By: Dutton

CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

1   WHEREAS, A key objective of Texas' public education system as
2 stated in the Texas Education Code is that, through enhanced
3 dropout prevention efforts, all students will remain in school
4 until they obtain a high school diploma; to ensure that public
5 schools make every effort to achieve this goal, dropout rates have
6 been a major component of the state's accountability system since
7 its inception, and both district accreditation and campus ratings
8 depend on how well schools perform in this regard; and

9   WHEREAS, Since 1984, with passage of the groundbreaking
10 reforms of House Bill 72, school districts have been required to
11 publish annual performance reports including attendance data and
12 dropout rates; however, dropout data was not collected uniformly or
13 systematically statewide until development of the Public Education
14 Information Management System, which began collecting dropout data
15 during the 1987-1988 school year; and

16   WHEREAS, Building on the 1984 reforms, the legislature in
17 1987 required the Texas Education Agency (TEA) to determine the
18 number of dropouts in grades 7 through 12 for each campus, district,
19 county, and region and to submit a biennial report to the
20 legislature and governor on the dropout rates for students in each
21 of those grades, on projected five-year longitudinal dropout rates
22 for each grade, and on a systematic plan for reducing those
23 longitudinal rates to meet specified goals; and

24   WHEREAS, A major criticism of this method of dropout

1 reporting is that calculating rates based on a span of grades 7
2 through 12, though statutorily required, includes large numbers of
3 students in middle school grades who are highly unlikely to drop out
4 and thus distorts the true picture, obscuring the fact that the real
5 problem lies in high school when students are more likely to drop
6 out of school; and

7 WHEREAS, Although the legislature addressed the issue in 2001
8 by adding high school completion rates as a performance indicator
9 and requiring TEA, on an annual basis, to report completion rates of
10 students entering ninth grade based on certain factors, questions
11 about the validity of dropout reporting persist; and

12 WHEREAS, Given the importance attached to dropout rates in
13 the state's accountability system as a meaningful measure of
14 student achievement and of overall school performance, it is
15 essential that the data used to judge that performance be as
16 accurate as possible; furthermore, before the state can adequately
17 address the dropout problem and devote the necessary resources to
18 combat it, it must know the problem's full extent; now, therefore,
19 be it

20 RESOLVED, That the 78th Legislature of the State of Texas
21 hereby request the lieutenant governor and the speaker of the house
22 of representatives to create a joint interim committee to study the
23 issue of dropout rates in grades 9 through 12; and, be it further

24 RESOLVED, That the membership of the committee include at
25 least three members of the House Committee on Public Education and
26 at least three members of the Senate Committee on Education; and, be
27 it further

1   RESOLVED, That the committee's proceedings and operations be

2 governed by such general rules and policies for joint interim

3 committees as the 78th Legislature may adopt and that such rules and

4 policies supersede the provisions of this resolution to the extent

5 of any conflict; and, be it further

6   RESOLVED, That the committee submit a full report, including

7 findings and recommendations, to the 79th Texas Legislature when it

8 convenes in January 2005.