

BILL ANALYSIS

S.B. 851
By: Zaffirini
Higher Education
Committee Report (Unamended)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

This legislation would require the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board to set a single statewide financial aid deadline for all public four-year universities.

Currently, there is no law regarding a statewide financial aid deadline. Some institutions have their deadlines set in March, others in May, and others in June. This creates confusion when students have to meet different deadlines when applying to different institutions. Additionally, a single deadline will help the state support "financial aid weekends" and similar programs designed to inform students and parents regarding aid deadlines, priorities, forms, et cetera.

Many institutions of higher education also use financial aid deadlines as a way to compete with other universities by moving the deadline earlier in the year. For example, The University of Texas at Austin may push its deadline to March 30 to be able to provide financial aid to students who may also be considering other universities, which may have later deadlines. If a student receives a financial aid award package from one university before another, the student will likely attend that institution.

This bill establishes a single statewide priority deadline for financial aid. This will address student confusion and ensure that the state can direct concentrated outreach efforts around a specific date.

C.S.S.B. 851 amends current law relating to a uniform deadline for student financial assistance for public institutions of higher education other than public junior colleges.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

Rulemaking authority is expressly granted to the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board in SECTION 1 (Section 56.007, Education Code) of this bill.

ANALYSIS

SECTION 1. Amends Subchapter A, Chapter 56, Education Code, by adding Section 56.007, as follows:

Sec. 56.007. PRIORITY DEADLINE FOR STUDENT FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE.

(a) Requires the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) by rule to provide for a uniform priority application deadline for applications for financial assistance for an academic year.

(b) Prohibits the priority deadline from serving as a determination of eligibility for state financial assistance, but requires that otherwise eligible applicants who apply on or before the deadline be given priority consideration for available state financial assistance before other applicants.

(c) Requires THECB to consult with financial aid personnel at institutions of higher education in adopting rules providing for the deadline required under this section.

(d) Provides that this section only applies to a general academic teaching institution as defined by Section 61.003 (Definitions).

SECTION 2. Makes application of this Act prospective to the 2013-2014 academic year.

SECTION 3. Effective date: January 1, 2013.

EFFECTIVE DATE

January 1, 2013.