

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center

S.B. 101
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Veteran Affairs & Military Installations
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Enrolled

AUTHOR'S/SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

The Hazlewood Act, set forth in Section 54.203, Texas Education Code, entitles eligible veterans, and the children of service members who die during or directly due to their service in the armed forces, to free tuition and free or reduced fees for up to 150 college credit hours at publicly supported institutions of higher education (IHEs).

Currently, IHEs independently manage the Hazlewood tuition exemptions. Due to the lack of a centralized database, there is no way for the IHEs to track veterans' eligibility and use of benefits. IHEs have no way of ensuring against fraudulent "double-dipping" into the allowed benefits. Additionally, it has been difficult to determine the true cost of the Hazlewood Act to the state because of conflicting statistics stemming from the reporting requirements. Any future changes to or the expansion of the Hazlewood benefits need to include accurate tracking of the tuition exemptions, both in the aggregate and individually.

During the interim, the Senate Committee on Veteran Affairs and Military Installations recommended the establishment of funding for a database dedicated to track the use of Hazlewood benefits and to clarify the overall cost to improve management of the program.

S.B. 101 requires IHEs to electronically report to the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (board) information relating to individuals receiving Hazlewood tuition exemptions. S.B. 101 also requires the board to develop a system to electronically monitor the use of the Hazlewood Act.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

Rulemaking authority is expressly granted to the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board in SECTION 1 (Section 54.203, Education Code) of this bill.

SECTION BY SECTION ANALYSIS

SECTION 1. Amends Section 54.203, Education Code, by adding Subsections (h) and (i), as follows:

(h) Requires the governing board of each institution of higher education (IHE) to electronically report to the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (board) the information required by Section 61.0516, Government Code, relating to each individual receiving an exemption from fees and charges under Subsection (a) or (b). Requires the IHE to report the information no later than December 31 of each year for the fall semester, May 31 of each year for the spring semester, and September 30 of each year for the summer session.

(i) Authorizes the board to adopt rules to provide for the efficient and uniform application of this section.

SECTION 2. Amends Subchapter C, Chapter 61, Education Code, by adding Section 61.0516, as follows:

Sec. 61.0516. ELECTRONIC SYSTEM TO MONITOR TUITION EXEMPTIONS FOR VETERANS AND DEPENDENTS. Requires the board to develop a system to electronically monitor the use of tuition exemptions under Section 54.203 (Veterans,

Dependents, Etc.). Requires the system to allow the board to electronically receive, for each semester, certain information from an IHE.

SECTION 3. Requires the board to develop the monitoring system no later than October 1, 2005.

SECTION 4. Effective date: upon passage or September 1, 2005.