

By: West, Royce, et al.

S.C.R. No. 24

CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

1 WHEREAS, Over the past 60 years, a series of shifts in both
2 the national and Texas economies have progressively increased the
3 educational requirements for much of the workforce; U.S. Bureau of
4 Labor Statistics projections indicate that by 2008 more than 30
5 percent of the nation's jobs will require a postsecondary
6 education; and

7 WHEREAS, This trend has serious implications for Texas, given
8 its current demographics; while its prosperity will depend heavily
9 on a greater number of highly educated young adults entering
10 tomorrow's workforce, a growing segment of the state's college-age
11 population is coming from families with little or no history of
12 participation in higher education and therefore little or no
13 expectation of future college enrollment; and

14 WHEREAS, Texas must close this gap or face a bleak future of
15 declining economic and social well-being; national studies
16 indicate that providing financial aid is one of the best methods of
17 encouraging enrollment and success in higher education, especially
18 among underrepresented populations without the means to otherwise
19 participate; and

20 WHEREAS, Unfortunately, two factors inhibit the potential
21 for state financial aid programs to maximize this participation;
22 students and their families find the process of applying for
23 financial aid complex and intimidating, while state funding for
24 financial aid programs is limited; and

1 WHEREAS, The undue complexity facing financial aid
2 applicants begins with the initial step in the process, filling out
3 the four-page Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) that
4 students and families must complete before being considered for
5 most federal, state, or institutional student aid programs; and

6 WHEREAS, Indicative of the burden imposed on applicants is
7 the fact that completing this form is sometimes comparable to
8 filing one's income taxes, and, in fact, applicants must provide or
9 be able to document much of the same information in both cases; and

10 WHEREAS, Recent proposals in Congress, most notably H.R.
11 4283--the College Access and Opportunity Act of 2004--have
12 attempted to simplify the financial aid application process for
13 needy students and families; H.R. 4283, for example, would have
14 made it easier for the neediest students to benefit from federal
15 student aid programs by simplifying and expanding eligibility for
16 use of the "simplified needs test" to determine how much aid a
17 family qualifies to receive; and

18 WHEREAS, H.R. 4283 also would have helped distribute
19 financial aid information to low-income families by requiring that
20 special efforts be made through federal sources to notify students
21 and parents who qualify for free lunch, food stamps, or other
22 similar assistance programs of their potential eligibility for a
23 maximum college Pell Grant; and

24 WHEREAS, Another provision that could have benefited Texas
25 institutions was a requirement for a new formula to distribute
26 federal campus-based funds among colleges and universities; the
27 current allocation of federal work-study funds, educational

1 opportunity grants, and loans is based largely on when a campus
2 began its program participation and the state in which it is located
3 without considering institutional missions or state population
4 growth; and

5 WHEREAS, Five states, including Texas, are expected to
6 accommodate approximately two-thirds of the nation's projected
7 increase in the college-age population between 2000 and 2015; yet
8 in 2003, Texas received only \$145.6 million, or 7.7 percent, of the
9 \$1.9 billion distributed through these programs, highlighting the
10 need for revision of the current formulas; and

11 WHEREAS, While H.R. 4283 and other related proposals
12 ultimately did not pass, it is nevertheless incumbent upon the
13 Texas congressional delegation to support similar legislation that
14 would simplify the overly complicated FAFSA, require a more
15 equitable formula for distributing federal funds for student
16 financial aid programs benefiting institutions of higher
17 education, and remedy the disproportion between relative shares of
18 burden and benefits; now, therefore, be it

19 RESOLVED, That the 79th Legislature of the State of Texas
20 hereby respectfully urge the Congress of the United States to enact
21 legislation that would simplify the Free Application for Federal
22 Student Aid, help distribute financial aid information to
23 low-income families, and require the use of a new formula for
24 equitably distributing federal campus-based funds among
25 institutions so that each institution's share of the benefits is
26 commensurate with its share of the burden; and, be it further

27 RESOLVED, That the Texas secretary of state forward official

1 copies of this resolution to the president of the United States, to
2 the speaker of the house of representatives and the president of the
3 senate of the United States Congress, and to all the members of the
4 Texas delegation to the congress with the request that this
5 resolution be officially entered in the Congressional Record as a
6 memorial to the Congress of the United States of America.