

Texas Lawmakers To End High School Steroid Testing Program

The Texas state legislature will soon vote on whether random drug testing of high school athletes should find a place in the state budget. Recent reports suggest that the \$3 million annual outlay that was approved by legislators eight years ago is all set to end.

The Texas legislature approved funding for the program in 2007 after reports across North Texas of [anabolic steroid](#) use among high school athletes, most notably in the Dallas-Fort Worth suburbs of Colleyville and Plano. Random testing began during the second semester of the 2007-08 school year with 0.26 percent testing positive. Following similar results, funding was cut a year later to \$1 million and then to the current \$650,000 in 2011-12.

The bill was recommended by the staff of the legislature's Sunset Advisory Commission that is charged with elimination of unnecessary spending in state government. Results of the testing during its 5½ years cast doubt on whether it's worth even the current annual expenditure of \$650,000, said Commission director Ken Levine. According to the commission staff's report, less than one-third of 1 percent of subjects testing positive (190 out of 62,892) at a cost of \$9.3 million and funding has steadily declined from an annual \$3 million to about \$650,000 this year.

School Year	Budget	Tests	% Schools	% Students	Pos	% Pos
Spring 2008	\$3M	10,117	1.3	15	26	0.26
2008-09	\$3M	35,077	4.5	46	125	0.36
2009-10	\$1M	6,441	0.83	30	9	0.14
2010-11	\$1M	4,595	0.59	21	8	0.17
2011-12	\$650,000	3,311	0.42	15	11	0.33
2012-13	\$650,000	3,351	0.41	14	11	0.34
TOTAL	\$9.3M	62,892	1.34*	23.5*	190	0.27*

Source: Sunset Advisory Committee staff report, August 2014

* – Avg

Ken Levine remarked recommendation of the commission staff is split between determining the problem is not as serious as previously thought and assuming that the test as administered cannot provide a reliable snapshot of the situation. Levine added it may not be a good investment of funds at this time and also remarked that we said in the report that the world of steroid use and other performance enhancing drugs has changed a lot since they originally implemented this.

New Jersey was the first state to administer statewide tests for [performance enhancing drugs](#) to high school athletes in 2005-06. Soon, Texas and Illinois joined. Florida tested in 2008-09 and brought an end to its program after only one academic year, finding one positive among approximately 600 tests.

Steroid testing proponents agree the Texas steroid testing program would not deliver many positives and cited inadequacies in procedure and scope of the program. Don Hooton, whose [Taylor Hooton Foundation](#) has been offering anti-steroid education to young athletes for 12 years, said it was never about measuring the amount of performance enhancing drug usage by the kids and added it was all about providing deterrents. Don Hooton added he believes Texas should reallocate the testing money for anti-steroid education and commented that we are dealing with a political climate that doesn't believe this is a problem with the kids.