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Bill on executive pay now at governor's desk

Jul 25, 2007

SACRAMENTO – Senate Bill (SB) 190, the Higher Education Governance Accountability Act authored by Senator Leland Yee (D-San Francisco/San Mateo), has received unanimous approval in the Assembly Appropriations Committee.

The bill, which would bring greater transparency and public access to executive compensation actions at both the University of California (UC) and the California State University (CSU), was unanimously approved by the Senate earlier this year and now only requires a final vote by the full Assembly before heading to the Governor's desk.

Specifically, SB 190 will require all executive compensation packages to be voted on in an open session of a subcommittee and the full board. The bill will also require full disclosure of the compensation package with accompanying rationale, public comment on the specific action item, and closes a loophole that allows UC Regents and CSU Trustees on advisory groups to circumvent open meetings law.

"We have one final vote before the Governor can end the culture of secrecy at UC and CSU," said Yee. "SB 190 will bring much needed sunshine to executive compensation discussions, provide members of the media the democratic access they deserve, and help restore the public's trust."

SB 190 comes after a series of audits, lawsuits and other revelations found that the UC and the CSU failed to get public approval from the Regents or Trustees for compensation packages and that some top executives were paid more than what was released to the public.

Over the past several months, the Regents and Trustees have handed out a number of excessive executive compensation payouts, and also increased student fees. In addition, the CSU faculty had to call for a strike before the administration finally settled on a fair contract.

"It seems as if the students and faculty – the backbone of our university – are always left to the bear the burden, while high execs live high on the hog," said Yee. "As a graduate of both the UC and CSU, I want to make sure our higher education systems succeed. We should be investing in instruction, not creating a get-rich factory for executives."

"SB 190 will give the public an open window into the secret and scandal-ridden compensation practices of the UC Regents and CSU Trustees," said Tom Newton, General Counsel for the California Newspaper Publishers Association. "This legislation will not only shine some light on executive compensation discussions, but will allow the public to decide for itself whether UC and CSU pay practices are fair and appropriate."

