

BILL ANALYSIS

H.B. 1566
By: Telford
Higher Education
Committee Report (Unamended)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

For many years, the people of Texarkana have tried to bring a four-year institution of higher education to their city. Originally established by the legislature in 1971 as part of the East Texas State University System, Texas A&M University-Texarkana is authorized to offer upper division courses only.

In 2001, the legislature authorized the formation of a partnership between Texas A&M University-Texarkana and Texarkana College. The boards of both institutions agreed to a draft framework for the partnership. However, the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools and the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board determined that a key provision of the partnership was unworkable, bringing an end to the partnership discussions.

Community leaders in Texarkana have decided that the most effective way to ensure increased access to baccalaureate degree programs in Texarkana is to expand Texas A&M University-Texarkana to a full four-year university.

HB 1566 allows Texas A&M University-Texarkana to offer lower-division courses, but does not require it in any year that the legislature fails to appropriate funds.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

It is the committee's opinion that this bill does not expressly grant any additional rulemaking authority to a state officer, department, agency, or institution.

ANALYSIS

HB 1566 amends Sections 87.571(a) and (b), Education Code, to eliminate the upper-level designation from The Texas A&M University-Texarkana. The bill provides that The Texas A&M University-Texarkana may offer lower division courses, but is not required to do so in any academic year for which the legislature does not appropriate money.

HB 1566 repeals Section 87.571(c), Education Code, which allows The Texas A&M University-Texarkana to enter into a partnership agreement with the Texarkana College District in the manner authorized by Subchapter N, Chapter 51, Education Code.

EFFECTIVE DATE

This Act takes effect September 1, 2003.