

**SUBJECT:** Authorizing TNRCC to take and finance actions in Mexico

**COMMITTEE:** Environmental Regulation — favorable, without amendment

**VOTE:** 6 ayes — Chisum, Kuempel, Uher, Dukes, Geren, Zbranek  
1 nays — Howard  
2 absent — Bonnen, Bosse

**SENATE VOTE:** On final passage, April 18 — 29-1 (Nelson)

**WITNESSES:** None

**BACKGROUND:** Under current law, the Texas Natural Resource Conservation Commission (TNRCC) has no authority to participate in environmental projects in Mexico.

**DIGEST:** SB 749 would permit TNRCC to finance and participate in activities in Mexico, in cooperation with Mexican governmental authorities, if TNRCC considered it necessary or convenient to accomplish one of TNRCC's duties and would benefit the Texas environment.

The bill would take immediate effect if finally passed by a two-thirds record vote of the membership of each house. Otherwise, it would take effect September 1, 2001.

**SUPPORTERS SAY:** SB 749 would allow TNRCC to better protect the Texas border environment. Actions taken in Mexico, including chemical dumping, pollution of the Rio Grande, and emissions of air pollutants, have an impact on the environment in Texas. El Paso, for example, shares an airshed with Juarez and other parts of Mexico. The burning of tires and garbage in factory furnaces in Mexico has a direct impact on air quality in El Paso. Visibility and air quality in Big Bend National Park also are affected negatively by industrial coal-burning plants in Piedras Negras, Mexico.

The bill would contain an appropriate limitation on TNRCC participation. TNRCC only could participate in a project if it found it necessary or convenient to accomplish one of TNRCC's duties and if it would benefit the environment in this state.

OPPONENTS  
SAY:

Texas should not be spending its tax dollars on projects in Mexico. Funding start-up projects could lead to a continued financial commitment for Texas, either through increased support for these projects or future assistance in implementing new technology. Also, no guarantee exists that these projects would continue; Texas could fund installation of pollution control technology only to find that the affected entities had stopped operations, or had failed to maintain that technology.