

TFA Texas Faculty Association Higher Ed Legislative Report

March 9, 2023

Affiliated with TSTA/NEA

Bill Filing Deadline Looms

The bill filing deadline for the 88th Legislative Session is March 10th. So far this week, legislators are filing an average of more than 400 bills per day, with even higher numbers expected through the end of the week. As of this writing, we are tracking 126 bills, and will be adding to that track as we triage the last three days of filings.

Though we still have not seen the high priority bills signaled by Lieutenant Governor Patrick, we are reviewing several bills related to curriculum, instructional resources, institutional safety and faculty contracts, including:

- HB 1607 by Cody Harris, a higher education version of last session's "CRT" bill
- HB 1760 by Hefner, HB 2280 by Anchía, SB 205 by Eckhardt, limiting or repealing campus carry of firearms
- HB 2736 by Toth, SB 1152 by Hall, related to library resources and definitions of obscenity
- HB 3164 by Tepper, restricting diversity, equity, and inclusion programs
- HB 3471 by Bucy, encouraging diversity, equity, and inclusion programs, as well as critical thinking curriculum
- SB 1799 by Springer, limiting all two-year college contracts to one year terms

We have learned a few more things this week. There is a fair probability that Senate Education and the Senate Education Subcommittee on Higher Education will switch hearing times, meaning that the subcommittee will meet on Tuesdays rather than Wednesdays. We also are advised that HB 8, the community college funding bill, will be heard in the House Higher Education Committee on Monday, March 20.

What You Can Do

- Read bills! We will be forwarding more bills as the session progresses. We will be posting committee agendas as they become available. Reading the bills is a strong step to creating accountability between us and our legislative representatives.
- Send feedback. Your wisdom on the potential effects of these bills helps to guide policy arguments and discussions in the Capitol.
- Consider attendance and testimony at hearings. Committee hearings with active agendas start next week and will go through the middle of May. Your voices, in the form of information to your association, visits to the Capitol, written testimony to committees or in-person testimony, need to be heard.
- Recruit your colleagues to join. If we are learning anything so far this session, it is that higher education faculty members in Texas face real challenges and have some real opportunities in the legislative process. The more members your association represents, the greater the influence you will have in the capitol. More members also mean a deeper talent pool for activities, and more resources for activities.