

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center
76R442 KEL-D

S.B. 1702
By: Ellis
Higher Education
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As Filed

DIGEST

Currently, Texas law does not provide for a scholarship program to assist deserving students at public law schools who commit to practice law in certain public interest fields. High loan debts deter students from accepting minimal-paying positions with the state. By relieving students of loan repayment the program creates a larger pool of competent state attorneys that will remain with the state for a longer period of time. S.B. 1702 would create a scholarship program to assist deserving students at public law students who commit to practice law in certain public interest fields.

PURPOSE

As proposed, S.B. 1702 creates a scholarship program to assist deserving students at public law schools who commit to practice law in certain public interest fields.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

Rulemaking authority is granted to the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board in SECTION 1 (Section 54.219(j), Chapter 54D, Education Code) of this bill.

SECTION BY SECTION ANALYSIS

SECTION 1. Amends Chapter 54D, Education Code, by adding Section 54.219, as follows:

Sec. 54.219. TEXAS LEGAL SERVICES SCHOLARSHIPS. Defines "indigent," "law schools," and "trust fund." Requires the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (board) to award scholarships, in a number to be determined by the board after reviewing the total amount of money available to the Texas Legal Service Scholarship Trust Fund (trust fund), to eligible students. Authorizes the board to distribute a scholarship to the recipient in installments during the time the recipient attends law school. Authorizes a scholarship recipient to use a scholarship to pay the tuition and fees or other expenses necessary to attend law school. Provides that a student must meet certain requirements to be eligible for a scholarship. Requires a student to agree to serve for five years in this state working as a certain type of attorney. Requires a scholarship recipient to fulfill certain public service obligations. Sets forth requirements for the student's promissory note. Requires the board to determine the amount required to be repaid by a scholarship recipient who does not complete the person's obligations. Provides that a student who receives a scholarship under this section is considered to have failed to satisfy the conditions of the scholarship, and the scholarship automatically becomes a loan, if the student fails to remain enrolled in or to make steady progress in law school without good cause as determined by the board. Requires the board to adopt certain rules as necessary for the administration of this section. Requires the board to distribute to each law school the eligibility criteria and a description of the weight given to each factor and the role each factor plays in the decision to award scholarships, before the date applications for scholarships are considered under this section for any academic period. Requires the board to award scholarships under this section from the amount available in the trust fund. Sets forth requirements for the trust fund. Authorizes the board to solicit gifts and grants from any public or private source for the purpose of this section and to deposit a gift or grant to the credit of the trust fund. Authorizes the legislature to appropriate money to the trust fund.

SECTION 2. Requires the board to adopt rules for awarding scholarships under Section 54.291, Education Code, as added by this Act, not later than December 1, 1999. Requires the board to award scholarships under Section 54.291, Education Code, as added by this Act, beginning with the 2000-2001 academic year.

SECTION 3. Emergency clause.
Effective date: 90 days after adjournment.