

# Higher Ed Legislative Advocacy: Updates & How to Get Involved

Hosted by Texas AAUP-AFT  
March 24, 2025

Presenters are speaking for themselves  
as private individuals



# COMMUNITY GUIDELINES

- We listen respectfully and demonstrate respect for different perspectives and experiences shared during discussions.
- Please mute yourself when you are not talking.
- Criticize ideas, not individuals.
- It's okay to say you don't know enough about a question to contribute.
- We recognize how our own social positionality (e.g., race, class, gender, sexuality, ability) informs our perspectives and reactions to the event content and activities (e.g., discussions, polls, break-outs)
- Presenters are speaking for themselves as private individuals

# AGENDA

- Breathe.
- Overview of the Legislative Session
- Texas AAUP-AFT Legislative Agenda
- Higher Ed Bills in the Texas Legislature
- Getting involved remotely & in person

# 89th LEGISLATIVE SESSION

- Nov. 11, 2024. First day bills could be filed.
- Jan. 14, 2025. Opening day. Speaker Dustin Burrows (R-Lubbock) elected. House has 88 R 62 D. Senate has 20 R 11 D.
- 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.
- Mar. 14, 2025. Deadline for bills to be filed (60th day of session).
- Mar. 20, 2025. Senate Comm Education K-16 hears first higher ed bills
- March 25, 2025. House Comm Higher Ed will hear first higher ed bills
- June 2, 2025. Session ends.



Brandon  
Creighton  
(R) Chair



Donna  
Campbell (R)  
Co-Chair



# Senate Comm. on Education

## K-16

Senate Higher Education  
Subcommittee folded  
into Education Comm.

9 Republicans  
2 Democrats



Paul  
Bettencourt (R)



Brent  
Hagenbuch (R)



Adam  
Hinojosa (R)



Phil  
King (R)



José  
Menéndez (D)



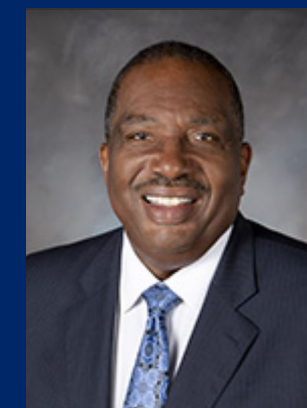
Mayes  
Middleton (R)



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)



# Lege Priorities

Texas AAUP Bill  
Tracker:



## Freedom to Research

Removing barriers that hinder competitiveness for research teams to win government and private grants.

## Maintaining Tenure

Upholding current tenure policies that recruits and retains instructors for workforce development.

## Freedom to Learn & Teach

Encouraging and protecting free inquiry, free expression, intellectual exploration, and open dissent.

## Shared Governance

Supporting traditional democratic faculty structures to foster the highest quality curriculum, teaching methods, research, and hiring decisions.

# Barriers to Research

Although it was not the intent of SB 17 (88th Session) to create barriers to research expansion, researchers at community colleges, universities, and health institutions are struggling to apply for and receive research funding.

Since the implementation of SB 17, faculty and students across disciplines are struggling to apply, receive, and be competitive for research grants– even if their research is not directly related to “DEI”.



# Faculty Employment

- **SB 18 (88th Session) has three parts**
  - Tenure defined as continuous employment with property rights (has due process protections from the 14th Amendment)
  - Defines 10 reasons that any fixed-term, tenure-track, or tenured faculty member can be dismissed with 7 of the ways undefined
  - Defines summary (fast-track) dismissal
- **Tenure: earned after six-year probationary period with rigorous annual evals & cumulative eval of teaching, research, service.**
- **Tenure allows faculty to**
  - conduct long-term research (e.g. 5-10 years horizon)
  - provide long-term curriculum development and support
  - serve in teaching/research leadership and administration roles

# Freedom to Learn & Teach

- 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

# Hearings so far...

- **3/4 and 3/11 - House Higher Ed Committee Organizational Hearings**

- Highlights:

