

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center
88R17139 JTZ-F

H.B. 2158
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Education
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Engrossed

AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

There is a nationwide shortage of volunteer firefighters, and fire departments and local communities in Texas have reported having a difficult time in attracting volunteer firefighters. Given this, the state needs to step in and provide volunteer firefighters with an additional incentive to join volunteer fire departments. H.B. 2158 makes the tuition and laboratory fees exemption for certain volunteer firefighters enrolled in courses offered as part of a fire science curriculum at public universities more widely available.

H.B. 2158 amends current law relating to tuition and fee exemptions for firefighters enrolled in certain courses 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 Section 54.353(a), Education Code, as follows:

(a) Requires the governing board of an institution of higher education to exempt from the payment of tuition and laboratory fees any student enrolled in one or more courses offered as part of a fire science curriculum who:

(1) makes no changes to this subdivision;

(2) is a member in good standing of a volunteer fire department that is registered with the Texas A&M Forest Service and responds to 9-1-1 emergency calls in a designated area and who:

(A) attends at least 20 hours of annual training approved by the State Firefighters' and Fire Marshals' Association of Texas;

(B) attends or provides support services for at least 25 percent of the department's emergencies in a calendar year; and

(C) creates this subdivision from existing text and makes nonsubstantive changes.

Deletes existing text requiring the governing board of an institution of higher education to exempt from the payment of tuition and laboratory fees any student who enrolled in one or more courses offered as part of a fire science curriculum who is currently and has been for at least one year, an active member of an organized volunteer fire department participating in the Texas Emergency Services Retirement System or a retirement system established under the Texas Local Fire Fighters Retirement Act (Article 6243e, Vernon's Texas Civil Statutes).

SECTION 2. Makes application of Section 54.353(a), Education Code, as amended by this Act, prospective to the 2023 fall semester.

SECTION 3. Effective date: upon passage or September 1, 2023.