

SUBJECT: Exempting counties with civil service from employee written contracts

COMMITTEE: County Affairs — favorable, without amendment

VOTE: 6 ayes — Ramsay, G. Lewis, Chisum, Farabee, Krusee, Swinford

0 nays

3 absent — B. Brown, Hilderbran, Salinas

WITNESSES: For — Craig Pardue, Dallas County

Against — None

BACKGROUND: Local Government Code, sec. 151.902 requires all county employees in a county with a population of 500,000 or more to be employed by written contract. When the law was enacted in 1935, that population bracket applied only to Harris County. Since then, several other counties have grown to that size, and some operate under the civil-service system created under Chapter 158 of the Local Government Code.

DIGEST: HB 809 would exempt counties with a civil-service system created under Local Government Code, chapter 158 from the requirement that county employees be employed by written contract.

HB 809 would take immediate effect if finally approved by a two-thirds record vote of the membership in each house.

SUPPORTERS SAY: HB 809 would clarify the law to ensure that large counties, such as Dallas County, that have operated under a civil service system could continue to do so. Under a civil service system, county employees work under rules developed by a civil service commission that provide them with specified protections that otherwise would be covered in a written contract. The bill would not affect counties with populations of more than 500,000 that already use written contracts.

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OPPONENTS
SAY: No apparent opposition.

NOTES: The Senate companion bill, SB 395 by Carona, passed the Senate by 31-0 on March 11 on the Local and Uncontested Calendar. The House County Affairs Committee reported SB 395 favorably, without amendment, on March 31, making it eligible to be considered in lieu of HB 809.