- Addressing workforce shortages & aligning higher ed programs with workforce demands
- Credentials of value
- Dual credit
- Research expansion

- Chairman Terry Wilson on research and downstream effects of SB 17:

- “We have unintended consequences when we use our universities as a political grandstand to a point that we’re not also acknowledging the value that they bring and their participation within the manufacturing industries, their participation in the National Science Foundation, and so forth. The knee-jerk reactions of politicians essentially impact the type of research faculty we get, or need to get, to compete within that research. That could potentially mean that their source selection is going to look elsewhere other than Texas, or our Tier 1 institutions where they may best be suited. Unfortunately, it is a crisis by our own doing. While I appreciate the legislation that was looked at last session, we’ve got to make sure we don’t let the train fall off the tracks.”



# Bills of Concern - SB 37

**Consolidates all power at a public community college, university, or health institution in the governing board. It's a state government takeover of public universities and health institutions. (Community College Boards of Trustees are locally elected.)**

- **Curriculum**

- Empowers a governing board to manage and oversee the curriculum
- Prohibits core curriculum courses, which are required for Associate and Bachelors degrees, from endorsing specific public policies, ideologies, or legislation
- Removes faculty oversight in the curriculum

- **New Investigative Unit**

- Creates new investigative unit, the "Office of Excellence in Higher Education" concerning academic discourse to receive complaints and refer findings to the Attorney General.

- **Institutional Governance**

- Empowers a governing board to overturn any institutional decision
- Empowers the governing board to hire and evaluate the performance of all administrators at an institution
- Requires the president to appoint at least half of the Faculty Senators as well as the Faculty Senate President and the other two officer positions
- Prohibits faculty from being involved in grievances or faculty discipline processes

**Impacts on campuses?**

# Bills of Concern

- **SB 452 (Middleton)**
  - Gives Boards of Regents and Boards of Trustees the sole authority to appoint heads of academic departments. This overrides shared governance between the faculty and the administration of the college or university.
- **SB 1489 (Bettencourt)**
  - Requires Faculty Senates to be authorized by the Board of Regents. Members are elected by the General Faculty or Colleges and Schools. A Faculty Senate is advisory only, reports to President. May not conduct an investigation. All meetings are public, and all votes recorded. Institution shall make decisions on degree and curriculum matters under direction of the institution's governing board.
- **HB 2548 (Harris)**
  - Bans teaching of dozens of topics related to gender, racism, ethnicity, equity, and social justice in any course required for a program or degree requirement. Faculty teaching electives on these topics won't have the elective counted in workload, merit raises, or promotion
- **SB 2614 (Creighton)**
  - Amends SB 17 (88th Session) to ban "DEI" in academic course instruction offered by a medical or dental unit.
- **HB 281 (Tepper) / SB 757 (Middleton)**
  - Defunds / discontinues academic programs if the median salaries do not exceed student loan debt 2 years (BS), 3 years (MS), and 5 years (doctoral) after graduation.
- **HB 1705 (Shofner) / SB 530 (Sparks) & HB 1870 (Leo-Wilson) / SB 1322 (Hagenbuch)**
  - Removes the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools as the sole accrediting agency for public and private colleges and universities (except for law and medical schools).
- **HB 1830 (Shaheen)**
  - Bans all future offerings of tenure.

