

SUBJECT: Additional educational requirements for land surveyors

COMMITTEE: Licensing and Administrative Procedures — committee substitute recommended

VOTE: 7 ayes — Wilson, Kubiak, Goolsby, D. Jones, Pickett, Torres, Yarbrough
0 nays
2 absent — Brimer, Dear

WITNESSES: For — Steven E. Hanan and Kevin A. Meals, Texas Society of Professional Surveyors
Against — None
On — David A. Vilbig, Texas Board of Professional Land Surveyors

BACKGROUND: Certified surveyors-in-training may apply to become registered professional land surveyors after two years experience as surveyors-in-training.

Certification as a surveyor-in-training requires a bachelor's degree in surveying; a bachelor of science degree in another course of study, including 32 semester hours in board-approved courses, and one year of experience as a subordinate to a registered professional land surveyor; an associate degree in surveying and two years of experience; completion of 32 hours in land surveying or other board-approved courses and two years of experience; or a high school degree and four years of experience.

DIGEST: CSHB 201 would change the educational requirement for applicants to become registered professional land surveyors, as of September 1, 1997. In addition to two years of experience as surveyors-in-training, applicants would have to meet one of the following educational requirements:

- a bachelor's degree in surveying;
- a bachelor's degree, in any course of study, including at least 32 semester hours in any board-approved combination of civil engineering, land

surveying, mathematics, photogrammetry, forestry, land law, or the physical sciences and at least one year of board-accepted experience, or

- an associate degree, in any course of study, including at least 32 semester hours in any board-approved combination in civil engineering, land surveying, mathematics, photogrammetry, forestry, land law, or the physical sciences and at least *four* years of board-accepted experience.

Until September 1, 1997, applicants for registration as professional land surveyors could still have completed at least 32 semester hours of surveying without getting a degree, but they would have to have had *six* years of experience rather than two, and high school graduates would have to have had *ten* years of experience rather than four.

The revised educational and experience requirements would also apply to applicants for certification as surveyors-in-training, as of September 1, 1995.

SUPPORTERS
SAY:

Higher educational requirements for registration as a professional land surveyor are necessary to keep pace with rapid advances in technology in the field of surveying. In some cases applicants may have only a high school degree and four years of experience, while analyzing data produced by satellites and advanced electronic equipment requires knowledge of calculus, statistics and general scientific principles only learned at the college level. The new degree requirement for registration would be phased in and not take effect for two years.

A person can be taught in one hour to collect the necessary survey data using advanced equipment, but a basis in math and science for analysis of that data can only be taught in a classroom setting. Apprenticeship programs cannot take the place of that education.

Because an error in surveying might not show up for 10 or 20 years, when responsibility is impossible to trace, the public has a great interest in requiring firm minimum educational requirements for surveyors to prevent major damages down the road. It is also likely that if these educational requirements are enacted, colleges will rise to the occasion to provide the necessary classes.

Those who have not completed their degree requirements could still apply for certification as surveyors-in-training, although the experience requirement would be increased. However, as of September 1, 1997, certified surveyors-in-training could not be registered as professional land surveyors without a degree.

OPPONENTS
SAY:

CSHB 201 would discriminate against bright workers who cannot attend college for personal or financial reasons. In addition, people otherwise qualified might not pursue surveying because many colleges do not offer surveyor-specific courses. The multiple-year apprenticeship requirements more than make up for the classroom education for people in these situations. CSHB 201 might lead to higher surveying charges, since it is generally true that professions requiring more education charge more.

OTHER
OPPONENTS
SAY:

CSHB 201 would undermine the recommendations of the Sunset Advisory Commission and decisions made by the 72nd Legislature in 1991. The 71st Legislature in 1989 had required that applicants to be professional surveyors, after January 1, 1996, hold a bachelor's degree with at least 32 hours in surveying or surveying related courses. The 72nd Legislature repealed this requirement based on a recommendation of the Sunset Advisory Commission, which found the increased educational requirements burdensome and not in line with the requirements of other states. HB 201 would flip state policy yet again.

NOTES:

The original bill would have required that to become registered professional land surveyors applicants would have to have a bachelor's degree after January 1, 2003.

CSHB 201 was originally sent to the Local and Consent Calendars Committee. It was withdrawn from the calendar on March 30 and transferred to the Calendars Committee.