

**SUBJECT:** Transfers and legislative leave for Houston police

**COMMITTEE:** Urban Affairs — committee substitute recommended

**VOTE:** 7 ayes — Hill, Bailey, Burnam, Clark, Ehrhardt, Hodge, Shields  
0 nays  
1 present, not voting — Wohlgemuth  
1 absent — Garcia

**WITNESSES:** For — Mark Clark, Combined Law Enforcement Associations of Texas;  
Steve Lyons, Houston Police Department  
Against — None  
On — S. C. Van Vleck, Fort Worth Police Department

**BACKGROUND :** Under the Local Government Code, Houston police officers in specialized divisions, such as park police, airport police and municipal marshals, who want to move to another division or to the Houston police force must qualify and enter the new class at its lowest entry level.  
Houston police officers can take legislative leave without pay to appear before the Legislature during a regular or special session. The officer must pay the municipality the amount of money required to offset the cost of the leave.

**DIGEST:** CSHB 3324 would allow Houston police officers in specialized divisions to make lateral or promotional moves from one specialized division to another or to the regular Houston police force. The city would be required to classify officers from a specialized police division in the same class as regular police officers.  
CSHB 3324 also would allow Houston firefighters and police officers to donate one hour of leave per month to an employee organization. Up to 4,000 hours of this leave time could be used by any member of the

employee organization for legislative leave. The city of Houston could determine and credit the actual cash value of the leave time and deduct the actual cash value of time used from the account, or could credit and debit the time on an hour-for-hour basis, regardless of the cash value of the time donated.

CSHB 3324 would take effect September 1, 1997.

**SUPPORTERS  
SAY:**

CSHB 3324 would simplify the organizational structure of the Houston police department and allow specialized officers, who go through the same training as regular police officers, to make lateral or promotional transfers to any other division in the force. This would eliminate unnecessary barriers that have been problematic for police officers and management, and provide police officers with the option of taking advantage of opportunities in other divisions.

CSHB 3324 would also allow police officers and fire fighters to pool legislative leave and repay for lost time using leave rather than cash. These changes would not substantially change current law, which allows officers to take leave for legislative purposes.

**OPPONENTS  
SAY:**

No apparent opposition.

**NOTES:**

The original bill would have made substantive changes to the complaint and disciplinary process of the Houston police and fire departments.