# Bills to Support - HB 4277

- Filed by Donna Howard
- Explicitly lists grants as an exemption
- **We need concrete examples of impacted research to help push this bill**

(2) scholarly research, including research funded or to be funded wholly or partly by government or private grants, or a creative work by an institution of higher education's students, faculty, postdoctoral fellows, or other research personnel or the dissemination of that research or work;

(3) information or guidance by faculty or staff on career opportunities and grant applications;

Questionnaire for Texas SB 17  
Impacts on Teaching and Research



# Bills to Support

- **HB 237 (Bucy) / SB 572 (Eckhardt & Zaffirini)**
  - Raises the pay by \$10,000 for all higher education employees. In the last session, all state employees received raises except K-12 educators and higher education employees.
- **HB 435 (Davis)**
  - Exempts certain requirements regarding diversity, equity, or inclusion initiatives for certain activities for veterans or persons with disabilities provided by public institutions
- **HB 1330 (Howard)**
  - Allow a student to have an Academic Fresh Start.
- **HB 2321 (Harris-Davila) / SB 1191 (Creighton)**
  - Aligns GPA points for Dual Credit and Advanced Placement courses.



# Students and Immigration

- We're flagging this for faculty who might be concerned about how new immigration bills might affect their students and campus
  - **SB 8 Senate Bill 8 – Requiring Local Law Enforcement to Assist the Federal Government's Deportation Efforts**
  - **HB 160 Leo Wilson (R):** 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 Cody Vasut (R), HB 424 Richard Hayes (R), HB 979 Briscoe Cain (R), HB 1324 Mike Olcott (R), and HB 1815 Jared Peterson (R):** Relating to the determination of resident status of students by public institutions of higher education

# Upcoming This Week: House Higher Ed

HB 102 Wilson  
Relating to early registration for certain students at public institutions of higher education.

HB 126 Tepper  
Relating to the compensation and professional representation of prospective student athletes and student athletes participating in intercollegiate athletic programs at certain institutions of higher education.

HB 271 González, Mary  
Relating to a report by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board regarding enrollment and success in higher education for students with disabilities.

HB 290 Lopez, Ray | et al.  
Relating to assistance for tuition and fees at postsecondary educational institutions for certain members of the Texas military forces.

HB 300 Wilson  
Relating scholarships under the Texas Armed Services Scholarship Program.

HB 538 Bernal  
Relating to student access to certain academic records; authorizing a fee.

HB 718 Bell, Cecil  
Relating to prohibiting a public institution of higher education from partnering with certain private entities for the construction of a student housing facility.

HB 1022 Morales, Eddie | et al.  
Relating to the course levels offered at Sul Ross State University Rio Grande College.

HB 1330 Howard  
Relating to the period for which an applicant for admission as an undergraduate student to a public institution of higher education is entitled to an academic fresh start.

HB 2110 VanDeaver | et al.  
Relating to public higher education.

HJR 5 Lambert | et al.  
Proposing a constitutional amendment providing for the creation of funds to support the capital needs of educational programs offered by the Texas State Technical College System and repealing the limitation on the allocation to that system and its campuses of the annual appropriation of certain constitutionally dedicated funding for public institutions of higher education.

# Getting Involved Remotely

- ❖ Come to these monthly legislative updates! 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 start 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

- ❖ Join Texas AAUP-AFT to visit Legislative Offices on Thursdays, 9:30am-12:30pm.
- ❖ Testify at the House Committee on Higher Education on Tuesdays
- ❖ Testify at the Senate Committee on Education K-16 on Thursdays



**Texas AAUP members and allies preparing to testify against SB 37 on March 20, 2025**



# How to Testify

- ❖ Example [11/7 Hearing Faculty Talking Points](#) and [SB 37 Talking Points](#)
- ❖ Write your testimony beforehand.
- ❖ Please be clear that you're speaking for yourself as a private individual.
- ❖ Max 2 minutes for a Senate hearing and 3 minutes for a House hearing (one page)
- ❖ Review background info for context, like hearing agendas and invited speakers
- ❖ Tell your story! Personal narratives are important to testimonies, so tie how it impacts you and others back to the issues, and make the call to action clear!

# Join Texas AAUP-AFT Action Committees

- **Join Texas AAUP-AFT  
Action Committees!**
  - Legislative Advocacy
  - Organizing
  - Media & Messaging
  - Legal Analysis
- **1 year commitment**



**Thank you!**