

## Texas House Scuttles Legislation That Would Have Capped Admissions Under Top-10% Law

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In a surprising vote on Sunday, the Texas House of Representatives rejected a proposal to give state universities more of a say in how many in-state students they must admit under the state's top-10-percent law.

The law, which was enacted a decade ago, requires that Texas students who graduate in the top 10 percent of their high-school class be admitted to the state institutions of their choice. Many of the students who qualify have chosen the University of Texas at Austin, which now admits more than 70 percent of its students solely by class rank. University officials have criticized the law, saying it hampers their ability to create a diverse student body.

The State Senate passed a measure earlier this month allowing universities to cap the proportion of freshman they admit under the program at 60 percent (The Chronicle, May 7). Supporters of the measure expected approval in the House because that chamber has repeatedly voted to amend the existing law and had passed previous versions of the bill, while the Senate had blocked such attempts in the past. The bill rejected last night was a compromise measure.

State Rep. Helen Giddings, who represents Dallas and is a co-author of the 1997 top-10-percent law, lobbied against changing the law by telling House members how many residents of their districts had been admitted to the University of Texas at Austin under the current plan.

"I was surprised we had argued that persuasively," she told The Chronicle, considering the House's earlier support for changing the law.

Ms. Giddings argued that the 10-percent plan increases the chances that students from many districts around the state can attend the University of Texas's flagship university.

"Many people believe that this law is just for admission of African-American and Hispanic students," she said. "That is a major component, but another major component, and perhaps equally important, is the geographic diversity that we've never had at the University of Texas," she said.

The vote probably kills the measure for this legislative session, which was scheduled to end at midnight on Monday.