College admission standards bill killed by Senate panel

By MIKE HASTEN
State Editor

BATON ROUGE — A proposal to set admission standards for state universities has been killed by the Senate Education Committee.

Morgan City Sen. Anthony Guarisco's bill called for minimum standards to be set for entering freshmen. He said he wanted to improve the quality of students entering college, which would cut down on the amount of money the state has to pay to teach college students what they should have learned in high school.

But committee members and representatives of the Louisiana Association of Educators and Louisiana Federation of Teachers objected.

They said the standards would keep many students out of college, which conflicts with the state's open-door policy.

Lawrence Narcisse of the LAE said he believes the standards would lead to the state "moving toward an elitist system of universities."

Guarisco said he is upset with the present system because students who are not the least prepared to go to college are allowed in "and we fool that person into thinking he can get a college education and take his money."

The standards would not be too stringent, Guarisco said, and would be just strong enough to keep the weakest students out.

Dale Thorn of the Board of Regents said some colleges would have stricter entrance requirements than others. For example, LSU would be harder to get into than some smaller schools.

"Everyone would have access to state institutions but you might

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not get to go to the university you want to," Thorn said. "Few states allow anyone access to the institution of his choice."

Committee chairman Armand Brinkhaus of Sunset said he agrees with Guarisco's premise. "If we act like losers, we'll be losers," he said.

However, the committee voted to defer action of the bill, which in effect, kills it.

The committee did vote to increase the penalty for a parent not sending his child to school.

Sens. Armand Brinkhaus of Sunset and Cecil Picard of Maurice voted in favor of the proposal, which increases the penalty from $15 to a maximum of $250 and six months in jail.

Judges have complained that with the $15 fine, parents often just pay the fine and do not worry about sending their children to school.

Sen. Cliff Newman of Lake Charles, author of the bill, said it gives judges flexibility and the threat of imprisonment if court orders are not followed.

The committee also approved a Brinkhaus bill to lift the $60,000 cap on the salary for the superintendent of education, effective just prior to soliciting applicants for the appointed position.

James Soileau, executive secretary of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, said $60,000 might not be high enough to attract the type person the state needs.

Most college presidents make more than that, Soileau said.

For example, Dr. Allen Coppen, president of LSU, makes $115,000 a year and gets a house, car and numerous other benefits.

The bill was approved 2-1 with Picard abstaining.

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