

## LEGISLATIVE BUDGET BOARD

Austin, Texas

### FISCAL NOTE, 81ST LEGISLATIVE REGULAR SESSION

May 20, 2009

**TO:** Honorable Judith Zaffirini, Chair, Senate Committee on Higher Education

**FROM:** John S. O'Brien, Director, Legislative Budget Board

**IN RE: HB2347** by Thibaut (Relating to tuition and laboratory fee exemptions at public institutions of higher education for certain peace officers enrolled in criminal justice or law enforcement management-related course work.), **As Engrossed**

**No significant fiscal implication to the State is anticipated.**

The bill would extend the tuition and laboratory fee exemption program currently for firefighters enrolled in fire science curricula to peace officers employed by political subdivisions of the state who enroll in a course or courses offered as part of a criminal justice or law enforcement management-related curriculum designed for peace officers. The bill would require the Higher Education Coordinating Board to develop rules governing the granting or denial the exemption and a uniform listing of degree programs covered the exemption. Under provisions of the bill, if the legislature does not specifically appropriate funds to an institution to pay the institution's costs associated with the exemption, the governing board of each institution shall report the estimated costs to the Senate Finance Committee and the House Appropriations Committee for that semester.

Based on information provided by the Higher Education Coordinating Board, in fiscal year 2008 a total of 1,706 paid firefighters were reported as receiving exemptions totaling \$1,394,202. Approximately 87% or 1,487 of the firefighters attended public community colleges and 11% or 193 of the firefighters attended public universities. The average awards were \$1,569 at universities and \$707 at community colleges. Over the past three years, the awards have grown by approximately 25% per year.

According to the Texas Workforce Commission, there are 26,250 persons in Texas employed as firefighters and 55,650 employed as peace officers. The Higher Education Coordinating Board assumed the same share of volunteer firefighters would use the exemption as of paid firefighters. To estimate the number of recipients they multiplied the number of peace officers (54,600) by the share of paid firefighters receiving exemptions (1,706/26,250). Based on these calculations 3,548 peace officers would eventually use the exemption. Since this will be a new program for peace officers, they assumed 35% of this number would enroll in fiscal year 2010, growing by 10% per year thereafter resulting in 1,241 enrolling in fiscal year 2010, growing to 2,660 by fiscal year 2014.

Based on these assumptions, the Higher Education Coordinating Board has calculated that total tuition exemption for all students in all sectors, to be \$1,341,549 for fiscal year 2010 and \$1,984,266 in fiscal year 2011. The decreases in tuition would increase in future years as the number of peace officers claiming the tuition exemption increased.

#### Local Government Impact

No fiscal implication to units of local government is anticipated.

**Source Agencies:** 781 Higher Education Coordinating Board, 720 The University of Texas System Administration, 758 Texas State University System, 769 University of North Texas System Administration

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