to offer complete vocational and technical programs.

It would make sense to include Granbury in the Weatherford College service area because Granbury is closer in proximity to the Weatherford service area than to any other service area, including Hill College's. The provisions in the bill would not affect any Weatherford College campus other than the one in Granbury.

Also, including Granbury in the college district service area would be good for the city's economic development because it would attract more area students into higher education, thereby increasing the future available workforce for the community. Granbury is a growing, thriving city that has a 5A independent school district. It is the cultural and economic center of Hood County and it belongs in the Weatherford College service area.

**OPPONENTS
SAY:**

This bill is not in the interests of the communities that it would affect. The complementary programs offered by the two colleges under the memorandum

of understanding have worked well since 1993. As a result, Hill College has spent considerable time and capital outlay in the development of educational services to Hood County and now is expanding its course offerings in computer technology, nursing, and cosmetology. The two colleges can best meet the educational needs of Hood County by continuing to work together, rather than setting up separate programs that would take additional time and money.

This bill would place Granbury students enrolled in Hill College classes in a no-win situation. They either would have to transfer to the campus in Cleburne or wait until Weatherford College established their vocational and technology classes.

This bill does not enjoy broad support even in Hood County, where the commissioner's court opposes this bill as a matter of record. In March 2003, the Hood County Commissioner's Court unanimously adopted a resolution formally disapproving of any legislation that would place Hood County in any specific community college district. Instead, the resolution calls for the creation of a collegiate educational advisory committee to study the educational needs of Hood county residents and make recommendations to the commissioner's court. Any legislation on the educational needs of Hood County should wait until the collegiate educational advisory committee has submitted its recommendations.

NOTES:

The committee substitute differs from the bill as introduced by adding only the city of Granbury to the Weatherford College District service area, instead of Hood County as a whole.

The companion bill, SB 676 by Estes, has been referred to the Senate Education Subcommittee on Higher Education