The Louisiana Senate effectively killed a controversial House-passed bill Sunday that would require passage of a high school exit test to qualify for a traditional diploma.

The senators voted 24-7 to table the bill, which means in effect that the subject is put to rest for this session of the Legislature.

Sen. Allan Bares, D-Lafayette, who handled the bill on the Senate floor, didn’t even try to win passage of the measure in its original form. Instead, he offered amendments removing the requirements of the bill and converting it to a request that the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education study the subject.

However, the proposed amendment never came to a vote. Instead, the Senate adopted a motion by Sen. Charles Barham, D-Ruston, to table the matter.

“I’m not really upset that the matter was tabled,” Bares said. “I had a feeling it would have been killed anyway.”

The bill, HB1565 by Rep. B.F. O’Neal, R-Shreveport, would have required BESE to develop a high school graduation test. According to the original bill, those who passed the test beginning in 1989 would receive the traditional high school diploma. Those who failed would receive a “certificate of completion.”

Bares said one problem with the bill in its original form was that a “certificate of completion” was not well defined. He said someone with a certificate of completion probably could not enter a Louisiana college nor could he or she enter the U.S. Army.

“I just think it’s a drastic step, and if we’re going to put it into the law we’ve got to be very deliberative about it,” said Bares, seeking support for his study amendment.

“This is very cruel,” said Sen. Anthony Guarisco, D-Morgan City, speaking of the bill in its original form. “Imagine if you were graduating high school and it was graduation night, and a friend was standing next to you with a diploma and you had a thing called a certificate of completion.”

He said another problem is that the bill requires no accountability on the part of the educational system.

“I don’t think the author of this bill meant to be cruel, but that is what’s happening here,” Guarisco said.

Bares said O’Neal’s intent was to make sure that a high school diploma really means something. But Bares said O’Neal agreed to the amendments.

“I think there is some value to the passage of this kind of act so the BESE board will take it seriously and report back to us . . .,” Bares said.