

By: Morrison, Berman, Corte, Escobar, Chavez

H.B. No. 2807

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

1 AN ACT

2 relating to vouchers for tuition and required fees at certain
3 institutions of higher education for students who sound "Taps" at a
4 veteran's funeral.

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

6 SECTION 1. Section 434.007, Government Code, is amended to
7 read as follows:

8 Sec. 434.007. DUTIES. (a) The commission shall:

9 (1) compile federal, state, and local laws enacted to
10 benefit members of the armed forces, veterans, and their families
11 and dependents;

12 (2) collect information relating to services and
13 facilities available to veterans;

14 (3) cooperate with veterans service agencies in the
15 state;

16 (4) inform members and veterans of the armed forces,
17 their families and dependents, and military and civilian
18 authorities about the existence or availability of:

19 (A) educational training and retraining
20 facilities;

21 (B) health, medical, rehabilitation, and housing
22 services and facilities;

23 (C) employment and reemployment services;

24 (D) provisions of federal, state, and local law

1 affording rights, privileges, and benefits to members and veterans
2 of the armed forces and their families and dependents; and

3 (E) other similar, related, or appropriate
4 matters;

5 (5) assist veterans and their families and dependents
6 in presenting, proving, and establishing claims, privileges,
7 rights, and benefits they may have under federal, state, or local
8 law;

9 (6) cooperate with all government and private agencies
10 securing services or benefits to veterans and their families and
11 dependents;

12 (7) investigate, and if possible correct, abuses or
13 exploitation of veterans or their families or dependents, and
14 recommend necessary legislation for full correction;

15 (8) coordinate the services and activities of state
16 departments and divisions having services and resources affecting
17 veterans or their families or dependents; and

18 (9) provide training and certification of veterans
19 county service officers and assistant veterans county service
20 officers in accordance with Section 434.038.

21 (b) The commission shall establish a program to issue
22 vouchers to be exchanged for an exemption from the payment of
23 tuition and required fees at an institution of higher education as
24 provided by Section 54.215, Education Code, to students in grades 6
25 through 12 or at postsecondary educational institutions who sound
26 "Taps" on a bugle, trumpet, or cornet during military honors
27 funerals held in this state for deceased veterans. A voucher must

1 be issued in the amount of \$25 for each time a student sounds "Taps"
2 as described by this subsection.

3 (c) The commission by rule shall design a form for the
4 vouchers and distribute the form, with an explanation of the form's
5 use, to each funeral director in this state for issuance to a person
6 who is eligible to receive a voucher under Subsection (b). The
7 commission may not charge a fee for distribution of the form.

8 (d) The commission shall encourage a private or independent
9 institution of higher education to grant a tuition and fee
10 exemption in exchange for a voucher.

11 (e) A voucher issued under this section may be used by the
12 student at any time and is not transferable.

13 (f) In this section, "institution of higher education" and
14 "private or independent institution of higher education" have the
15 meanings assigned by Section 61.003, Education Code.

16 SECTION 2. Section 25.087, Education Code, is amended by
17 adding Subsection (c) to read as follows:

18 (c) A school district may excuse a student in grades 6
19 through 12 for the purpose of sounding "Taps" at a military honors
20 funeral held in this state for a deceased veteran. A student whose
21 absence is excused under this subsection may not be penalized for
22 that absence and shall be counted as if the student attended school
23 for purposes of calculating the average daily attendance of
24 students in the school district. A student whose absence is excused
25 under this subsection shall be allowed a reasonable time to make up
26 school work missed on those days. If the student satisfactorily
27 completes the school work, the day of absence shall be counted as a

1 day of compulsory attendance.

2 SECTION 3. Subchapter D, Chapter 54, Education Code, is
3 amended by adding Section 54.215 to read as follows:

4 Sec. 54.215. PARTICIPANTS IN MILITARY FUNERALS. The
5 governing board of each institution of higher education shall
6 provide a \$25 exemption from tuition and required fees under this
7 chapter to a student in exchange for a voucher issued to the student
8 under Section 434.007, Government Code, and presented by the
9 student to the institution.

10 SECTION 4. This Act takes effect immediately if it receives
11 a vote of two-thirds of all the members elected to each house, as
12 provided by Section 39, Article III, Texas Constitution. If this
13 Act does not receive the vote necessary for immediate effect, this
14 Act takes effect September 1, 2005.