

SUBJECT: Including the border region in state agency strategic planning

COMMITTEE: State Affairs — favorable, with amendment

VOTE: 13 ayes — Wolens, S. Turner, Alvarado, Bailey, Counts, Craddick, Danburg, Hilbert, Hunter, D. Jones, Longoria, Marchant, McCall

0 nays

2 absent — Brimer, Merritt

WITNESSES: For — Andrew Biar and Bill Hammond, Texas Association of Business and Chambers of Commerce; Susan Rocha, City of El Paso; John Wood, City of Brownsville

Against — None

DIGEST: HB 566, as amended, would revise the Government Code to require state agency strategic plans to identify each geographic region of the state served by the agency, including the Texas-Mexico border region. If appropriate, the strategic plan also would have to identify the agency's means and strategies for serving each region.

The bill would define the border region to include 43 specific counties, including Bexar and El Paso counties.

HB 566 would take effect September 1, 1999.

SUPPORTERS SAY: Currently, agency strategic plans do not identify the regions of the state that the agency serves. HB 566 would require agencies to report their services on a regional basis to help policymakers evaluate the implementation of the agency's strategic plan.

As amended, HB 566 would not require the agency to ask for additional funds to serve specific areas of the state but only to highlight the provision of services to each area, including the border region.

The border region has long suffered neglect in the receipt of state services. According to a July 1998 report by the Comptroller's Office, *Bordering the Future*, the region ranks dead last in the U.S. in per-capita personal income and nearly last in average annual pay. Without continued attention by the state, this growing region could fail to receive any of the economic prosperity currently benefitting other parts of the state.

OPPONENTS
SAY:

HB 566 would require strategic plans to show regional services, but by drawing special attention to the border region and specifically defining that region and not other regions, the bill could place undue prominence on that region in state funding. While it is indisputable that the border region needs special attention, state government needs to consider the needs of residents of all regions of the state on an equal basis.

NOTES:

The committee amendment would remove a requirement that each agency's strategic plan identify strategies to increase the agency's physical presence in each region.

The companion bill, SB 501 by Shapleigh, passed the Senate on April 15 by voice vote and was reported favorably, without amendment, by the House State Affairs Committee on May 3.