

**SUBJECT:** Exempting university employees from engineering licensing requirements

**COMMITTEE:** Higher Education — favorable, without amendment

**VOTE:** 7 ayes — Rangel, F. Brown, Farabee, J. Jones, Morrison, E. Reyna, West  
0 nays  
2 absent — Goolsby, Uher

**SENATE VOTE:** On final passage, May 1 — 30-0

**WITNESSES:** None

**BACKGROUND:** The Texas Board of Professional Engineers requires university faculty teaching upper-division courses in engineering theory or principles of engineering analysis and design to be licensed as professional engineers.

**DIGEST:** SB 1797 would exempt from the licensing requirements of the Texas Engineering Practice Act any person employed by a public, private, or independent institution of higher education who performed research or instructional work within the scope of the person's employment.

The bill would take immediate effect if finally passed by a two-thirds record vote of the membership of each house. Otherwise, it would take effect September 1, 2001.

**SUPPORTERS SAY:** SB 1797 would exempt university engineering faculty from licensing requirements. As engineering education has evolved in recent years, faculties have come to include members from increasingly diverse fields. Many faculty members have backgrounds or degrees in specialized fields, such as computer engineering or materials science. Although such faculty members often are experts in their field, they must pass a generalized engineering examination, which often covers topics outside their field, to pass licensing requirements.

The licensing requirement often makes the extremely competitive task of recruiting outstanding faculty even more difficult. A push is currently underway to graduate more engineering students from Texas universities and attracting prominent faculty is critical to this effort. The current licensing requirement acts as a disincentive for prospective faculty to accept teaching or research positions at Texas universities.

Teaching engineering in universities or colleges provides a valuable service to the state and does not involve engineering services that could endanger the public. Professors are not required to be licensed to teach in other professional fields, such as law or medical schools. An engineering professor is not providing engineering services. SB 1797 would not exempt a faculty member from licensing requirements for work, such as project consulting, that the professor performed outside of the educational capacity.

OPPONENTS  
SAY:

Exempting engineering faculty from licensing requirements would set a bad example for engineering students. Engineering faculty members convey not only substantive knowledge to their students but also the responsibilities and duties that are part of being a professional engineer.

The requirements to become a licensed engineer are strenuous because of the profession's integral role in public safety. No other profession, with the possible exception of medicine, does more to protect public health, safety, and welfare. Virtually every product, road, vehicle, or building with which the public comes in contact has been designed or studied by an engineer. Licensing requirements for engineers, whether faculty or practitioners, ensure a minimum level of competence in a critical profession.