

By: Patrick, Zaffirini, Shapiro

S.B. No. 1488

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT

relating to the Texas Teach Corps Scholarship Program for students who agree to teach in public schools in this state that have shortages of teachers in certain academic subjects.

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

SECTION 1. Chapter 61, Education Code, is amended by adding Subchapter FF to read as follows:

SUBCHAPTER FF. TEXAS TEACH CORPS SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

Sec. 61.9831. SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM; AMOUNT OF SCHOLARSHIP.

(a) In accordance with this subchapter and board rules, the board shall establish and administer the Texas Teach Corps Scholarship Program to award scholarships to undergraduate students who:

(1) are enrolled in educator preparation programs provided by public or private institutions of higher education in this state; and

(2) agree to teach for a specified period in the public schools in this state that are determined by the Texas Education Agency to have shortages of teachers in academic subjects.

(b) The amount of a scholarship under this subchapter for an academic year is equal to the lesser of:

(1) the total amount of tuition that the public or private institution of higher education in which the scholarship recipient is enrolled charges the recipient for that academic year for semester credit hours for which the recipient may use the

1 scholarship to pay tuition as provided by Subsection (c); or

2 (2) \$5,000.

3 (c) A student may use a scholarship under this subchapter  
4 only to pay tuition for a semester credit hour that is required for  
5 completion of the educator preparation program in which the student  
6 is enrolled.

7 (d) For purposes of this subchapter, not later than April 1  
8 of each school year, the Texas Education Agency shall determine  
9 which public schools in this state are anticipated to have  
10 shortages of teachers during the following school year and shall  
11 provide that information to the board and to each educator  
12 preparation program in this state accredited by the State Board for  
13 Educator Certification. In making the determination required by  
14 this subsection, the agency shall consider the availability of  
15 teachers for only those subjects designated by agency rule as  
16 academic subjects. In making those designations, the agency may  
17 not consider athletics, physical education, art, or music,  
18 including band, as academic subjects.

19 Sec. 61.9832. ELIGIBILITY; LIMITATION ON NUMBER OF  
20 SCHOLARSHIPS. (a) To be eligible to receive a scholarship under  
21 this subchapter, a person must:

22 (1) have graduated from a high school in this state  
23 with an overall grade point average:

24 (A) of at least 3.0 on a four-point scale or the  
25 equivalent; and

26 (B) in the top 25 percent of the student's  
27 graduating class;

1           (2) be enrolled in an educator preparation program  
2 accredited by the State Board for Educator Certification that is  
3 provided by a public or private institution of higher education in  
4 this state; and

5           (3) enter into an agreement with the board as provided  
6 by Section 61.9833.

7           (b) Not more than 4,000 scholarships may be awarded under  
8 this subchapter for an academic year.

9           (b-1) This subsection expires September 1, 2011.  
10 Notwithstanding Subsection (b), not more than the following number  
11 of scholarships may be awarded under this subchapter for the  
12 specified academic year:

13           (1) for the 2008-2009 academic year, not more than  
14 1,000 scholarships may be awarded;

15           (2) for the 2009-2010 academic year, not more than  
16 2,000 scholarships may be awarded; and

17           (3) for the 2010-2011 academic year, not more than  
18 3,000 scholarships may be awarded.

19           (c) If in any year the amount of money available for  
20 scholarships under this subchapter is insufficient to award a  
21 scholarship to each eligible applicant or if there are more  
22 eligible applicants than the number of scholarships authorized by  
23 this section, the board shall establish criteria to determine which  
24 eligible applicants will be granted scholarships as the board  
25 determines appropriate to further the purposes of this subchapter,  
26 including criteria that:

27           (1) are related to the financial need of an applicant;

1 and

2 (2) serve to ensure geographic and ethnic diversity  
3 among scholarship recipients.

4 Sec. 61.9833. AGREEMENT REQUIREMENTS. (a) To qualify for  
5 a scholarship under this subchapter, a person must enter into a  
6 written agreement with the board as provided by this section. The  
7 agreement must:

8 (1) specify the conditions the person must satisfy to  
9 receive the scholarship award;

10 (2) require the person to earn a baccalaureate degree  
11 through completion of an educator preparation program accredited by  
12 the State Board for Educator Certification that is provided by a  
13 public or private institution of higher education in this state;

14 (3) require the person to obtain, within the period  
15 prescribed by board rule, appropriate certification under  
16 Subchapter B, Chapter 21, to teach in a public school in this state;

17 (4) require the person to accept, for the first school  
18 year that begins after the date the person obtains the appropriate  
19 certification, an offer of full-time employment to teach in a  
20 public school in this state selected by the person from among  
21 schools anticipated by the Texas Education Agency to have shortages  
22 of teachers in academic subjects for that first school year for  
23 which the person is accepting employment;

24 (5) require the person to complete eight years of  
25 full-time employment teaching as follows:

26 (A) beginning with the school year described by  
27 Subdivision (4), four consecutive school years of employment

1 teaching in one or more public schools in this state selected by the  
2 person from among schools anticipated by the Texas Education Agency  
3 to have shortages of teachers in academic subjects for the person's  
4 applicable year of employment by the school; and

