

- SUBJECT:** Awarding higher-education course credit to certain military veterans
- COMMITTEE:** Defense and Veterans' Affairs — committee substitute recommended
- VOTE:** 6 ayes — Corte, Vaught, Edwards, Ortiz, Pickett, C. Turner  
0 nays  
3 absent — Chavez, Farias, Maldonado
- WITNESSES:** For — Steven Shaw, University of Texas Student Veterans Association; John Stewart; (*Registered, but did not testify:* James Cunningham, Texas Council of Chapters Military Officers Association of America; James S. Duncan, Texas Lone Star Chapter - Korean War Veterans; Morgan Little, Texas Committee Employer Support of Guard & Reserve; John A. Miterko, Texas Coalition of Veteran Organizations)  
  
Against — None  
  
On — Macgregor Stephenson, Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board
- BACKGROUND:** Education Code, sec. 51.3041 allows the awarding of course credit for certain military training. Among other requirements, institutions must determine whether the substance of that training satisfies the purpose of the course for which the student seeks credit.
- DIGEST:** HB 269 would require higher education institutions to award to a student course credit for military service. The credit could count toward all physical education courses required by an institution for a degree, and up to 12 elective course credits for courses outside the student's major or minor. It would apply to a student who withdrew to perform active military service and was readmitted.  
  
The student would have to have graduated from an accredited public or private high school in the state or from a high school operated by the U.S. Department of Defense. The student would have to have been honorably discharged from the armed forces with at least two years of service or discharged due to a disability.

Institutions would be authorized to adopt rules requiring proof of the student's duration in the military and of the student's discharge status and would not be prohibited from awarding additional course credits for a student's military service as the institution considered appropriate.

The bill would apply to students attending a higher education institution, regardless of whether the student was admitted before the effective date of the bill.

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, 2009.

**SUPPORTERS  
SAY:**

For individuals who return from military service and enroll in college, transitioning from soldier to student can be difficult. CSHB 269 would make the transition easier. The bill would increase veterans' attendance and graduation rates from college and would have a positive impact not only for on veterans but also on Texas. While there would be some lost revenue due to granting course credit, the bill also would result in students graduating faster. Currently, it is up to each university to consider awarding a veteran course credit.

There is no standardized set of rules or guidelines for the awarding of credit based on military service. Each institution would determine the number of credits they would accept and how they would be applied toward a student's degree. Most schools only grant military science or physical education credits or choose not to accept any non-collegiate credit. Given the alarmingly low graduate rate for veterans, Texas should do more.

According to the latest numbers from the U.S. Department of Education (DOE), veterans are less likely to graduate from college than students who have never served in the military. The DOE's most recent data further shows that just 3 percent of veterans who entered a four-year college graduated in six years. U.S. Census Bureau data shows that only 25 percent of all veterans have graduated from a college or university. These statistics are very disconcerting, since one of the main reasons young people join the military is for the educational benefits.

A Department of Veterans Affairs survey shows that 18 percent of veterans recently returned from active duty are unemployed, and of those

who are employed, 25 percent earn less than \$22,000 per year. The bill would not only assist veterans looking to start careers in civilian life but would also help veterans obtain an undergraduate degree to pursue an officer's commission at officer candidate schools.

**OPPONENTS  
SAY:**

The course credit for military service required by CSHB 269 would only be available to students who have graduated from a public or private high school in Texas or from a high school operated by the U.S. Department of Defense. It would exclude students that graduated from an out-of-state high school but live in Texas and otherwise would be eligible for this benefit.

**NOTES:**

The substitute replaced kinesiology courses with physical education courses and specified that the elective course requirements for the student's degree program would be for courses outside the student's major and minor. The substitute also specified that an institution would not be prohibited from awarding additional course credits.