

SUBJECT: Requiring tenant member in municipalities with housing authority

COMMITTEE: Urban Affairs — committee substitute recommended

VOTE: 6 ayes — Hill, Bailey, Ehrhardt, Staples, Tillery, Woolley
0 nays
1 present, not voting — Davila
2 absent — Conley, Thompson

WITNESSES: For — John Henneberger, Texas Low Income Housing Information Service; Pamela M. Brown, Texas Legal Services Center; Janee Briesemeister, Consumer's Union.

Against — None

BACKGROUND: The 73rd Legislature required municipalities with a population of 75,000 or more with a housing authority to appoint a tenant member to the board. Board members serve two-year terms with no term limits. Tenant members can be removed for missing three consecutive meetings or when they leave public housing. The provisions also apply to counties with housing authorities of 750 units or more and to regional housing authorities.

DIGEST: CSHB 2805 would amend Local Government Code sec. 392.0331 to require all municipalities with a housing authority to appoint a tenant to the housing authority board. The bill also would prohibit appointed tenant members from serving consecutive terms.

The bill specifically would not affect the ability of any current board member to serve out a term, and board presiding officers would make appointments as required when vacancies come due or terms expire.

SUPPORTERS SAY: This bill is necessary so that all 338 cities with a housing authority board, not just those with a population of 75,000 or more, would be required to appoint one tenant member to the authority's board.

Having a tenant member improves communication and understanding between tenants and housing authority board and gives tenants a sense of ownership. The needs of residents will be heard and will lead to better living conditions.

Limiting a tenant to one term would assure that different views and ideas are heard, which would facilitate greater cooperation among tenants. No election costs would be incurred to local governments, since board members are appointed.

**OPPONENTS
SAY:**

Term limits should not apply only to tenant members. If limits on consecutive terms are a good idea, they should be applied uniformly, not just to the tenant members.

NOTES:

The committee substitute added the prohibition on tenant commissioners serving consecutive terms.

The companion bill, SB 1208 by Ellis, is pending in the Senate Intergovernmental Relations Committee.