



PRESS RELEASE

RIO GRANDE VALLEY LEGISLATIVE DELEGATION

For immediate release: February 4, 2013

Contact: Sen. Eddie Lucio, Jr., 512-463-0127; Sen. Juan "Chuy" Hinojosa, 512-463-0120; Sen. Judith Zaffirini, 512-463-0121; Rep. Rene Oliveira, 512-463-0640; Rep. Ryan Guillen, 512-463-0416; Rep. Armando Martinez, 512-463-0530; Rep. Eddie Lucio III, 512-463-0606; Rep. Sergio Muñoz, Jr., 512-463-0704; Rep. Bobby Guerra, 512-463-0578; Rep. Terry Canales, 512-463-0426; Rep. Oscar Longoria, 512-463-0645

Analysis of pending Senate bill and H.B. 1000

The pending Senate bill and House Bill 1000 propose creating a new University of Texas System university spanning the Rio Grande Valley, which will attract more money to improve higher education, medical education, and health care options in the region. The legislation will bring together the students, faculty, and assets of The University of Texas - Pan American, The University of Texas at Brownsville, and the Regional Academic Health Center. The legislation also commits to the creation of a four-year medical school in the Valley.

The new university, if approved by two-thirds of each chamber of the Texas Legislature, will be eligible for money from the Permanent University Fund and provide access to programs and money that UTPA and UTB today cannot benefit from. Additionally, the new university could quickly qualify for "emerging research university" status, which will place it on track for further development in the future. Consolidating the administration of UTB and UTPA under the new university will also result in cost savings to the System.

The University of Texas Board of Regents will decide the name and location of future buildings, while using existing campuses. The legislation requires the Board of Regents to "equitably allocate" facilities across Cameron, Hidalgo and Starr counties, and to conduct medical and research programs across the region, while maintaining a substantial presence in Hidalgo and Cameron counties.

The legislation directs the Board of Regents to appoint an Advisory Board comprised of nationally-recognized experts in the organization and administration of medical schools. After taking input from interested parties, including business organizations, health care providers, and educators, the Advisory Board will give advice and make recommendations on the design and development of a 21st Century medical school, considering resources, costs, assets, infrastructure, long-term fiscal viability and other objective criteria. The legislation provides no exact date for the creation of a medical school.

Passage of the bill will not result in the immediate creation of the new university nor the abolition of UTPA and UTB. An exact timeline for the creation of the new university and the abolition of UTPA and UTB has yet to be determined. Any student attending UTB or UTPA when the new university is created is entitled to attend the new university.

The legislation also contains a provision necessary to continue funding of the Centers for Border Economic and Enterprise Development at UTB and UTPA. That money from the Texas Legislature flows to UTB and UTPA through The University of Texas at El Paso.

The legislation mandates that the Board of Regents establish a Texas Academy of Mathematics and Science at the new university. This Academy will provide academically gifted and highly motivated high school juniors and seniors a chance to take challenging university-level courses in English, foreign languages, social studies, mathematics, science, and technology.

The legislation clarifies that it does not affect the powers, duties, and obligations of UTB nor its partnership with Texas Southmost College under Senate Bill 1909 (2011), and that, as proscribed by Senate Bill 1909, UTB and TSC shall continue in partnership until August 31, 2015, to the extent necessary to ensure accreditation.

###