

SUBJECT: Requiring public schools to close on Memorial Day

COMMITTEE: Public Education — favorable, without amendment

VOTE: 7 ayes — Grusendorf, Oliveira, Branch, Dawson, Eissler, Griggs, Hochberg
0 nays
1 present not voting — Madden
1 absent — Dutton

SENATE VOTE: On final passage, April 2 — 30-1 (Bivins)

WITNESSES: None

BACKGROUND: Education Code, ch. 25 governs admission and enrollment requirements, student transfers, the operation of schools, school attendance, student/teacher ratios, and class size. Sec. 25.081 requires each school district to provide at least 180 days of instruction for students annually. This does not apply to a school district that operates its schools on a year-round system. The education commissioner may approve fewer than 180 days of instruction if a disaster, flood, extreme weather conditions, fuel curtailment, or another calamity causes the closing of schools.

DIGEST: SB 862 would require a school district to provide for district schools to be closed each year on Memorial Day.

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: It is important that Texas school children and their families and teachers honor American veterans of wars and those who have died while serving their country. Most working adults have this day off from work, and their children should be able to observe this holiday with them.

**OPPONENTS
SAY:**

This type of decision should be left to the discretion of local school districts. Even though most schools do observe Memorial Day, it is not mandated, because this day can be used as a makeup day — for example, for an instructional day lost because of bad weather. Districts need to retain the flexibility to address their students' needs while meeting the mandate that schools provide at least 180 days of instruction per year.