

By: Turner of Harris

H.B. No. 779

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT

relating to higher education student loan repayment assistance for peace officers.

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

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

SUBCHAPTER II. PEACE OFFICER LOAN REPAYMENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Sec. 61.9851. DEFINITION. In this subchapter, "peace officer" has the meaning assigned by Article 2.12, Code of Criminal Procedure.

Sec. 61.9852. REPAYMENT AUTHORIZED. The board shall establish and administer a program to provide, in accordance with this subchapter and board rules, assistance in the repayment of student loans for persons who are employed as peace officers by state agencies or political subdivisions of this state and who apply and qualify for the assistance.

Sec. 61.9853. ELIGIBILITY. To be eligible to receive repayment assistance under this subchapter, a person must:

- (1) apply to the board;
- (2) be a resident of this state;
- (3) at the time of application for repayment assistance have been employed full-time for at least one year as, and be currently employed full-time as, a peace officer by a state agency or political subdivision of this state;

1 (4) have earned at least 60 hours of course credit at a
2 public or private or independent institution of higher education in
3 this state before becoming a peace officer; and

4 (5) comply with any additional requirement adopted by
5 board rule.

6 Sec. 61.9854. LIMITATIONS. (a) On qualifying for
7 repayment assistance under this subchapter, a person may receive
8 repayment assistance for each year of employment as a peace
9 officer, not to exceed five years.

10 (b) The amount of repayment assistance that a person may
11 receive for each year of employment as a peace officer may not
12 exceed 20 percent of the peace officer's total amount of eligible
13 loans as provided by Section 61.9855.

14 (c) The total amount of repayment assistance provided under
15 this subchapter to a person may not exceed \$20,000.

16 (d) The total amount of repayment assistance provided under
17 this subchapter may not exceed the total amount of gifts and grants
18 accepted by the board for the repayment assistance, legislative
19 appropriations for the repayment assistance, and other funds
20 available to the board for the repayment assistance.

21 Sec. 61.9855. ELIGIBLE LOANS. (a) The board may provide
22 repayment assistance for the repayment of any student loan received
23 by an eligible person through any lender for the cost of attendance
24 at a public or private or independent institution of higher
25 education for a semester or other term that ended not earlier than
26 60 months before the date of the person initially becoming a peace
27 officer.

1 (b) The board may withhold repayment assistance for a
2 student loan that is in default at the time of the peace officer's
3 application.

4 (c) The board may not provide repayment assistance for the
5 repayment of a loan for the cost of attendance for credit hours a
6 person earns after becoming a peace officer.

7 Sec. 61.9856. REPAYMENT. (a) The board shall deliver any
8 repayment under this subchapter in a lump sum payable to the lender
9 and the peace officer, in accordance with any applicable federal
10 law.

11 (b) A repayment under this subchapter may be applied to any
12 amount due in connection with the loan.

13 Sec. 61.9857. ACCEPTANCE OF GIFTS. The board may solicit
14 and accept gifts and grants from any source for the purposes of this
15 subchapter.

16 Sec. 61.9858. RULES. (a) The board shall adopt rules as
17 necessary to administer this subchapter.

18 (b) The board shall distribute a copy of the rules adopted
19 under this section and pertinent information regarding this
20 subchapter to:

21 (1) each public and private or independent institution
22 of higher education in this state;

23 (2) any appropriate state agency; and

24 (3) any appropriate professional association.

25 SECTION 2. The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board
26 shall adopt the rules for repayment assistance under Subchapter II,
27 Chapter 61, Education Code, as added by this Act, not later than

1 December 1, 2009.

2 SECTION 3. This Act takes effect immediately if it receives
3 a vote of two-thirds of all the members elected to each house, as
4 provided by Section 39, Article III, Texas Constitution. If this
5 Act does not receive the vote necessary for immediate effect, this
6 Act takes effect September 1, 2009.