

BILL ANALYSIS

C.S.H.B. 2497
By: Parker
State Affairs
Committee Report (Substituted)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

There are concerns that civics education in this state does not sufficiently address the storied and unique history of Texas, reaching back before the founding of the Republic of Texas following independence from Mexico in 1836. Every Texan, regardless of age, will benefit from having a deeper understanding of state history and the policy decisions that have allowed the state to flourish. C.S.H.B. 2497 seeks to increase civic literacy and an understanding of the importance of Texas' unique history by establishing the 1836 Project as an advisory committee to promote patriotic education and increase awareness of Texas values.

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. 2497 amends the Government Code to establish the nine-member 1836 Project as an advisory committee to promote patriotic education and increase awareness of the Texas values that continue to stimulate boundless prosperity across Texas. The bill sets out the committee's composition to be appointed by the governor, lieutenant governor, and speaker of the house of representatives and provides for the appointment of the initial members. The bill provides also for the committee's administration and operation, including funding and administrative support by the Texas Education Agency (TEA), reimbursement for travel expenses incurred by a committee member, two-year member terms, the appointment of a presiding officer, and conditions under which a member may be removed.

C.S.H.B. 2497 requires the project to do the following:

- promote awareness among Texas residents of the following as they relate to the history of prosperity and democratic freedom in Texas:
 - Texas history, including the indigenous peoples of Texas, the Spanish and Mexican heritage of Texas, Tejanos, the Texas War for Independence, annexation of Texas by the United States, and Juneteenth;
 - the founding documents of Texas;
 - the founders of Texas; and
 - state civics;
- advise the governor on the core principles of the founding of Texas and how those principles further enrich the lives of its residents;

- facilitate the development and implementation of the Gubernatorial 1836 Award to recognize student knowledge of Texas Independence;
- advise executive branch state agencies with regard to their efforts to ensure patriotic education is provided to the public at certain places important to the Texas War for Independence and the founding of Texas; and
- facilitate, advise on, and promote other activities to support public knowledge of and patriotic education on the Texas War for Independence and founding of Texas.

In carrying out its duty to advise the governor, the project may solicit statements and contributions from intellectual and cultural figures.

C.S.H.B. 2497 requires the project to do the following not later than September 1, 2022:

- provide a pamphlet with specified content to the Department of Public Safety (DPS) that explains the significance of policy decisions made by the state that promote liberty and freedom for businesses and families; and
- prepare a written report that includes the following:
 - a description of the project's activities;
 - the project's findings and recommendations;
 - a plan that identifies the best method of carrying out certain of the project's duties;
 - any proposals for legislation; and
 - any other matter the project considers appropriate.

Subsequent to that report, the project may prepare additional reports it considers appropriate. The bill requires TEA to make any report produced by the project available to the public on its website. The project is abolished and the bill's provisions relating to the establishment and duties of the project expire September 1, 2036.

C.S.H.B. 2497 amends the Transportation Code to require DPS to provide the project's pamphlet to persons who receive a driver's license.

EFFECTIVE DATE

September 1, 2021.

COMPARISON OF ORIGINAL AND SUBSTITUTE

While C.S.H.B. 2497 may differ from the original in minor or nonsubstantive ways, the following summarizes the substantial differences between the introduced and committee substitute versions of the bill.

The substitute includes among the aspects of Texas history regarding which the project must promote awareness the history of the indigenous peoples of Texas, the Spanish and Mexican heritage of Texas, and Tejanos, whereas the original did not.

The substitute includes a specification not included in the original that any additional reports prepared by the project occur subsequent to the required report due September 1, 2022.