

BILL ANALYSIS

S.B. 480
By: Janek
Higher Education
Committee Report (Unamended)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

Section 61.003 (15) of the Education Code defines private institutions of higher education to include those private or independent institutions accredited by the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools or the Liaison Committee on Medical Education (added to include Baylor College of Medicine, the only independent medical school in Texas). This definition of private institutions has more than 60 references throughout Texas statute in areas ranging from employment to financial aid.

There is currently no accrediting body for independent law schools in Texas statute. This oversight has led to the possible exclusion of any independent law schools in Texas accredited by the American Bar Association (ABA) and not affiliated with an institution accredited by another body. South Texas College of Law is presently the only institution in the state that falls under this category.

Senate Bill 480 corrects this by adding the American Bar Association as a recognized accrediting agent in Texas under Section 61.003 (15) of the Education Code. This is the only accrediting body for law schools in the United States. This addition will have no negative effects on the accreditation of any institutions of higher education and does not create any accrediting authority for the ABA except to acknowledge such authority in statute.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

It is the committee's opinion that this bill does not expressly grant any additional rulemaking authority to a state officer, department, agency, or institution.

ANALYSIS

SECTION 1: Section 61.003 (15) of the Education Code is amended so that the American Bar Association is included as a statutorily recognized accrediting body along with those currently recognized including the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools and the Liaison Committee on Medical Education. Makes conforming changes.

SECTION 2: Effective date.

EFFECTIVE DATE

Upon passage, or, if the Act does not receive the necessary vote, the Act takes effect September 1, 2007.