

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center
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S.B. 837
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Higher Education
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As Filed

AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

In addition to the rising cost of tuition at institutions of higher education, fees are also a significant cost to students attending college. Unlike tuition costs, which are determined by an institution's governing board, student fees can be raised through student elections, which traditionally have very low voter turnout, often less than 10 percent. Additionally, fees can be voted on by an institution's current student population and then continue for years to come and charged to students who had no vote in the original fee election.

In order to authorize or raise existing student fees, S.B. 837 requires that student elections at general academic institutions have at least 10 percent of the student population participate in the election. S.B. 837 also requires that the majority of those students participating have a certain amount of semester credit hours remaining to complete in their degree plan.

As proposed, S.B. 837 amends current law relating to requirements for student elections to authorize or increase certain fees at public institutions of higher education.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

This bill does not expressly grant any additional rulemaking authority to a state officer, institution, or agency.

SECTION BY SECTION ANALYSIS

SECTION 1. Amends Subchapter E, Chapter 54, Education Code, by adding Section 54.5001, as follows:

Sec. 54.5001. PARTICIPATION REQUIREMENTS FOR STUDENT FEE ELECTIONS. Provides that, notwithstanding any other provision of this subchapter or other law, a general student election held at a general academic teaching institution for the purpose of authorizing a student fee or approving an increase in the amount of an existing student fee is not valid unless:

- (1) at least 10 percent of the students enrolled at the institution participate in the election; and
- (2) not including the semester credit hours for which a student is enrolled on the date of the election, at least 50 percent of the students participating in the election have completed less than 75 semester credit hours toward the student's baccalaureate degree program, or 36 semester credit hours toward the student's master's degree program.

SECTION 2. Makes application of Section 54.5001, Education Code, as added by this Act, prospective.

SECTION 3. Effective date: September 1, 2017.