

SUBJECT: Readmission of higher education students after active military duty

COMMITTEE: Higher Education — favorable, without amendment

VOTE: 9 ayes — Morrison, Goolsby, F. Brown, Dawson, Gallego, Giddings, Harper-Brown, J. Jones, Rose
0 nays

WITNESSES: None

DIGEST: HB 1170 would require a higher education institution to readmit a student who withdrew from the institution to perform active military service as a member of the United States armed forces or Texas National Guard. Institutions would have to readmit such students in any academic term that began up to one year after qualifying students were released from active duty. Students who otherwise were eligible to register for classes would not have to reapply to regain admission, and institutions could require students to produce proof about the nature and duration of the military service.

The bill would not apply to students who withdrew to perform one or more training exercises as members of the Texas National Guard.

The bill would apply to readmissions for the first semester or academic term that began after the bill took effect. 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, 2005.

SUPPORTERS SAY: Students who must withdraw from university to perform active military service should not be inconvenienced or penalized by having to reapply to that university after their release. Some higher education institutions require returning soldiers to reapply and wait to be readmitted, which causes unnecessary delay for returning students who already are behind in their studies. In some cases, students even have been forced to pay a new application fee because institutions are not required to readmit them automatically. The increasingly large number of returning students who have served our country and protected the freedom of others should not encounter barriers to their reentry into college life.

OPPONENTS
SAY:

This bill is a good first step at addressing the problems encountered by students who return to university after military deployment, but it would not adequately address all the difficulties that arise in this circumstance. While higher education institutions are eager to accommodate students who serve our nation in the armed forces, student soldiers generally do not formally withdraw when they are called for duty, and university registrars often are left to assume that such students are no longer active. Unfortunately, this can result in delayed readmission and the assessment of additional fees. The bill should allow universities to establish a formal process for the readmission of students who serve in the military and require students who are placed on active duty to notify the institution and request that their file be suspended until their return. This would alleviate much of the confusion and administrative hassle that all parties seek to avoid upon the student's return.