Voucher Bills to be heard in Senate Education Committee on March 26, 2015

SB 276 Campbell, Donna(R) Relating to state savings and government efficiency achieved through a taxpayer savings grant program administered by the comptroller of public accounts.
As filed, a student who is entering kindergarten or first grade, attended a public school a year preceding initial participation in the Taxpayer Savings Grant Program; or participated in the program in a proceeding year is considered an eligible student. The parent/guardian of an eligible student may receive reimbursement for the tuition paid for a private school in an amount that is (1) equal to the tuition paid or (2) 60% of the state average maintenance and operations expenditures per student. Federal or available school funds cannot be used for reimbursement for this program. A private school that a parent selects may not be required to comply with any state law or rule governing the school's educational program that was not in effect on January 1, 2015. The comptroller (not TEA) will be administering the program and provide the reimbursement of funds to parents. Not later than October 1 of each year, the comptroller shall notify the commissioner and the LBB of the number of eligible students likely to participate in the grant program. Not later than March 1 of each year, the comptroller will provide both parties the number of students participating in the program. This Act takes effect September 1, 2015.
SB 4 Taylor, Larry(R) Relating to school choice programs for certain students eligible to attend public school.
As filed, this bill creates two programs to provide additional choice options. The first is an education tuition program for students that are entering kindergarten or first grade, in foster care, in institutional care, or has a household income that does not exceed 150% of the level that qualifies for a free or reduced price lunch. The program is limited to $50 million each fiscal year. Grant amounts would be limited to the lesser of tuition or 75% of state average M&O expenditures per student. Private schools that participate are specifically exempted from any state law governing their educational program that did not exist as of January 1, 2015. The second program operates as a tax credit program, where donations to an organization that provides scholarships result in tax credits for businesses against franchise tax or insurance premium taxes. The student eligibility for the tax credit programs is the same as for the education tuition program. The amount of the scholarship cannot exceed 75% of the amount to which a district would be entitled per ADA in the FSP. The total amount of credits that may be awarded may not exceed $50 million per year. The bill takes effect January 1, 2016.
SB 642 Bettencourt, Paul (F)(R) Relating to a franchise or insurance premium tax credit for contributions made to certain educational assistance organizations.
As filed, this bill enacts a tax credit scholarship and educational expense assistance program. For contributions made to "educational assistance organizations" that give scholarships of educational expense assistance to eligible students to attend either public or private elementary or secondary schools, taxpayers would be eligible for a credit against their franchise tax or insurance premium tax liability. The student eligibility criteria includes only students assigned to campuses with more than 100 students located in counties with more than 50,000 population. Students must also be in foster care, in institutional care, or in a family with income that does not exceed 200% of the eligibility for a free or reduced-price lunch. Students must also have attended a public school in the preceding year, be starting school in Texas for the first time, or be a sibling of an eligible student. Scholarship amounts may not exceed 75 percent of the state average entitlement per ADA in the Foundation School Program. Educational expense assistance may not exceed $500 per student per year. The credit to the taxpayer may not exceed 50% of the tax liability, and the total statewide may not exceed $100 million, with an annual escalation of 5%. The bill takes effect January 1, 2016.