5 (B) beginning with the school year immediately  
6 following the last of the four consecutive school years described  
7 by Paragraph (A), four additional consecutive school years teaching  
8 in any public school in this state;

9 (6) provide that any scholarship award the person  
10 receives under this subchapter constitutes an interest-free loan  
11 until the person:

12 (A) subject to Section 61.9835, satisfies the  
13 requirements of Subdivision (5) and any other applicable conditions  
14 of the agreement; or

15 (B) is excused from the repayment obligation in  
16 accordance with law; and

17 (7) require the person to sign a promissory note  
18 acknowledging the conditional nature of the scholarship award  
19 received and promising to repay any unforgiven amount of that award  
20 and reasonable collection costs if the person does not satisfy the  
21 applicable conditions and is not excused from the repayment  
22 obligation in accordance with law.

23 (b) To satisfy the teaching obligation prescribed by an  
24 agreement under this section, a person must teach an academic  
25 subject for not less than four hours each school day. For purposes  
26 of this subsection, an academic subject is a subject designated as  
27 such under Texas Education Agency rule as provided by Section

1 61.9831(d).

2 (c) For purposes of Subsection (a)(5)(A), if a person is  
3 employed as a teacher in a public school anticipated to have a  
4 shortage of teachers in academic subjects in the first year of  
5 employment, each subsequent year of continuous employment as a  
6 teacher in that school is considered to be employment in a school  
7 anticipated to have such a shortage of teachers in that subsequent  
8 year, regardless of whether the Texas Education Agency anticipated  
9 that the school would have a shortage of teachers in that year.

10 (d) The board shall determine the terms of the promissory  
11 note required by Subsection (a)(7). To the extent practicable, the  
12 terms must be the same as those applicable to state or federally  
13 guaranteed student loans made at the same time.

14 Sec. 61.9834. EXCEPTIONS TO TEACHING AND REPAYMENT  
15 OBLIGATIONS. (a) A person is not considered to be in violation of  
16 the teaching obligation in the agreement described by Section  
17 61.9833 during any period in which the person:

18 (1) is pursuing a full-time course of study related to  
19 the field of teaching offered by a public or private institution of  
20 higher education in this state and approved by the State Board for  
21 Educator Certification;

22 (2) is serving on active duty as a member of the armed  
23 forces of the United States, including as a member of a reserve  
24 force or National Guard called to active duty;

25 (3) is temporarily totally disabled for a period not  
26 to exceed 36 months as established by the affidavit of a qualified  
27 physician;

1           (4) is unable to secure employment for a period not to  
2 exceed 12 months because of care required by a disabled spouse or  
3 child;

4           (5) is seeking and unable to find, for a single period  
5 not to exceed 12 months, full-time employment teaching in a public  
6 school in this state, or if the person is within the period of the  
7 agreement described by Section 61.9833(a)(5)(A), full-time  
8 employment teaching in a public school in this state anticipated to  
9 have a shortage of teachers in academic subjects for the year for  
10 which the person is seeking employment; or

11           (6) satisfies the provisions of any other teaching  
12 exception adopted by the board.

13           (b) A person is excused from the repayment obligation in a  
14 promissory note described by Section 61.9833 if:

15           (1) the person becomes permanently totally disabled as  
16 established by the affidavit of a qualified physician; or

17           (2) the board waives repayment in the case of extreme  
18 hardship to the person.

19           Sec. 61.9835. FORGIVENESS OF REPAYMENT OBLIGATION. The  
20 board shall forgive 25 percent of the total amount of a person's  
21 scholarship awards under this subchapter for each complete school  
22 year the person teaches in accordance with the agreement under  
23 Section 61.9833 after the expiration of the period described by  
24 Subsection (a)(5)(A) of that section.

25           Sec. 61.9836. GRANTS, GIFTS, AND DONATIONS. In addition to  
26 money appropriated by the legislature, the board may solicit and  
27 accept grants, gifts, and donations from any public or private

1 source for the purposes of this subchapter.

2 Sec. 61.9837. RULES. (a) The board shall adopt rules to  
3 administer this subchapter, including rules:

4 (1) providing for the manner in which a student may  
5 apply for a scholarship; and

6 (2) providing for notification of the scholarship  
7 program under this subchapter to students enrolled in educator  
8 preparation programs in this state.

9 (b) The board shall distribute to each educator preparation  
10 program of a public or private institution of higher education in  
11 this state a copy of the rules adopted under this section.

12 SECTION 2. Not later than December 31, 2007, the Texas  
13 Higher Education Coordinating Board and the Texas Education Agency  
14 shall adopt rules for the Texas Teach Corps Scholarship Program  
15 under Subchapter FF, Chapter 61, Education Code, as added by this  
16 Act.

17 SECTION 3. This Act takes effect immediately if it receives  
18 a vote of two-thirds of all the members elected to each house, as  
19 provided by Section 39, Article III, Texas Constitution. If this  
20 Act does not receive the vote necessary for immediate effect, this  
21 Act takes effect September 1, 2007.