

## **BILL ANALYSIS**

C.S.H.B. 1532  
By: Farrar  
Judiciary & Civil Jurisprudence  
Committee Report (Substituted)

### **BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE**

There is concern that many Texans fall into what has been called a "justice gap" in which they are neither poor enough to qualify for free legal services nor affluent enough to afford legal services on their own, thus putting these pro se litigants at a disadvantage during the legal process. C.S.H.B. 1532 seeks to address this gap by requiring the courts of Texas to make information relating to legal self-help resources publicly available on each court's website, if the court has a website, and in the office of the court clerk.

### **CRIMINAL JUSTICE IMPACT**

It is the committee's opinion that this bill does not expressly create a criminal offense, increase the punishment for an existing criminal offense or category of offenses, or change the eligibility of a person for community supervision, parole, or mandatory supervision.

### **RULEMAKING AUTHORITY**

It is the committee's opinion that this bill does not expressly grant any additional rulemaking authority to a state officer, department, agency, or institution.

### **ANALYSIS**

C.S.H.B. 1532 amends the Government Code to require the clerk of each court in Texas to post on the court's website, if any, a link to the State Law Library's website and a link to the self-help resources website designated by the Office of Court Administration of the Texas Judicial System (OCA) in consultation with the Texas Access to Justice Commission that includes information on certified lawyer referral services; the name, location, and any website of any local legal aid office; and any court-affiliated self-help center serving the county in which the court is located. The bill requires each clerk to conspicuously display a sign with such information in the clerk's office in a location frequently accessed by the public and requires OCA to prescribe the format for the required information.

### **EFFECTIVE DATE**

September 1, 2017.

### **COMPARISON OF ORIGINAL AND SUBSTITUTE**

While C.S.H.B. 1532 may differ from the original in minor or nonsubstantive ways, the following comparison is organized and formatted in a manner that indicates the substantial differences between the introduced and committee substitute versions of the bill.

INTRODUCED

HOUSE COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE

85R 23231

17.102.944

Substitute Document Number: 85R 14628

SECTION 1. Subchapter I, Chapter 51, Government Code, is amended by adding Section 51.808 to read as follows:

Sec. 51.808. NOTICE OF SELF-HELP RESOURCES. (a) The clerk of each court in this state shall:

(1) post on the court's Internet website, if any, a link to:

(A) the self-help resources Internet website of the Office of Court Administration of the Texas Judicial System described in Subsection (b);

(B) the Lawyer Referral and Information Service of the State Bar of Texas and any local lawyer referral service serving the county in which the court is located;

(C) the Internet website of any legal aid or pro bono organization that provides free legal services to indigent persons in the county in which the court is located; and

(D) any court-affiliated self-help center serving the county in which the court is located; and

(2) conspicuously display in the clerk's office in a location frequently accessed by the public a sign with the information described in Subdivision (1).

(b) The Office of Court Administration of the Texas Judicial System shall develop and maintain a self-help resources Internet website that includes information on and links to:

(1) the Lawyer Referral and Information Service of the State Bar of Texas;

(2) the Referral Directory Legal Services and Other Resources for Low-Income Texans of the State Bar of Texas;

(3) the State Law Library;

(4) the self-help website for this state's electronic filing system;

(5) the programs and services section on the Internet website of the supreme court; and

(6) any other self-help resource approved by the office.

(c) The Office of Court Administration of the Texas Judicial System shall prescribe the format for the information required under Subsection (a).

SECTION 2. As soon as practicable after

SECTION 1. Subchapter I, Chapter 51, Government Code, is amended by adding Section 51.808 to read as follows:

Sec. 51.808. NOTICE OF SELF-HELP RESOURCES. (a) The clerk of each court in this state shall:

(1) post on the court's Internet website, if any, a link to:

(A) the self-help resources Internet website designated by the Office of Court Administration of the Texas Judicial System, in consultation with the Texas Access to Justice Commission, that includes information on:

(i) lawyer referral services certified under Chapter 952, Occupations Code;

(ii) the name, location, and any Internet website of any local legal aid office; and

(iii) any court-affiliated self-help center serving the county in which the court is located; and

(B) the State Law Library's Internet website; and

(2) conspicuously display in the clerk's office in a location frequently accessed by the public a sign with the information described in Subdivision (1).

No equivalent provision.

(b) The Office of Court Administration of the Texas Judicial System shall prescribe the format for the information required under Subsection (a).

SECTION 2. Same as introduced version.

the effective date of this Act, the Office of Court Administration of the Texas Judicial System shall prescribe the format of the information required under Section 51.808, Government Code, as added by this Act.

SECTION 3. This Act takes effect September 1, 2017.

SECTION 3. Same as introduced version.