

1-1 By: Hochberg, et al. (Senate Sponsor - Shapiro) H.B. No. 256  
1-2 (In the Senate - Received from the House April 14, 2003;  
1-3 April 22, 2003, read first time and referred to Subcommittee on  
1-4 Higher Education; May 22, 2003, reported to Committee on Education;  
1-5 May 23, 2003, reported favorably by the following vote: Yeas 7,  
1-6 Nays 0; May 23, 2003, sent to printer.)

1-7 A BILL TO BE ENTITLED  
1-8 AN ACT

1-9 relating to excused absences for religious holy days for students  
1-10 in institutions of higher education.

1-11 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF TEXAS:

1-12 SECTION 1. Section 51.911(b), Education Code, is amended to  
1-13 read as follows:

1-14 (b) An institution of higher education shall excuse a  
1-15 student from attending ~~[allow a student who is absent from]~~ classes  
1-16 or other required activities, including examinations, for the  
1-17 observance of a religious holy day, including travel for that  
1-18 purpose. A student whose absence is excused under this subsection  
1-19 may not be penalized for that absence and shall be allowed to take  
1-20 an examination or complete an assignment from which the student is  
1-21 excused ~~[scheduled for that day]~~ within a reasonable time after the  
1-22 absence ~~[if, not later than the 15th day after the first day of the~~  
1-23 ~~semester, the student notified the instructor of each class the~~  
1-24 ~~student had scheduled on that date that the student would be absent~~  
1-25 ~~for a religious holy day]~~.

1-26 SECTION 2. Section 51.911(c), Education Code, is repealed.

1-27 SECTION 3. (a) Sections 1 and 2 of this Act apply beginning  
1-28 with the 2003 fall semester.

1-29 (b) The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board shall  
1-30 adopt rules for the administration of Section 51.911(b), Education  
1-31 Code, as amended by this Act, or amend its existing rules for that  
1-32 purpose as soon as practicable after this Act takes effect. Before  
1-33 October 1, 2003, the coordinating board may adopt or amend the rules  
1-34 in the manner provided by law for emergency rules.

1-35 SECTION 4. This Act takes effect immediately if it receives  
1-36 a vote of two-thirds of all the members elected to each house, as  
1-37 provided by Section 39, Article III, Texas Constitution. If this  
1-38 Act does not receive the vote necessary for immediate effect, this  
1-39 Act takes effect September 1, 2003.

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