

SUBJECT: Eliminating required legislative approval for the sale of Texas Tech land

COMMITTEE: Higher Education — favorable, without amendment

VOTE: 11 ayes — C. Turner, Stucky, Button, Frullo, Howard, E. Johnson,
Pacheco, Schaefer, Smithee, Walle, Wilson

0 nays

WITNESSES: For — None

Against — None

On — Gary Barnes, Texas Tech University System

BACKGROUND: Education Code sec. 109.054 requires the board of regents of the Texas Tech University System to obtain legislative approval before selling any land that is part of the university's original main campus.

DIGEST: HB 2709 would eliminate the provision that requires the Legislature to approve the sale of land that is part of Texas Tech University's original main campus.

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, 2019.

SUPPORTERS SAY: HB 2709 would eliminate an outdated provision and grant the board of regents of the Texas Tech University System the authority necessary to best address the needs of the system's stakeholders. The board currently must receive legislative approval for the sale of certain campus lands, which can delay needed projects and inhibit the ability of the board to efficiently manage and use the university's resources.

In 1983, the Legislature began requiring legislative approval for the sale of land that was part of Texas Tech University's original main campus.

Since then, the Legislature has established the Texas Tech University System and its board of regents. These regents are in the best position to determine the appropriate use of campus land, and as they are appointed by the governor and approved by the Senate, they are already accountable to the public without the need of further oversight by the Legislature.

During the 85th regular legislative session, the Legislature enacted a bill allowing the board of regents to transfer ownership of land from Texas Tech University to Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center. Without that bill, the transfer could not have been completed. Projects such as these cannot always wait for the next legislative session or the delays inherent in the legislative calendar. In addition, the Legislature does not exercise similar oversight over any other statewide university system. The requirement for legislative approval is outdated, inefficient, and should be removed.

OPPONENTS
SAY:

No concerns identified.