

From: "Brian Evans" <halftoning@juno.com>
Subject: Moving Forward with Legislative Advocacy
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Dear Colleague,

Thank you for contacting and visiting Legislative offices, encouraging others to advocate, writing op-eds, and testifying at the committee hearings for anti-CRT SB 16, anti-DEI SB 17, and anti-tenure SB 18 during the regular Legislative session. Although we did not achieve all of the outcomes we wished, we had a positive impact on all three bills (especially on SB 16 and SB 18) and established important relationships with legislators. A special thanks to the dozen higher ed advocacy organizations that came together this session! We are so much stronger together – let’s keep building on this! We’ll need to be even stronger and better organized to repel future assaults on academic freedom, tenure, and shared governance. We give a much longer thank-you at the end of this message.

Please follow us on Twitter @TexasAaup and @aaup_utAustin.

As you probably know, SB 16 passed the Senate and then died in the House Higher Education committee, but SB 17 and SB 18 were both approved by the House and Senate and have been sent to the Governor for his signature. The Governor has indicated his intention to sign SB 17, the anti-DEI bill; there is no word yet as to his intentions regarding SB 18, which regulates tenure in public universities and community colleges rather than abolishes it.

Special sessions this Summer. Three hours after the regular Legislative session ended yesterday around 6pm, the Legislature started a 30-day special session called by Gov. Abbott to address property taxes and border security. More 30-day special sessions will follow. Please be ready for advocacy on higher ed issues in a special session this summer. More on this next.

Lt. Governor’s Priorities. Among the Lt. Gov. Patrick’s high priority bills for this Legislative session was SB 16 to fulfill one of his three goals from his Feb. 18, 2022, [press conference](#):

- “the law will change to teaching critical race theory as prima facie evidence of good cause for tenure revocation”

[SB 16](#) restricts academic freedom and critical thinking, inside and outside the classroom, on race, sex, or ethnicity, or social, political, or religious belief and penalties include termination. SB 16 passed in the Senate but did not move in the House. See our [bill summary and analysis](#). Lt. Gov. Patrick has asked Gov. Abbott to include SB 16 in a special session.

The Lt. Governor proposed [SB 17](#) to ban DEI offices, officers, programs, and practices, with some exceptions. This will be devastating to public higher education in Texas. SB 17 awaits signature from Gov. Abbott. See [our bill summary and analysis](#).

The other two goals related to higher education from the Lt. Gov’s Feb. 18, 2022, [press conference](#) were related to tenure, namely:

- “end all tenure for all new hires”
- “tenure to be reviewed annually” instead of every six years (this applies to already tenured professors)

As passed by the Senate, [SB 18](#) eliminated the future granting of tenure on or after Jan. 1, 2024. The House passed a different version that codifies tenure with vague reasons to fire a tenured faculty member and weak due process procedures for termination. The Senate passed the House version. SB 18 awaits signature from Gov. Abbott. See our [bill summary and analysis](#).

Next Steps. We know that efforts to limit academic freedom will continue, and the partnerships that we have built during this fight will serve us well in the future. In addition to fighting SB 16, should it come up in a special session, we will need to keep a close eye on how SB 17 and SB 18 (if enacted) are implemented. Both bills contain vague language that could lead to a chilling effect on faculty and staff, and both leave room for decisions about implementation by campus administrations. We will need to keep in close communication to monitor and try to affect campus implementation of these bills.

Gratitude for Legislative Advocacy and Support. We would like to thank all the Legislators and their staff in the Legislative Black Caucus and the Mexican American Legislative Caucus as well as the many other Legislators and their staff who fought in committee hearings and on the Senate and House floor against SB 16, 17 and 18.

Thanks to the dozen higher ed advocacy organizations that came together this session! We would like to thank the NAACP Legal Defense Fund for bringing us together, providing bill analysis, testifying at hearings, and supporting us during the long days of testimony, and the Texas American Federation of Teachers for providing bill analysis and IT support as well as guidance on forming Legislative coalitions, reaching out to media outlets, and coordinating day-to-day operations.

Additional special thanks to the following, many of whom are in multiple advocacy organizations:

- David Albert, Zeph Capo, Eli Melendrez, and Patty Quinzi from Texas AFT (David Albert is also an AAUP member)
- Gary Bledsoe, President, Texas NAACP Chapter, who testified and helped others write theirs
- Jeff Blodgett, Karma Chavez, Bill Fagelson, Ashley Farmer, Andrea Gore, Lauren Gutterman, Jim Klein, Teresa Klein, and Polly Strong at Texas AAUP, who coordinated bill analyses, Legislative visits, testimonies, and Facebook posts and tweets
- Dan Braaten, Karma Chavez, Jen Ebbeler, Andrea Gore, Christopher Hepburn, T. Scott Johnson, Christine Julien, V. Jo Shu, and others for publishing op-eds during the session
- Karma Chavez, Ashley Farmer, and the media team at the Texas Faculty Coalition, who organized a Freedom To Learn Rally at the Capitol, visited offices, and testified at hearings
- Jen Ebbeler for analyzing the SB 17 and 18 hearings and debates (Jen is also an AAUP member)
- Beaman Floyd at TFA and TACT for legislative updates and helping us connect the dots
- Andrea Gore, Brent Iverson, Brian Korgel, and Diana Marculescu on impact on STEM fields (Andrea, Brent and Diana are also AAUP members)
- Trevor Hale and Joey Velasco, Presidents, Texas Council of Faculty Senates and Texas AAUP
- Pat Heintzelman, TFA President and Texas AAUP member
- Antonio Ingram, Hamida Labi, and Allen Liu from NAACP LDF
- Jim Klein, TACT President and Texas AAUP officer
- Irene Mulvey, President, AAUP, and Kelly Benjamin, AAUP Communications Director
- Jaime Puente, Every Texan
- Texas Students for DEI, who testified at hearings, circulated statements, interviewed with reporters, protested, maintained a lively Twitter feed, and were ever-present at the Capitol
- Tyler Sheldon and Anne Lewis, Texas State Employees Union, for the April 12th Rally and much more
- Angela Venezuela and Emilio Zamora, Black Brown Dialogues on Policy
- Members of Black Brown Dialogues on Policy, Every Texan, NAACP Legal Defense Fund, Texans United for DEI project, Texas American Association of University Professors, Texas American Federation of Teachers, Texas Faculty Association, Texas Association of College Teachers, Texas Council of Faculty Senates, Texas Faculty Coalition, Texas State Employees Union, and Texas Students for DEI

- Many others, including individual college and university faculty, staff, students, and alumni, as well as business and community leaders

Best,
Brian

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Speaking for myself as a private citizen

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Member, [Texas State Employees Union](#), CWA #6186, AFL-CIO
Member, [Texas Faculty Association](#), TSTA, NEA
Member, [Texas Association of College Teachers](#)
Member, Texas Faculty Coalition
Former Member, [Texas Council of Faculty Senates](#)

We're part of a collaborative effort among the Black Brown Dialogues on Policy, Every Texan, NAACP Legal Defense Fund, Texans United for DEI project, Texas American Association of University Professors, Texas American Federation of Teachers, Texas Faculty Association, Texas Association of College Teachers, Texas Council of Faculty Senates, Texas Faculty Coalition, Texas State Employees Union, Texas Students for DEI, and many others.