

Tuesday, May 15, 2007

Cap on top 10% law clears House panel
Bill's limits on college admissions vary from those in Senate plan

By Holly K. Hacker

AUSTIN – Following in the Senate's footsteps, a House committee approved a bill Monday to limit the number of students admitted under the state's "top 10 percent" law on college admissions.

The version by the House Higher Education Committee differs somewhat from a bill the full Senate passed this month. The House bill would allow public colleges to admit no more than half of incoming freshmen under the top 10 law. Currently, all high school students in the top tenth of their class can attend the school of their choice.

The Senate's bill was amended to set a 60 percent cap and provides \$1,500 in state-college tuition to each student in the top 10th of his or her class, as an incentive to stay in Texas for college. Also, the current top 10 law would resume in 2015.

Rep. Geanie Morrison, the Victoria Republican who chairs the House committee, said she wanted the full House to consider a "clean bill" and review the Senate changes.

In either form, the bill would affect only the University of Texas at Austin, where 70 percent of Texas freshmen enter under the law. President William Powers supports a cap, saying it would give UT more flexibility in the admissions process. Supporters of the current law say it keeps Texas colleges racially and geographically diverse.

The House bill passed 7-1, with Rep. Helen Giddings, D-Dallas, voting no. It heads next to the full House. Any remaining differences would have to be ironed out, assuming the House approves something.

Also Monday, Ms. Morrison's committee approved a bill requiring colleges to post online report cards about graduation rates, college costs and other measures. The Senate passed that bill last month.