

By: Hochberg, et al.

H.B. No. 256

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT

relating to excused absences for religious holy days for students in institutions of higher education.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF TEXAS:

SECTION 1. Section 51.911(b), Education Code, is amended to read as follows:

(b) An institution of higher education shall excuse a student from attending ~~[allow a student who is absent from]~~ classes or other required activities, including examinations, for the observance of a religious holy day, including travel for that purpose. A student whose absence is excused under this subsection may not be penalized for that absence and shall be allowed to take an examination or complete an assignment from which the student is excused ~~[scheduled for that day]~~ within a reasonable time after the absence ~~[if, not later than the 15th day after the first day of the semester, the student notified the instructor of each class the student had scheduled on that date that the student would be absent for a religious holy day].~~

SECTION 2. Section 51.911(c), Education Code, is repealed.

SECTION 3. (a) Sections 1 and 2 of this Act apply beginning with the 2003 fall semester.

(b) The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board shall adopt rules for the administration of Section 51.911(b), Education Code, as amended by this Act, or amend its existing rules for that

1 purpose as soon as practicable after this Act takes effect. Before
2 October 1, 2003, the coordinating board may adopt or amend the rules
3 in the manner provided by law for emergency rules.

4 SECTION 4. This Act takes effect immediately if it receives
5 a vote of two-thirds of all the members elected to each house, as
6 provided by Section 39, Article III, Texas Constitution. If this
7 Act does not receive the vote necessary for immediate effect, this
8 Act takes effect September 1, 2003.