



Young Conservatives of Texas Legislative Affairs

Public Testimony before the Senate Committee on Finance

Presented by Brianna Becker, Director of Legislative Publications

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Thank you Senators, and good afternoon. My name is Brianna Becker. I am a student at the University of Texas, and I am here today representing Young Conservatives of Texas, a state-wide conservative student organization.

Earlier we heard from UT's Student Body President. While I respect and appreciate his testimony, I wish to offer an alternative opinion, which I believe to be beneficial in light of our view that UT's Student Government is a noncompetitive body which represents the interests of UT administration more than that of the students.

As you well know, the most important issue with higher education in this state is the rapidly rising cost of university tuition and fees. The impact those high costs have had on Texas students and their families is evident across the state.

Young Conservatives of Texas believes that the finance committee should take this into consideration when deciding how to appropriate tax dollars to our universities.

As you recall, the University of Texas administration was the strongest advocate for tuition deregulation when it was passed in 2003 and subsequently has fought efforts to change the policy.

YCT believes that the UT administration is basically trying to have its cake and eat it too. Let me explain. They want the public funding that comes with being a public university, yet they would also like unlimited power over tuition and fees that a private university enjoys.

This is a problem, and YCT believes there are two solutions that can be applied directly to remedy it.

1. The University of Texas System has a 3.4 million dollar governmental relations budget. YCT believes that it is simply wrong for public funds to be used to lobby public officials. There should be no exception for higher education. This budget should simply be eliminated and the savings passed on to taxpayers: to the students, and their families.
2. It is our suggestion that until the University of Texas ends its opposition to the bills filed this session which would place restraints on the rate that tuition and fees can increase, their general revenue funding, or at least a large portion thereof, should be transferred to the Texas Grant program and should not be returned unless something is accomplished this session to regulate tuition.

We would also like to point out here, that such a move would not cut one penny from higher education.

We believe that such action is just what is needed to break the stalemate over tuition deregulation and finally lend relief to Texas families.