

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center

S.B. 95
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S/C on Higher Education
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As Filed

AUTHOR'S/SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

The proximity of El Paso to Juarez, a Mexican city with over one million residents that contributes to industrial and air pollution, and soil contamination, impacts Texas, but the state has little control. On any given day, hundreds of trucks can be found parked with their motors running near the U.S.-Mexico boarder. Numerous trucks sit and wait to cross the border, while others park overnight with their engines running to maintain air conditioning and/or refrigeration units.

Exposure to diesel exhaust has been associated with asthma-like reactions, and cancerous and noncancerous adverse health outcomes, like lung disease. Rates of asthma, a disease that is exacerbated by poor air quality, have nearly doubled in the last twenty years.

Asthma rates along the border are particularly high due to poor air quality caused by international bridge crossings and increasingly high traffic as a result of the North American Free Trade Agreement, and about 50 percent of all children enrolled in the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) in Hidalgo and Webb counties are diagnosed with asthma.

As proposed, S.B. 95 would establish the Asthma Research Center (center) at the Texas Tech University Campus in El Paso. The center would work with The University of Texas at El Paso, the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality, and the Texas Department of State Health Services to accomplish its goals. The center would conduct research on asthma and other health problems associated with industrial and environmental pollution, air and soil quality, and motor vehicle traffic along the border.

The center would develop a 10-year strategic plan, to be updated every two years, to establish environmental standards in relation to health issues and recommend preventative and corrective steps to reduce adverse health effects. The strategic plan would also recommend guidelines on air quality and air pollution standards in relation to health issues, as well as the monitoring and compliance necessary to enforce the guidelines.

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 Chapter 110, Education Code, by adding Section 110.151, as follows:

Sec. 110.151. TEXAS TECH ASTHMA RESEARCH CENTER. (a) Defines "board" and "center."

(b) Requires the board of regents of the Texas Tech University System (board) to establish the Texas Tech Asthma Research Center (center). Requires the center to operate in collaboration with The University of Texas at El Paso and the Texas Commission on Environment Quality.

(c) Requires the center to conduct research related to asthma and conditions associated with asthma, including health problems associated with industrial

pollution and other environmental contamination in this state in the region that borders the United Mexican States.

(d) Requires the center to undertake certain activities.

(e) Requires the center to develop a 10-year strategic plan to guide and evaluate the center's progress toward achieving the center's purposes in accordance with this section, focusing on the region of this state that borders the United Mexican States. Requires the strategic plan to follow certain procedures.

(f) Requires the center to update the strategic plan required by Subsection (e) at least every two years. Requires the board, no later than December 15 of each even-numbered year, to submit to the legislature a report concerning the strategic plan, including any recommendations for legislative action.

(g) Requires the board to organize, control, and manage the center.

(h) Requires the board to approve the center's employment of personnel and operating budget. Provides that an employee of the center is an employee of the Texas Tech University System.

(i) Requires the board to select a site for the center at the regional academic health center of the Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center in El Paso.

(j) Authorizes the center to enter into an agreement or to cooperate with a public or private entity to perform the research functions of the center.

(k) Authorizes the board to solicit, accept, and administer gifts and grants from any public or private source for the use and benefit of the center.

SECTION 2. Requires the board to establish the Texas Tech Asthma Research Center as provided by Section 110.151, Education Code, as added by this Act, no later than January 1, 2007.

SECTION 3. Effective date: upon passage or September 1, 2005.