

BILL ANALYSIS

C.S.H.B. 269
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Defense & Veterans' Affairs
Committee Report (Substituted)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

Higher education is vital for success in our modern economy, however, according to the latest data from the U.S. Census Bureau, only 25 percent of veterans have graduated from a college or university. Providing an incentive and support for veterans to pursue a college education after returning from service is an important means to help them succeed as they assimilate back into civilian life. This bill recognizes the educational value of the occupational specialty and training a veteran receives while in the military and encourages veterans to enroll in and graduate from college.

C.S.H.B. 269 awards course credit for all physical education courses required for an undergraduate degree and up to 12 additional elective semester credit hours that may be applied to satisfy an elective course requirement for the student's degree program for courses outside the student's major or minor to a veteran who has graduated from a Texas high school and who is honorably discharged and either completed a minimum of two years of service or was discharged because of a disability.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

It is the committee's opinion that rulemaking authority is expressly granted to institutions of higher education in SECTION 1 of this bill.

ANALYSIS

C.S.H.B. 269 amends the Education Code to require an institution of higher education to award an undergraduate student who is admitted to the institution, including a student who has been readmitted after withdrawing to perform active military service, course credit for all physical education courses required by the institution for an undergraduate degree and for additional semester credit hours, not to exceed 12, that may be applied to satisfy any elective course requirements for the student's degree program for courses outside the student's major or minor if the student graduated from an accredited Texas public or private high school or from a high school operated by the United States Department of Defense, and is an honorably discharged former member of the armed forces of the United States who completed at least two years of service in the armed services or was discharged because of a disability. The bill specifies that this requirement does not prohibit an institution of higher education from awarding additional course credit for a student's military service as the institution considers appropriate. The bill authorizes an institution of higher education to adopt rules requiring reasonable proof from a student of the fact and duration of the student's military service and the student's military discharge status. The bill makes its provisions applicable to a student attending an institution of higher education, without regard to whether the student was admitted to the institution before the effective date of this bill, and defines "institution of higher education" for the purposes of its provisions.

EFFECTIVE DATE

On passage, or, if the act does not receive the necessary vote, the act takes effect September 1, 2009.

COMPARISON OF ORIGINAL AND SUBSTITUTE

C.S.H.B. 269 differs from the original by awarding course credit for all physical education courses required for the qualified student's undergraduate degree program and for up to 12 additional semester credit hours that may be applied to satisfy any elective course requirements for the student's degree program for courses outside the student's major or minor, whereas the original awards up to 12 semester credit hours for any kinesiology course or elective course required for the student's degree program. The substitute adds a provision not in the original specifying that its provisions do not prohibit an institution of higher education from awarding additional course credit for a student's military service as the institution considers appropriate.