

**SUBJECT:** Allowing extraordinary cost fee by public state and technical colleges

**COMMITTEE:** Defense and Veterans' Affairs — favorable, without amendment

**VOTE:** 7 ayes — Corte, Chavez, Edwards, Farias, Maldonado, Ortiz, C. Turner  
0 nays  
2 absent — Vaught, Pickett

**SENATE VOTE:** On final passage, March 31 — 31-0

**WITNESSES:** For — (*Registered, but did not testify:* Dwain Jones, Texas Committee for Employers Support of the Guard and Reserve)  
Against — None  
On — Elton Stuckly, Jr., Texas State Technical College

**BACKGROUND:** Education Code, sec. 54.203 requires all Texas colleges and universities to exempt from dues, fees, and charges military veterans who have been Texas residents for at least 12 months and who served on active duty during a national emergency or certain military conflicts. Children of military service members who died while in service or are missing in action, or whose death was directly caused by illness or injury connected with military service also are exempt, as are the children of veterans who are rated as totally disabled for purposes of employability by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.  
  
Veterans and dependents are not exempt from general deposit fees or student services fees or from charges related to lodging, board, or clothing. The governing board of a junior college district also may charge a fee for extraordinary costs associated with a specific course or program and does not have to exempt veterans or dependents.

**DIGEST:** SB 847 would allow public junior colleges, public technical institutes, and public state colleges to establish a fee for extraordinary costs associated

with a specific course or program. It would allow those schools to charge those fees to veterans and dependents.

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, 2009.

**SUPPORTERS  
SAY:**

SB 847 would allow public junior colleges and technical schools to charge all students a fee for costs associated with flight training and other programs, including veterans and military dependents. The rising cost of fuel combined with the exemption given to certain students in these programs has resulted in rapidly decreasing revenue for some schools, including Texas State Technical College-Waco, causing TSTC-Waco to consider discontinuing their flight training program. Public technical and junior colleges should be allowed to charge a fee to all students who participate in a course or program that has extraordinary costs, which would preserve the viability of these important programs. Schools would not be required to charge program fees to veterans or their dependents, but would have that option.

The bill would apply to a limited number of schools and programs, and should not discourage participation in these specialized programs. Students who wished to take similar courses in other settings would be charged for extraordinary costs.

**OPPONENTS  
SAY:**

Allowing more schools to charge students extra fees for attending a certain course or participating in a certain program could discourage participation in these programs.