

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center
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S.B. 156
By: Fraser
Finance
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As Filed

AUTHOR'S/SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

In the spring of 2004, Tarleton State University System Center (Tarleton-CT) enrolled 1,983 students - an increase of 56 percent over the number enrolled when the center opened its doors in the fall of 1999. In the five years it has been open, Tarleton-CT has produced 2,006 graduates. Currently, all available space is fully utilized and options for responding to increased demand are very limited.

In its December 2002 "Regional Plan for Higher Education, Summary of Needs in Central Texas," the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board recognized the need to accommodate enrollment increases in central Texas, and more specifically in Bell and Coryell Counties. Population has increased 34 percent from 1990 to 2000 and the region continues to expect strong growth. The United States Army has already announced that 5,000 more soldiers will be arriving at Fort Hood in 2006, bringing their families and civilian contractors with them.

The United States Congress provided for conveyance of approximately 700 acres of land to the Texas A&M University System for the purpose of establishing Texas A&M University - Central Texas (which Tarleton-CT will become when a statutory full time student threshold is met). Fort Hood, the largest military base in the world, supported the effort to convey part of its base, because Fort Hood leadership believes so strongly that its soldiers and their families deserve access to public upper-level educational opportunities.

As proposed, S.B. 156 authorizes the Texas A&M University System to issue revenue bonds in an amount not to exceed \$45 million to be used to plan, construct, furnish, and equip new facilities and related infrastructure on the federally conveyed land.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

This bill does not expressly grant any additional rulemaking authority to a state officer, institution, or agency.

SECTION BY SECTION ANALYSIS

SECTION 1. Amends Subchapter B, Chapter 55, Education Code, by adding Section 55.1751, as follows:

Sec. 55.1751. TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY--CENTRAL TEXAS. (a) Authorizes the board of regents of the Texas A&M University System to acquire, purchase, construct, improve, renovate, enlarge or equip certain properties including roads and related infrastructure, for educational facilities, for educational facilities for the Tarleton State University System Center--Central Texas at the location that may become Texas A&M University--Central Texas, from being financed by the issuance of bonds, including bonds issued in accordance with a systemwide revenue financing program and secured as provided by that program, in aggregate principal amount not to exceed \$45 million.

(b) Authorizes the board of regents to pledge irrevocably to the payment of the bonds or any part of the revenue funds of an institution, branch, or entity of The Texas A&M University System, including student tuition charges. Prohibits the amount of a pledge from being reduced or abrogated while the bonds for which the pledge is made, or bonds issued to refund those bonds, are outstanding.

(c) Authorizes the board to transfer funds among certain entities of The Texas A&M University System to ensure the most equitable and efficient allocation of available resources for each of those certain entities to carry out its duties and purpose.

SECTION 2. Amends Section 61.0572(e), Education Code, to make a conforming change.

SECTION 3. Amends Section 61.058(b), Education Code, to make a conforming change.

SECTION 4. Provides that it is the intent of the legislature that buildings, structures, and permanent improvements financed under Section 55.1751, Education Code, will be denominated as facilities of Texas A&M University Central Texas rather than any other institution of higher education.

SECTION 5. Effective date: upon passage or September 1, 2005.