

HOUSE RESOLUTION

No. 177 Session of 2005

INTRODUCED BY ARMSTRONG, BARRAR, BENNINGHOFF, BIRMELIN, BOYD, CALTAGIRONE, CLYMER, CRAHALLA, CREIGHTON, FAIRCHILD, FICHTER, FORCIER, GABIG, GILLESPIE, GINGRICH, HERSHEY, JAMES, W. KELLER, KILLION, LEH, METCALFE, R. MILLER, MUSTIO, PHILLIPS, READSHAW, ROBERTS, ROHRER, SCHRODER, STERN, R. STEVENSON, E. Z. TAYLOR, TRUE, WILT, YOUNGBLOOD, DENLINGER, CIVERA, RAPP, FLEAGLE, FLICK, BASTIAN, BROWNE, HARPER AND PAYNE, MARCH 29, 2005

AS AMENDED, HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, JULY 5, 2005

A RESOLUTION Establishing a select committee to examine the academic atmosphere and the degree to which faculty have the opportunity to instruct and students have the opportunity to learn in an environment conducive to the pursuit of knowledge and truth at State-related and State-owned colleges and universities and community colleges in this Commonwealth.

WHEREAS, Academic freedom and intellectual diversity are values indispensable to the American colleges and universities; and

WHEREAS, From its first formulation in the General Report of the Committee on Academic Freedom and Tenure of the American Association of University Professors, the concept of academic freedom has been premised on the idea that human knowledge is a never-ending pursuit of the truth, that there is no humanly accessible truth that is not, in principle, open to challenge, and that no party or intellectual faction has a monopoly on wisdom; and

WHEREAS, Academic freedom is likely to thrive in an environment of intellectual diversity that protects and fosters independence of thought and speech; and

WHEREAS, Students and faculty should be protected from the imposition of ideological orthodoxy, and faculty members have the responsibility to not take advantage of their authority

position to introduce inappropriate or irrelevant subject matter outside their field of study; therefore be it

RESOLVED, That a select committee composed of the Subcommittee on Higher Education of the Education Committee, plus one member appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives and one member appointed by the Minority Leader of the House of Representatives, examine, study and inform the House of Representatives on matters relating to the academic atmosphere and the degree to which faculty have the opportunity to instruct and students have the opportunity to learn in an environment conducive to the pursuit of knowledge and truth and the expression of independent thought at State-related and State-owned colleges, universities and community colleges, including, but not limited to, whether:

- (1) faculty are hired, fired, promoted and granted tenure based on their professional competence and subject matter knowledge and with a view of helping students explore and understand various methodologies and perspectives;
- (2) students have an academic environment, quality life on campus and reasonable access to course materials that create an environment conducive to learning, the development of critical thinking and the exploration and expression of independent thought and that the students are evaluated based on their subject knowledge; and
- (3) that students are graded based on academic merit, without regard for ideological views, and that academic freedom and the right to explore and express independent thought is available to and practiced freely by faculty and students; and be it further

RESOLVED, That the chairman of the Subcommittee on Higher Education of the Education Committee of the House of Representatives shall be chairman of the select committee, that committee vacancies not affect the power of the remaining members to execute committee functions and that committee vacancies be filled in the same manner as the original appointment; and be it further

RESOLVED, That the committee may hold hearings, take testimony and conduct investigations within this Commonwealth as necessary; and be it further

RESOLVED, THAT IF AN INDIVIDUAL MAKES AN ALLEGATION AGAINST A FACULTY MEMBER CLAIMING BIAS, THE FACULTY MEMBER MUST BE GIVEN AT LEAST 48 HOURS' NOTICE OF THE SPECIFICS OF THE ALLEGATION

PRIOR TO THE TESTIMONY BEING GIVEN AND BE GIVEN AN OPPORTUNITY TO TESTIFY AT THE SAME HEARING AS THE INDIVIDUAL MAKING THE ALLEGATION; AND BE IT FURTHER

RESOLVED, That the Chief Clerk, with the Speaker's approval, pay for the reasonable, appropriate and proper expenses incurred by the committee; and be it further

RESOLVED, That the committee make a report of its findings and any recommendations for remedial legislation and other appropriate action by June 30, 2006, and that the committee may extend the investigation for additional time, if necessary, but no later than November 30, 2006.