

- SUBJECT:** Allowing public school libraries to participate in Texshare consortium
- COMMITTEE:** Public Education — favorable, without amendment
- VOTE:** 8 ayes — Grusendorf, Branch, Delisi, Dutton, Eissler, Hochberg, B. Keffer, Mowery
- 0 nays
- 1 absent — Oliveira
- WITNESSES:** For — Gloria Meraz, Texas Library Association; Shanna R. Weisfeld, Texas State Teachers Association; Jo Hannah Whitsett, Association of Texas Professional Educators; Janice Richardson; Julie Todaro
- Against — None
- On — Shirley Beverly, Texas State Library and Archives Commission
- BACKGROUND:** Government Code, ch. 441, authorizes the Texas State Library and Archives Commission to operate the TexShare Library Consortium as a resource-sharing consortium for public libraries and libraries at higher education institutions and nonprofit corporations and to assess different fees for different categories of membership.
- TexShare is required to provide electronic networks, shared databases, and other infrastructure necessary to enable the libraries in the consortium to share resources, negotiate and execute statewide contracts for information products and services, coordinate library planning, research, and development, and train library personnel. The commission may enter into group purchasing agreements under which materials or services may be obtained at discount rates by two or more libraries if the commission determines that the agreements offer members the most cost-effective method of purchasing library materials or services.
- DIGEST:** HB 661 would allow designated public school libraries to participate in the TexShare Library Consortium and would specify that one of the goals of TexShare would be to enhance the ability of public schools to further student achievement and lifelong learning through designated public

school library participation in group purchasing agreements.

The Texas State Library and Archives Commission could designate public school libraries that could participate in group purchasing agreements provided by the consortium and would have to adopt rules establishing criteria for participation. The commission could allow for public school participation in group purchasing agreements only to the extent that it was able to do so efficiently and in a manner that did not reduce services to consortium members.

The bill would take effect September 1, 2005.

**SUPPORTERS
SAY:**

HB 661 would put valuable research material back into public school libraries by giving school districts approved by the Library and Archives Commission the opportunity to participate in TexShare, which provides online databases and other resources to libraries throughout the state. State funding for a Texas Education Agency (TEA) program that provided on-line databases to public school libraries was eliminated in 2003, and school libraries no longer have access to this resource. As a result, students using their school library for research projects have to rely on printed materials, many of which are extremely outdated, or computer search engines, which do not deliver the quality or depth of information available through TexShare. The bill would allow school districts willing to pay for this service the ability to offer their students access to the wide range of online resources offered by TexShare.

**OPPONENTS
SAY:**

The state should provide online database access for all public school students by providing funding for all school districts to participate in TexShare rather than depending on individual districts to pay for participation.

NOTES:

The companion bill, SB 483 by Staples, passed the Senate on the Local and Uncontested Calendar on March 31 and has been referred to the House Public Education Committee.