

Higher Ed Legislative Update

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American Association of University
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February 21, 2025

*Speaking for myself as a private
individual and not representing any
group, institution, or organizing other
than Texas AAUP*



AGENDA

- Academic freedom/shared governance
- Higher ed bills in the Texas Legislature
- Getting involved remotely & in person

ACADEMIC FREEDOM

- Teachers need freedom to teach so students have freedom to learn.
- Free inquiry, free expression, intellectual exploration, and open dissent are critical for student learning and the advancement of knowledge.
- Academic freedom is the freedom from censorship by the institution in the instructional staff 's teaching, research, and expression.
- AF allows instructors to develop/disseminate new knowledge from all viewpoints, including conservative, moderate, liberal, apolitical.
- Safeguards include shared governance, tenure and due process.
- Codified in the [1940 AAUP Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure](#) adopted by all Texas public university systems as well as many community colleges and private institutions in Texas

SHARED GOVERNANCE

- Higher ed Administration delegates tasks using a division of labor
- Shared decision-making among students, staff, faculty, administrators, and board of governors based on communication, trust, mutual understanding, and transparency
- Faculty (due to expertise) have primary decision-making authority
 - Curriculum, subject matter, and methods of instruction
 - Matters related to faculty status – appointments, reappointments, non-reappointments, promotions, granting of tenure, dismissal
- Faculty have authority in financial exigency and program closures
- 1966 AAUP Statement of Government of Colleges and Universities adopted by more than 1500 colleges and universities in the US

89th LEGISLATIVE SESSION

- Nov. 11, 2024. First day bills could be filed.
- Jan. 14, 2025. Opening day. Speaker Dustin Burrows (R) elected.
- Jan. 17, 2025. Senate Committees announced.
- Jan. 29, 2025. Lt. Governor announced titles of 25 of 40 priority bills.
- Feb. 13, 2025. House Committees announced.
- Feb. 21, 2025. Today.
- March 14, 2025. Deadline for bills to be filed (60th day of session).
- June 2, 2025. Session ends.
- Special sessions lasting 30 days can be called by the Governor

Brandon
Creighton
(R) Chair



Donna
Campbell (R)
Co-Chair



Senate Comm. on Education K-

16

Senate Higher Education
Subcommittee folded
into Education Comm.



Paul
Bettencourt (R)



Brent
Hagenbuch (R)



Adam
Hinojosa (R)



Phil
King (R)



José
Menéndez (D)



Mayes
Middleton (R)



Tan
Parker (R)



Angela
Paxton (R)



Royce
West (D)

House Comm. on Higher Ed



Representative
Wilson, Terry M.

Chair



Representative
Howard, Donna

Vice Chair



Representative
Davis, Aicha M.



Representative
Lalani, Suleman



Representative
Lambert, Stan



Representative
Perez, Vincent M.



Representative
Shaheen, Matt



Representative
Shofner, Joanne W.



Representative
Tinderholt, Tony



Representative
VanDeaver, Gary



Representative
**Ward Johnson,
Charlene**

Terry Wilson (R) Chair
Donna Howard (D) Co-Chair

Seniority Appointments

Stan Lambert (R)
Vincent Perez (D)
Matt Shaheen (R)
Tony Tinderholt (R)

Speaker Appointments

Aicha Davis (D)
Suleman Lalani (D)
Joanne Shofner (R)
Gary VanDeaver (R)
Charlene Ward Johnson (D)

Shared Governance, Tenure

- **Shared Governance**

- **SB 452:** Gives Boards of Regents and Boards of Trustees the sole authority to appoint heads of academic departments. This could override shared governance between the faculty and the administration of the college or university.
- **SB 530 / HB 1705:** Removes Southern Association of Colleges and Schools as the sole accrediting agency for public and private colleges and universities (except for law and medical schools). SACS evaluates the procedures and policies to ensure academic freedom and shared governance.
- **SB 1489:** Faculty Senates must be authorized by the Board of Regents. Members are elected by the General Faculty or Colleges and Schools. Advisory only. Reports to President. May not conduct an investigation. Public meetings. All votes recorded. Institution has control of the curriculum.

- **Tenure**

- **HB 1830:** Bans future offering of tenure

Higher Ed Bill Tracker: <https://aaup-texas.org/blog/f/higher-ed-bills-in-the-2025-texas-legislature>

Academic Freedom

- **Academic Freedom**

- **HB 281** : Defunds / discontinues an academic program if the median salary of graduates of the program does not exceed student loan debt 2 years (BS), 3 years (MS), and 5 years (doctoral) after graduation.
- **HB 2311**: In the last Legislative session, SB 17 became law. SB 17 prohibits certain diversity, equity, and inclusion programs and practices at public colleges and universities. HB 2311 removes several exemptions including academic course instruction as well as scholarly research and creative works
- **HB 2339**: forbids public colleges and universities from offering a course, certificate, or degree program (1) in lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer studies or (2) diversity, equity, and inclusion. Penalties for an employee include leave without pay for one year on first violation and dismissal on second violation. For any violation, the employee may not be hired at a public college or university in Texas.
- **HB 2548**: forbids bans the teaching of a wide array of topics related to gender, race, ethnicity, and equity in any course required for a program or degree requirement

Academic Freedom

- **Academic freedom**

- **SB 184 & SB 530** :Adds an exemption to the DEI law SB 17 for research grants.
- **HB 393**: Repeals the DEI law SB 17 from the last session.

- **Safety and economic security**

- **SB 187**: Requires a public higher ed institution to have an Internet site and hotline to report discrimination and harassment based on race, color, or ethnicity
- **HB 237**: Increases pay for all faculty at public universities and community colleges. There were no pay increases in the State budget in the last session.

Student Learning

- **Student learning**

- **HB 936:** allows student athletes to retain their athletic scholarships in the case of injury, illness, or disability.
- **HB 1330 / SB 365:** allows a student to have an academic Fresh Start.
- **HB 231 / SB 1191:** align the GPA points for Dual Credit and Advanced Placement courses

- **Student Civic Participation**

- **HB 1003:** allows student IDs to be an acceptable ID for the purposes of voting.

Students and Immigration

- **Students and Immigration**

- **SB 8 Senate Bill 8 – Requiring Local Law Enforcement to Assist the Federal Government’s Deportation Efforts**
- **HB 160:** Relating to the enrollment, including resident status and tuition rates, of certain persons, including persons not authorized to be present in the United States, in public institutions of higher education.
- **HB 232, HB 424, HB 979, HB 1324 and HB 1815:** Relating to the determination of resident status of students by public institutions of higher education

Getting Involved Remotely

- ❖ Come to these monthly legislative updates! Mar. 24, Apr. 21, and May 19 at 6pm CT.
- ❖ Sign the [Texas AFT Educator's Bill of Rights](#) for K-12 and higher ed educators.
- ❖ Get active in your [AAUP Campus Chapter](#), or help form one if there isn't one.
- ❖ Look for opportunities for advocacy on [Texas AFT Mobilize](#) such as phone banking, email campaigns, and local office visits.

Getting Involved in Person

From Mobilize <https://www.mobilize.us/texasaft/>

- ❖ Join Texas AFT and Texas AAUP-AFT for an Advocacy Day on Monday, March 10 or 17, 2025, depending on your Spring Break schedule
 - RSVP to aaup.texas@gmail.com.
 - Bus service will be provided to the Capitol by a nearby K-12 Texas AFT Local – RSVP on Mobilize

Thank you!