

**The Graduate Student Assembly  
The University of Texas at Austin**

**Executive Summary**

**Resolution:** G.R. 18 (F) 3 - Ensuring Time Off to Vote for Student Employees

The current University of Texas at Austin Handbook of Operating Procedures 5-4450 Time Off to Vote (HOP 5-4450) gives time off to vote to all University employees except student employees. This bill works to change the scope of employees affected under HOP 5-4450 to allow graduate students employees the necessary time off to vote during local, state, national elections as stipulated by Texas Election Code Section 276.001 and Section 276.004. Under this change, graduate students would be counted as employees and given two hours paid leave, during which time they could go to the polls to vote.

**Frequently Asked Questions:**

**1. What about early voting?**

- a. This policy only concerns time on election day. Any student employee or general employee can pursue early voting if they choose, but they should still have equal opportunities for time on election day.

**The Graduate Student Assembly  
The University of Texas at Austin**

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**Resolution:** G.R. 18 (F) 3 - Ensuring Time Off to Vote for Student Employees

**WHEREAS (1):** Voting is a responsibility that enables eligible American citizens to choose their representation for future policy at the local, state, and federal level; and,

**WHEREAS (2):** Texas Election Code Section 276.001 and Section 276.004 require that employees have at least two hours off to vote on an election day (unless they have already voted under early voting procedures). Such time off needs to be paid to the extent that it cuts into the employee's normal working hours (V-1532)<sup>1</sup>; and,

**WHEREAS (3):** The University of Texas at Austin Handbook of Operating Procedures 5-4450 Time Off to Vote (HOP 5-4450) states, "The University of Texas at Austin provides an employee sufficient time off, without a deduction in salary, to vote on a national, state or local election day."<sup>2</sup>; and,

**WHEREAS (4):** HOP 5-4450 applies to all University employees "except students employed in positions that require student status as a condition of employment."<sup>3</sup>; and,

**WHEREAS (5):** Despite being part time workers, student employees, especially graduate students, can have multiple obligations of their time, including teaching classes as Teaching Assistants or Assistant Instructors, tutoring or mentoring sessions, conducting research, or meeting with faculty. These responsibilities can limit the available time a student employee may need to travel to a polling place and vote; and,

**WHEREAS (6):** HOP 5-4450 already requires employees to confer with their supervisors to inform them of planned time off to vote in order to allow the supervisor to arrange time off and distribute necessary work to other employees or be otherwise accounted for; and,

**WHEREAS (7):** Graduate students tend to vote at lower rates than the rest of the student body. In the 2016 Presidential election, 53.2% of eligible undergraduate students voted and only 42.9% of

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<sup>1</sup> Voting- Time Off. Texas Workforce Handbook. 1952. [https://twc.texas.gov/news/eftv/voting\\_time\\_off.html](https://twc.texas.gov/news/eftv/voting_time_off.html)

<sup>2</sup> Time Off to Vote. University of Texas Handbook of Operating Procedures. 2001. <https://policies.utexas.edu/policies/time-vote>

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

eligible graduate students voted.<sup>4</sup> By allowing time off for graduate student employees to vote, graduate students may vote at higher rates; now,

**THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT (1):** The Graduate Student Assembly (GSA) calls upon the University of Texas at Austin to change the scope of HOP 5-4450 to no longer exclude student employees so that all University employees have time to vote during local, state, and federal election days; and,

**THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT (2):** Alteration of HOP 5-4450 be publicized so that student employees are aware of their rights and supervisors are aware of their responsibilities for providing time off to vote; and,

**THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT (3):** Copies of this Resolution be sent to the Dean of Students, the Vice President for Student Affairs, and the University Policy Office.

**PASSED** by the GSA General Assembly, October 3, 2018.

Signature of the GSA President: \_\_\_\_\_



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<sup>4</sup> Student Voting Rates for the University of Texas at Austin. 2012 and 2016 Campus Report. National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement. August 2017. [https://issuu.com/utvotes/docs/2012\\_and\\_2016\\_nslve\\_report-the\\_univ](https://issuu.com/utvotes/docs/2012_and_2016_nslve_report-the_univ)