

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center

S.B. 101
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Education
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As Filed

AUTHOR'S/SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

The Hazlewood Act, set forth in Section 54.203, Texas Education Code, entitles eligible veterans, and the children of service members who die during or directly due to their service in the armed forces, to free tuition and free or reduced fees for up to 150 college credit hours at publicly supported institutions of higher education (IHEs).

Currently, IHEs independently manage the Hazlewood tuition exemptions. Due to the lack of a centralized database, there is no way for the IHEs to track veterans' eligibility and use of benefits. IHEs have no way of ensuring against fraudulent "double-dipping" into the allowed benefits. Additionally, it has been difficult to determine the true cost of the Hazlewood Act to the state because of conflicting statistics stemming from the reporting requirements. Any future changes to or the expansion of the Hazlewood benefits need to include accurate tracking of the tuition exemptions, both in the aggregate and individually.

During the interim, the Senate Committee on Veteran Affairs and Military Installations recommended the establishment of funding for a database dedicated to track the use of Hazlewood benefits and to clarify the overall cost to improve management of the program.

As proposed, S.B. 101 requires IHEs to electronically report to the Texas Veterans Commission (TVC) information relating to individuals receiving Hazlewood tuition exemptions. S.B. 101 also requires TVC to develop a system to electronically monitor the use of the Hazlewood Act.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

This bill does not expressly grant any additional rulemaking authority to a state officer, institution, or agency.

SECTION BY SECTION ANALYSIS

SECTION 1. Amends Section 54.203, Education Code, by adding Subsection (h), to require the governing board of each institution of higher education (IHE) to electronically report to the Texas Veterans Commission (TVC) the information required by Section 434.107 (Electronic System To Monitor Tuition Exemptions for Veterans and Dependents), Government Code, relating to each individual receiving an exemption from fees and charges under Subsection (a) or (b). Requires the IHE to report the information no later than December 31 of each year for the fall semester, May 31 of each year for the spring semester, and September 30 of each year for the summer session.

SECTION 2. Amends Subchapter C, Chapter 434, Government Code, by adding Section 434.107, as follows:

Sec. 434.107. ELECTRONIC SYSTEM TO MONITOR TUITION EXEMPTIONS FOR VETERANS AND DEPENDENTS. Requires TVC to develop a system to electronically monitor the use of tuition exemptions under Section 54.203 (Veterans, Dependents, Etc.), Education Code. Requires the system to allow TVC to electronically receive, for each semester, certain information from IHE.

SECTION 3. Requires TVC to develop the monitoring system no later than October 1, 2005.

SECTION 4. Effective date: upon passage or September 1, 2005.