

SUBJECT: Allowing universities to adopt integrated pest management programs

COMMITTEE: Environmental Regulation — committee substitute recommended

VOTE: 8 ayes — Chisum, Jackson, Dukes, Hirschi, Howard, Kuempel, Puente,
Talton

0 nays

1 absent — Allen

WITNESSES: For — John Gargas, Austin Independent School District; Reggie James,
Consumer's Union; Susan Pitman, The Chemical Connection; Jeanne
Guinn, Gordon Bennett

Against — Ned Ewart

On — Benny Mathis, Structural Pest Control Board; Jimmy Olson, Texas
Mosquito Control Association

BACKGROUND : The Structural Pest Control Board (SPCB), regulates the activities of
commercial pest control operators who apply pesticides in and around
residences, businesses, and other structures.

Integrated pest management (IPM) techniques can be defined as the
coordinated use of pest and environmental information with available pest
control methods to prevent unacceptable levels of pest damage by the most
economical means and with the least possible hazard to people, property and
the environment.

The Structural Pest Control Act requires public school districts to adopt
integrated pest management programs incorporating standards developed by
the SPCB. Standards include a list of products that a school district is
allowed to use in its applications and a requirement that the least toxic
methods available to control pests, rodents, insects and weeds be used.

DIGEST:

CSHB 1726 would amend the Structural Pest Control Act to allow an institution of higher learning to adopt an integrated pest management (IPM) program that would incorporate standards consistent with the current requirements in place for public school districts under the act.

The bill also would change the standards that the SPCB is currently required to establish by requiring that the least *hazardous* rather than the least *toxic* methods available be used to control pests, rodents, insects and weeds.

The adoption or the decision to adopt an IPM program could not be construed either to relieve the institution from liability or to imply that it had incurred liability because it had or did not have an IPM program.

If an institution of higher education established an IPM program under the provisions of HB 1726, the governing board of the institution would be required to report the results of the program to the speaker of the House and the lieutenant governor before September 1, 2001. The report would have to include an analysis of the costs and benefits of establishing the program.

The bill would take effect September 1, 1997.

SUPPORTERS
SAY:

The bill would permit institutions of higher education to adopt IPM programs, protecting students and university employees from dangerous chemicals. Overexposure to pesticides has been linked to cancer, learning disabilities, and memory loss. Often it is unnecessary to use hazardous pesticides since integrated pest management can work as well or better to control pests and weeds.

When chemicals are sprayed in the buildings and on the grounds of college campuses and universities, large numbers of students and university employees who have no choice in the matter are exposed to them. University students are particularly susceptible to overexposure since the chemicals may be sprayed in dormitories, libraries and classrooms.

CSHB 1726 would encourage institutions of higher learning to voluntarily try IPM programs. The SPCB would have no trouble overseeing university IPM programs with current staff and spending levels. Public school districts, which have been required to use IPM techniques since 1995, have

found the programs successful at controlling pests at approximately the same costs as other methods of pest management — the benefits to the health and safety of the students and university employees, however, is incalculable.

The bill would also give the Legislature a chance to evaluate the efficacy of IPM programs by requiring universities who put them in place to report to the Legislature in four years concerning program costs and benefits.

**OPPONENTS
SAY:**

There is no need for a bill permitting universities to do what they can do already. Any university that wishes to do so can implement IPM techniques immediately. This legislation is an attempt to lay the groundwork for mandates in the future that will require rather than permit all universities to adopt IPM programs.

Many public school districts across the state have not complied with the state mandate to adopt IPM programs and the SPCB barely has the staff to oversee current programs. Adding to their workload without additional funding would lower the efficacy of current IPM programs.

**OTHER
OPPONENTS
SAY:**

If the state really wants to reduce health hazards to students they should mandate strong educational requirements for all pesticide applicators rather than IPM programs. Health hazards resulting from pesticides usually result from chemicals that are misused, rather than the chemicals themselves.

NOTES:

The committee substitute did not include provisions in the original version requiring institutions of higher education to adopt IPM programs, and requiring the SPCB by October 1, 1997, to establish standards for IPM programs at institutions of higher education.