

- SUBJECT:** Establishing a meal-delivery grant program for the elderly and disabled
- COMMITTEE:** Agriculture and Livestock — committee substitute recommended
- VOTE:** 5 ayes — Miller, Anderson, Aycock, B. Brown, Heflin
0 nays
2 absent — Gallego, Garcia
- WITNESSES:** For — Betty L. Bradley, Meals on Wheels Association of Texas; Dan Pruett, Meals on Wheels Association of Texas; (*Registered, but did not testify:* Jim Allison, County Judges and Commissioners Association of Texas; Donna Chatham, Association of Rural Communities in Texas; Michael Goldstein, Meals on Wheels Association of Texas; Michelle Huck, United Way Capital Area; Jason Sabo, United Way Texas; Dick Waterfield)
Against — None
- DIGEST:** CSHB 407 would require the Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA) to establish a home-delivered meal grant program designed to benefit elderly and disabled Texans and to help defray unfunded costs of existing home-delivered meal programs
- Qualified non-profit organizations and governmental agencies would submit a grant application for each county in which they operate a home-delivered meal program. An organization would be eligible for TDA funding if:
- the county contributed partial funding for meal delivery; and
 - the home-delivered meal program was not fully funded by the Department of Aging and Disability Services or a local agency on aging.
- Funding distributed per county could not exceed an amount calculated by multiplying the county's senior population by the quotient of total available program funding divided by the state's senior population. This

sum could be divided proportionally among several organizations that delivered meals in a single county.

Each February 1, subject to the county cap, organizations would receive one dollar for every meal delivered in the preceding year. If the county contributed fewer than 25 cents per person age 60 or older, the amount distributed at the county level would be proportionally reduced.

If the total amount of grants distributed fell short of total program funding appropriated, TDA would add unspent funds proportionally to grants received by qualifying organizations. TDA could use not more than 5 percent of appropriated funding for program administration. TDA would adopt program rules as soon as practical after the bill took effect.

The bill would take immediate effect if passed by a two-thirds record vote of the membership of each house. Otherwise, it would take effect September 1, 2007.

**SUPPORTERS
SAY:**

CSHB 407 would enable many elderly and disabled people to maintain their dignity by residing independently in their homes. In addition, the home-delivered meal grant program would result in significant savings to the state by reducing expenditures associated with housing the elderly and disabled in nursing facilities. The cost to the state of health care and shelter for these populations would far outweigh the cost of partially funding meal delivery programs.

The meal-delivery process is an important form of human contact for recipients. In the process of delivering meals, participating organizations also perform the important service of checking in on these vulnerable populations. In addition, the program would raise nutritional standards among the elderly and disabled and thus improve their health.

Demand for home-delivered meals will increase in coming years with the rapid growth of the state's elderly population. Many seniors currently are on waiting lists to participate in home-delivered meal programs. CSHB 407 would allow home-delivered meal programs to expand operations and serve more people.

By offering partial funding for home-delivered meal programs, CSHB 407 would encourage grant recipients to continue outside fundraising efforts. The provision of state funding would enable grant recipients to draw

federal matching funds. The bill's requirement that home-delivered meal programs receive partial county funding would encourage counties to contribute more funding to such programs.

It is the state's moral obligation to provide assistance to elderly and disabled populations. Nationally, Texas ranks low in committing funds to senior nutrition, and CSHB 407 would bring Texas up to par in this regard with other states.

OPPONENTS
SAY:

Establishing a home-delivered meal grant program would result in significant, on-going costs to the state. According to the Legislative Budget Board (LBB), the program would cost the state nearly \$110 million from fiscal 2008 through fiscal 2012. Moreover, the home-delivered meal grant program could be viewed as an entitlement program and set a precedent for even greater costs to the state in the future.

NOTES:

The committee substitute modified the bill as introduced by:

- stipulating that the program would be designed to offset costs of home-delivered meal programs that were not "fully funded" as opposed to "paid";
- stipulating that organizations would receive proportionally less state funding to the extent that the county contributed fewer than 25 cents per "elderly" residents;
- changing the date by which the department would distribute grants to qualifying organizations from December 1 to February 1 of each year; and
- changing the date by which TDA would adopt program rules from October 1, 2007, to as soon as practical after the bill took effect.

According to the LBB, CSHB 407 would cost \$32.4 million in general revenue-related funds in fiscal 2008-09, rising to an annual level of \$28.3 million in fiscal 2012 as more eligible organizations applied for grants.

A similar bill, SB 286 by Watson, is scheduled for public hearing today in the Senate Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Affairs, and Coastal Resources. SB 286 would establish a meal-delivery program for homebound elderly *or* disabled people and would distribute grants to qualifying organizations on December 1 of each year, rather than February 1.