

BILL ANALYSIS

C.S.S.B. 1600
By: Watson
Technology, Economic Development & Workforce
Committee Report (Substituted)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

Collaboration in research is a key component of scientific advancement. However, researchers at major universities are often unaware of potential collaborators at neighboring institutions due to the absence of a comprehensive resource. A specialized database of research being conducted at major universities could increase the availability of such resource information by tracking specialized technology projects conducted by public universities, public university research facilities, and other state institutions. Ideally, a database search engine would be made available to the general public. Such data collection would enable Texas universities to share critical information about research projects, grants, and publications so that Texas can maintain its position as a leader in research and development.

C.S.S.B. 1600 creates a select interim committee to study the feasibility of collecting data and creating a database relating to specialized technology research in Texas.

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

C.S.S.B. 1600 creates a select interim committee to study the feasibility of collecting data and maintaining a searchable electronic database, search engine, or other data collection relating to specialized technology research projects that are developed or conducted at public universities in Texas, research facilities of public universities in Texas, or other facilities operated by a state agency, to facilitate coordination among the universities and facilities on projects and improve access to and awareness of specialized research and technologies developed at those institutions and facilities.

C.S.S.B. 1600 requires the study to consider appropriate entities to administer the data collection, including nonprofit organizations, public universities in Texas, or state agencies; the extent of legislative oversight required for an entity that would maintain the data collection; and compliance with state and federal laws regarding access to public information. The bill requires the study to consider the information the data collection would include, such as a list of projects involving one or more of the following areas:

- energy research, including methods of creation, storage, distribution, and conservation of energy;
- biomedical science research, including research that involves stem cells or human cloning;
- nanotechnology research, including nanomedicine; and
- other specialized technology research.

C.S.S.B. 1600 requires the data collection to include, for each project listed above, a brief description of the project, including the field of technology involved, the entity involved with the project, comments regarding the research, and other relevant information and resources in Texas relating to specialized technology research, including expert faculty or research personnel; available technology and patents obtained; the location of and policies for the use of available research equipment; public grants or contracts awarded; and the process through which any stem cells and stem cell lines utilized were derived.

C.S.S.B. 1600 requires the study to examine the current state of access to public information about specialized technology research projects, to assess the best methods of facilitating access to the information, and to consider what information should be accessible by the general public and what information, if any, should be restricted.

C.S.S.B. 1600 requires the committee to be composed of representatives of the following university systems, with one member named by each system: The University of Texas System, The Texas A&M University System, the Texas Tech University System, the University of Houston System, and the University of North Texas System; and a number of members appointed by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board as the coordinating board considers appropriate to represent the coordinating board, data collection providers, and the technology industry.

C.S.S.B. 1600 requires, on the request of the committee, a general academic institution of higher education, research facility of a general academic institution of higher education, or other facility operated by a state agency to provide to the coordinating board or a board advisory committee any information necessary for the coordinating board or advisory committee to perform its duties under these provisions.

C.S.S.B. 1600 requires the select interim committee to report its findings and recommendations to the lieutenant governor, the speaker of the house of representatives, and the governor not later than December 1, 2010. The bill requires the committee to include in its recommendations specific legislation that the committee considers desirable to address the need for and feasibility of establishing a data collection as determined by the committee's findings. The bill provides that the committee is abolished and these provisions expire January 16, 2011.

EFFECTIVE DATE

On passage, or, if the act does not receive the necessary vote, the act takes effect September 1, 2009.

COMPARISON OF ORIGINAL AND SUBSTITUTE

C.S.S.B. 1600 differs from the original by specifying that the select interim committee for the study of technology research data collection is composed of representatives of certain university systems, rather than institutions.