

SENATE BILL 2254

By Gresham

AN ACT to amend Tennessee Code Annotated, Title 49,
Chapter 7, relative to creating a higher education
ombudsperson.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE:

SECTION 1. Tennessee Code Annotated, Title 49, Chapter 7, Part 1, is amended by adding Sections 2 through 6 as a new, appropriated designated section thereto:

SECTION 2.

(a) There is created the office of higher education ombudsperson within the office of the comptroller of the treasury to answer questions and provide information to faculty, staff and employees of the University of Tennessee and the state university and community college system. The role of such office is to assist faculty, staff and employees in obtaining information about the operations and financial workings of the higher education system and provide educational outreach on higher education issues to such faculty, staff and employees.

SECTION 3.

(a) Each higher education system in state government shall appoint a person from existing personnel who shall serve as a contact person for the higher education ombudsperson when the ombudsperson has an issue or question concerning the system.

(b) Each higher education system in state government shall notify the higher education ombudsperson who the contact person is within sixty (60) days of July 1, 2012. If at any time a system changes the contact person, the system shall notify the higher education ombudsperson within seven (7) business days of the change.

SECTION 4. The higher education ombudsperson shall:

(1) Work with the higher education systems to ensure that faculty, staff and employees of the systems are provided with a means to obtain information about or comment on the operations and financial workings of the systems;

(2) Establish means to receive comments from faculty, staff and employees of the systems regarding the operations and financial workings of the systems;

(3) Establish means to refer comments from faculty, staff, and employees received pursuant to subdivision (2) to the contact person of the affected system in the appropriate circumstances and to maintain the confidentiality of the identity of the person making such comments.

SECTION 5. The higher education ombudsperson shall report annually to the chairs of the education committees of the senate and house of representatives regarding the office's activities, findings and recommendations. A copy of the report shall be provided to the governor, members of the general assembly and to the heads of the University of Tennessee and the state university and community college system. Prior to publishing the report, the higher education ombudsperson shall provide any affected state higher education system with an opportunity to comment on draft reports and include the system's comments in the final version of the report.

SECTION 6. The contact information for the higher education ombudsperson shall be published on the comptroller of the treasury's web site. The web site shall also include the names of all contact persons for each state higher education system as provided in Section 3.

SECTION 7. This act shall take effect upon becoming a law, the public welfare requiring it.