

SUBJECT: Outstanding educators serving as advisors to state education agencies

COMMITTEE: Public Education — committee substitute recommended

VOTE: 5 ayes — Eissler, Zedler, Hochberg, Olivo, Patrick
0 nays
1 present not voting — Branch
3 absent — Delisi, Dutton, Mowery

SENATE VOTE: On final passage, April 17 — 30-0

WITNESSES: For — (*Registered, but did not testify:* Portia Bosse, Texas State Teachers Association; Harley Eckhart, Texas Elementary Principals & Supervisors Association; Lindsay Gustafson, TCTA; Elena Lincoln, Association of Texas Professional Educators (ATPE); Patty Quinzi, Texas Federation of Teachers)
Against — None

BACKGROUND: Education Code, sec. 61.076 establishes the P-16 Council, which in conjunction with other agencies, ensures that long-range plans and educational programs for the state complement the functioning of the entire system of public education, extending from early childhood education through post-graduate study. The P-16 Council currently is composed of the commissioner of education, the commissioner of higher education, the executive director of the Texas Workforce Commission, the executive director of the State Board for Educator Certification, and the commissioner of assistive and rehabilitative services. The co-chairs may appoint three additional members who are education professionals, agency representatives, business representatives, or other members of the community.

Education Code, ch. 8 establishes regional education service centers, which assist school districts in improving student performance in each region of the system; enable school districts to operate more efficiently

and economically; and implement initiatives assigned by the legislature or the commissioner. Each regional education service center is governed by a board of directors composed of seven members.

Each year, the Texas Education Agency honors a state teacher of the year. Teachers also are selected as regional teachers of the year in their respective educational service center regions. These teachers serve as ambassadors for public education, but teachers currently are prohibited from serving as members of the their regional education service center boards of directors.

DIGEST:

CSSB 1644 would establish the Texas Advisory Committee of Educators to advise the Texas Education Agency (TEA), the State Board of Education (SBOE), and the State Board for Educator Certification (SBEC) on matters relating to state education policy and rulemaking. The commissioner of education, SBOE, or SBEC could submit a specific issue to the committee for its consideration and advice.

The advisory committee would be composed of educators recognized for excellence in their profession. The number of educators on the advisory committee would be determined by the commissioner, but could not be fewer than five. Each teacher selected as a state teacher of the year under a program adopted by the agency would serve as a member of the committee. The commissioner would appoint the remaining members, who would have to be classroom teachers who had received state or national recognition or otherwise were recognized for excellence in education. The commissioner could request nominations from entities that award teaching excellence, regional education service centers, or other entities selected by the commissioner.

A state teacher of the year would serve a two-year term, beginning on the first day of the teacher's term as state teacher of the year. The remaining members would serve staggered two-year terms concurrent with the state teachers of the year serving on the committee. The bill would require the commissioner to designate the terms of the initial members of the advisory committee, including teachers of the year, in a manner that resulted in the terms of subsequent members being staggered so that about one-half of the terms expired each year.

The commissioner would designate a member of the advisory committee to serve as the presiding officer, and the advisory committee would meet at the call of the presiding officer.

The bill would prohibit a member of the advisory committee from being compensated for service on the committee but would allow reimbursements for expenses incurred in performing committee duties. The TEA would provide administrative support for the committee.

This bill also would allow a state teacher of the year to serve as a non-voting member of the P-16 Council. That person would serve a two-year term beginning on the first day of the teacher's term as state teacher of the year.

A teacher selected as a regional teacher of the year could serve as a nonvoting member of the board of directors of the regional education service center for that region.

This bill would require a school district to allow an employee who was serving on the Texas Advisory Committee of Educators, the P-16 Council, or a regional education service center board to attend those meetings without having to use state minimum personal leave. The school district could require the employee to use personal leave provided beyond the state minimum if such leave were available.

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, 2007.

NOTES:

The Senate version of the bill provided for a state teacher of the year to serve as a non-voting member of the State Board of Education. The House substitute differs by establishing the Texas Advisory Committee of Educators on which a state teacher of the year could serve and provides for a state teacher of the year to serve as a non-voting member of the P-16 Council.

The House committee substitute also would require a school district to allow an employee serving on any of the committees, councils, or boards to do so without using state minimum personal leave, although the

employee could be required to use personal leave provided beyond the state minimum if it were available.