



Tuition Freeze Helps Those Going To College
An Opinion-Editorial Respectfully Submitted by Senator Florence Shapiro

Planning for college is always a challenge for Texas families, but that challenge has become even tougher due to the ever changing and increasing tuition costs during a student's enrollment. And if that wasn't enough, tuition increases have now met head on with difficult economic times that make this challenge even worse.

To offer a solution, I have authored the tuition freeze bill, Senate Bill 326, which recognizes the cost predictability problem of college tuition and fees. My bill requires Texas colleges and universities to offer the option of freezing tuition and fees when a student enters. The freeze would remain in effect for the full four years of college or the length of the degree plan.

In addition, the amount an institution can increase tuition from one cohort of student to the next is capped at five percent. For example, while the 2011 freshman class pays one rate all four years, the 2012 freshman class can only be charged up to five percent more than the previous class.

The incentive in this program is clear: A four-year freeze means that tuition and fees remain stable. In the fifth year or sixth year beyond a student's academic program, his or her tuition would rise to the current year's level. The goal is to graduate in four years, with the tuition rate locked-in.

There have been several other options presented on how to address the runaway tuition problem, ranging from a moratorium on increases to various caps on annual increases. While all of those focus on reigning in tuition, my plan focuses solely on the needs of the parents and students. It removes the element of uncertain costs, and helps families and students budget for the next four years.

The bottom line is freezing tuition and fees will help Texas students reach three goals: Clarity of cost, predictability for families to plan for the future, and motivation for the students to graduate in a timely manner.

I will continue to work for the best possible education provided at the lowest possible cost, and I firmly believe my tuition freeze is a great start.

Word Count: 352