

SUBJECT: Electronic distribution of school district policies to contract teachers

COMMITTEE: Public Education — committee substitute recommended

VOTE: 6 ayes — Grusendorf, Branch, Eissler, Griggs, Hochberg, Madden
0 nays
3 absent — Oliveira, Dawson, Dutton

WITNESSES: For — Juan Cruz, Texas Association of School Administrators, Texas Association of School Boards, and Council of School Attorneys; Ron May, Texas Association of School Boards

Against — Lonnie Hollingsworth, Texas Classroom Teachers Association

On — Kevin Lungwitz, Texas State Teachers Association; Ted Melina Raab, Texas Federation of Teachers

BACKGROUND: Education Code, sec. 21.204(d) requires a school district to give classroom teachers who are employed under contract a copy of their contract and a copy of the board's employment policies.

DIGEST: CSHB 912 would require a school district with an Internet website to post its employment policies on the website. A district would have to make available a copy of the district's employment policies on a teacher's request and would have to make a copy available for inspection on request at a reasonable time at each school in the district.

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: CSHB 912 would reduce paperwork for school districts while saving staff time and printing costs. Many school districts already have an Internet site. Allowing them to use these sites for routine employment paperwork would make good sense and would allow districts to focus their administrative

resources on enhancing student learning. According to the Legislative Budget Board, school districts across the state could save anywhere from \$30,000 to \$60,000 per year by not having to print an additional five to 10 pages of material per teacher.

CSHB 912 would provide a more convenient way for teachers to obtain employment policies while reducing the amount of paperwork they had to keep on file. In school districts with a website, teachers would have easy access to an online version of a district's employment policies. In districts without a website, they easily could request a hard copy of the policies from school administrators. Under no circumstances would this bill deprive a teacher of access to a district's employment policies.

**OPPONENTS
SAY:**

Since a school district's employment policies are incorporated legally as a part of a teacher's contract, the policies should be attached to the contract at the time of employment. CSHB 912 would require a district to provide a hard copy of its employment policies only if a teacher asked for it. The bill should require specifically that a hard copy of the policies be provided unless they are posted on the website.

NOTES:

As filed, HB 912 would have released school districts from having to provide a copy of the board's employment policies to teachers. The substitute added provisions for posting employment policies on a district's website and for a teacher to request a hard copy of the policies.