

SUBJECT: Requiring Internet video access for State Board of Education meetings

COMMITTEE: Public Education — favorable, without amendment

VOTE: 10 ayes — Eissler, Hochberg, Allen, Aycock, Dutton, Farias, Jackson, Olivo, Patrick, Weber

0 nays

1 absent — Shelton

WITNESSES: For — Chuck Hempstead, Science Teachers Association of Texas; Kathy Miller, Texas Freedom Network; (*Registered, but did not testify*: Ellen Arnold, Texas PTA; Amy Beneski, Texas Association of School Administrators (TASA); Portia Bosse, Texas State Teachers Association; Nan Clayton, League of Women Voters-Texas; David Duty, Texas Association of Community Schools (TACS); Harley Eckhart, Texas Elementary Principals and Supervisors Association; Monty Exter, Association of Texas Professional Educators (ATPE); Bill Grusendorf, Texas Association of Rural Schools; Lindsay Gustafson, Texas Classroom Teachers Association; Dwight Harris, Texas-American Federation of Teacher (AFT); Don Rogers, Texas Rural Education Association; Julie Shields, Texas Association of School Boards; Jon Taggart, Board Member Grandview ISD; Ken Whalen, Texas Daily Newspaper Association, Texas Press Association)

Against — None

On — Christy Rome, Austin ISD

BACKGROUND: The State Board of Education (SBOE) includes 15 elected members who meet at least four times a year to oversee public education in Texas. Meetings, unless otherwise specified by law, are open to the public, and agendas are posted on the website of the Texas Education Agency (TEA) and at 20 regional service centers around the state. Meetings are broadcast in live audio over the Internet, and archives are available on TEA's website for all meetings since 2004.

Under Government Code, sec. 551.128, a governmental body may broadcast an open meeting over the Internet. A governmental body that broadcasts an open meeting over the Internet must establish an Internet site to do so and provide notice of the meeting on the Internet site.

**DIGEST:** HB 772 would require TEA to broadcast over the Internet live video and audio of all open meetings of the State Board of Education. The agency would have to comply with existing notice requirements under Government Code, sec. 551.128. TEA also would be required make video and audio archives of public meetings available on its website.

The bill would take effect September 1, 2009.

**SUPPORTERS SAY:** Broadcasting live video as well as audio of State Board of Education meetings over the Internet would promote transparency and accountability in Texas government. The audio files that currently are posted do not provide a clear image of the meeting proceedings because listeners are unable match board members with their comments. Video recordings would allow viewers to see board members as they discuss issues.

The SBOE consists of elected officials who are responsible for determining the curriculum for public education in Texas. Decisions made at SBOE meetings affect the lives of educators, parents, and students around the state. Some of the board's decisions are controversial or affect how taxpayer dollars will be spent, so the public should be able to watch the meetings that precede these decisions. HB 772 would expose many more people to the educational policy decisions that routinely appear on the agenda of SBOE meetings.

The bill would allow citizens all over the state to watch broadcasts from any on-line access point, including from their own homes. HB 772 would remove the burden of having to take off from work and travel to Austin to get an up-close view of SBOE meetings. Many other state entities, including the Legislature, successfully have engaged more Texans by upgrading to on-line video technology. Since TEA already makes available Internet audio of SBOE meetings, the LBB does not anticipate any significant cost to implement a video feed.

**OPPONENTS SAY:** No apparent opposition.