



# Young Conservatives of Texas

*Young Conservatives of Texas is a non-partisan conservative youth organization that has been fighting for conservative values in the Lone Star State since 1980; and, publishes the longest running, and most respected ratings of the Texas legislature.*

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## **YCT Applauds Senator Schwertner on Tuition Deregulation Bill**

AUSTIN, TX — Today, Young Conservatives of Texas (YCT) applauded State Senator Charles Schwertner for filing SB 233, bringing attention to the issue of tuition deregulation and skyrocketing tuition costs.

In 2003, the State of Texas faced a \$10 Billion shortfall. As a way to mitigate cuts to higher education funding, the Legislature passed 'tuition deregulation' (HB 3015) which authorized unelected university boards of regents to set tuition rates, instead of the democratically elected legislature.

Since the passage of this bill, tuition rates have more than doubled and designated tuition has increased 222 percent.

"There is no issue we've had to educate elected officials and candidates on more than tuition deregulation," said YCT State Chairman Jeff Morris. "Most assume it is a good conservative policy because it has the word 'deregulation' in it, but the name is a misnomer at best."

At the time of passage, those in support argued the bill was justified based on the increasing value of a college education.

"A degree from UT or A&M is worth a lot of money and students may have to pay more for it through tuition deregulation," said Rep. Fred Brown (R – Bryan). "If you get the best education, it's going to cost a little extra money and there's no way around it."<sup>1</sup>

Even the conservative Speaker of the House, Tom Craddick, thought the policy made sense.

"I don't think this bill will shut anyone out of our higher education," said Craddick. "Universities need flexibility, I don't think all of them are going to go to the maximum."<sup>2</sup>

Craddick's support of the bill and decision to add \$500 million to the Higher Education budget in exchange for its passage drew harsh criticism from YCT, who opposed tuition deregulation even in 2003.

<sup>1</sup> Houston Chronicle: [UT president lauds House bill as 'wise'](#) (4/25/03)

<sup>2</sup> Lubbock Avalanche-Journal: [Craddick backs tuition freedom for universities](#) (5/4/03)

"Speaker Craddick is attempting to insert complete and immediate tuition deregulation after both the House and Senate rejected wholesale tuition deregulation," said then YCT State Chairman David Rushing.<sup>3</sup>

Some legislators had doubts about the bill and foresaw that its effects on students could be drastic.

"Universities would cater to the very rich and the very poor, and the middle class would be left out in the cold," said Rep. Sylvester Turner (D – Houston). "We should not balance the budget on the backs of middle-class families."<sup>4</sup>

"Our position at Texas Tech has been that we're in favor of some flexibility, but we're really opposed to total deregulation," said Texas Tech Regent Robert Brown. "As tuition continues to increase, universities could control enrollment by raising tuition and keeping students out who cannot afford higher payments."<sup>5</sup>

For years, this issue has been at the top of YCT's legislative priorities, but has not received much attention.

Last week, Senator Schwertner wrote a heartfelt piece about putting an end to tuition deregulation. In the editorial, he argued that because student loans are so readily accessible, inflated cost is a major reason for the huge increase in student loan debt across our state.

"In the fall of 2003, a resident undergraduate attending class full time paid \$1,934 per semester in tuition and fees. A decade later, the same student owed an average of \$3,951 per semester," said Schwertner. "Are we really expected to believe that the value of an undergraduate degree is worth twice what it was only a decade ago?"<sup>6</sup>

As a solution, Schwertner has filed SB 233 which caps the amount a university can raise tuition to the previous year's tuition rate plus inflation. Additionally, it prohibits universities from raising fees more than the previous year plus inflation without student approval.

"We are very proud of Senator Schwertner for stepping up to the plate and taking on this issue," continued State Chairman Jeff Morris. "We encourage his fellow legislators to sign on to the bill and push hard for its passage this coming Session."

*Young Conservatives of Texas is a non-partisan organization that has promoted conservatism at universities across the Lone Star State for over three decades. The State's most active political youth organization, YCT is composed of hundreds*

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<sup>3</sup> Houston Chronicle: [Tuition Issue still matter of concern](#) (5/29/03)

<sup>4</sup> Austin American Statesman: [Bill to deregulate tuition advances](#) (4/30/03)

<sup>5</sup> El Paso Times: [College to set tuitions](#) (5/29/03)

<sup>6</sup> Texas Tribune: [Tuition deregulation is failing Texas students](#) (12/7/14)

*of members and alumni who participate in the full spectrum of politics. YCT issues the most respected ratings of the Texas legislature and is the only conservative group to have done so without interruption over the past 20 legislative sessions. For more information about YCT, please visit [www.YCT.org](http://www.YCT.org).*

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