

SUBJECT: Nonvoting student regent on university system board of regents

COMMITTEE: Higher Education — committee substitute recommended

VOTE: 8 ayes — Morrison, Goolsby, F. Brown, Dawson, Giddings, Harper-Brown, J. Jones, Rose

0 nays

1 absent — Gallego

WITNESSES: For — Brent Chaney; Damon Garcia, Student Government Association, University of Texas San Antonio; Chuck Hempstead, Texas Association of College Teachers; Sam Laine, Omar Ochoa, University of Texas student body; Jerry Parker, Associated Student Government of Texas State

Against — Chris Diem, Texas A&M Student Government

DIGEST: CSHB 1968 would amend ch. 51, subch. G of Education Code, to establish a nonvoting student regent for each university system as well as for the general academic teaching institutions that are not a part of a university system.

A student regent would be an officer of the state but not a member of the board of regents of the system to which the student regent was appointed. A student regent would have the same powers and duties as the members of the board of regents of the system, except that the student regent could not vote on any matter before the board or make or second any motion before the board and would not be counted in determining a quorum.

The student government of each general academic teaching institution would solicit applicants for the position by September 1 of each year and would select five applicants and send the applications to the university system chancellor by November 1. The name of the applicant and the name of the institution where the applicant was enrolled would be removed from the application. The uniform application form would be developed by the chancellor of each university system. The president of an institution that was not part of a university system would develop a uniform application form.

From those applicants, the chancellor would select two or more applicants and send the recommendations to the governor no later than December 1. The governor could review all applications received by the student governments and could request to review information required to be removed from the applications. On February 1, if possible, the governor, with the advice and consent of the Senate, would appoint one of the applicants to serve for a one-year term that would expire on the next February 1. The governor would not be required to appoint an applicant recommended by the chancellor.

A student regent would have to be enrolled as an undergraduate or graduate student at the time of appointment and throughout the regent's term. A student enrolled in the summer term would be considered eligible if the student was enrolled for the preceding semester and was registered or preregistered for the following fall semester, if the student had not completed the student's degree program but was eligible to continue the program the following fall semester, or if the student had completed a degree program the preceding semester and was admitted to another degree program for the following fall semester.

The initial term of a student regent appointed for a state university system or for a state university would expire February 1, 2007. The student governments, the chancellor of each university system, the president of each university that was not part of a university system, and the governor would implement the requirements of the bill as soon as practicable after the bill took effect.

The bill would take effect September 1, 2005.

**SUPPORTERS
SAY:**

Boards of regents of university systems have done a good job of reaching out to students, but should have a student representing the voice and needs of the students. The rising cost of higher education directly affects students, increasing their burden and requiring them to work more hours. While it is true that many students take longer than four years to complete a degree, it is largely due to the fact that they have to work more to earn the increased tuition. Many students work all summer so that they do not have to work during the school year and cannot always take summer classes. Since the Legislature deregulated designated tuition and allowed the boards of regents to set this tuition, some students have expressed concern that their voices have not been heard, and their perspective needs to be represented on the board.

Many students would be capable of handling the duties of being a student regent, including sensitive, confidential issues. Some students are going to school concurrently while working with NASA. Other students handle large portfolios while in MBA programs. Being a student regent would add a dimension to a student's education beyond what that student would learn in school.

Thirty-nine other states currently have student regents, as well as the Texas Guaranteed Student Loan Corporation, and they have proved to be a valuable asset.

**OPPONENTS
SAY:**

The bill should prohibit a student regent from being present during executive sessions. If the board of regents were dealing with something as sensitive as the firing of a president, it would be awkward to have this proceeding aired in front of a student. This type of action is better left to the voting regents of the board.

NOTES:

The substitute differs from the original in that the student regent would be an officer of the state but not a member of the board of regents. The student regent may not vote or be used to determine a quorum, or make or second any motions. The substitute would remove language relating to a non-voting student regent designate and a voting student regent and all language regarding specific boards of regents.

The companion bill, SB 934 by Wentworth, has been referred to the Senate Education Subcommittee on Higher Education.