

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center
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C.S.S.B. 1678
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Criminal Justice
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Committee Report (Substituted)

DIGEST AND PURPOSE

Currently, the Texas Board of Pardons and Paroles (TBPP) has a separate policy board. C.S.S.B. 1678 reorganizes TBPP, replacing the current 18-member board, including the policy board, with a seven-member board led by a presiding officer. It requires TBPP to employ parole commissioners to participate in panels along with TBPP members to determine release, conditions of parole, and modification and withdrawal or mandatory supervision. However, only TBPP members will vote on clemency, capital, life, and sex offender cases, or any cases in which an inmate is ineligible for community supervision.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

Rulemaking authority is expressly granted to the Texas Board of Pardons and Paroles in SECTION 5 (Section 508.036, Government Code) of this bill.

Rulemaking authority previously granted to the Texas Board of Pardons and Paroles Policy Board is transferred to the Texas Board of Pardons and Paroles in SECTIONS 10 (Section 508.0441, Government Code) and 14 (Section 508.082, Government Code) of this bill.

SECTION BY SECTION ANALYSIS

SECTION 1. Amends Section 508.001, Government Code, by amending Subdivision (8) and adding Subdivision (10), to define “parole commissioner” and “presiding officer” and delete the definition of “policy board.”

SECTION 2. Amends Section 508.031(a), Government Code, to provide that the Texas Board of Pardons and Paroles (TBPP) consists of seven, rather than 18, members appointed by the governor with the advice and consent of the senate.

SECTION 3. Amends Section 508.034, Government Code, as follows:

- (a) Provides that it is a ground for removal from TBPP that a member is absent from more than half of the regularly scheduled meetings that the member is eligible to attend during each calendar year, except when the absence is excused by the presiding officer of TBPP (presiding officer), rather than by majority vote of TBPP.
- (b) Deletes the text of this subsection regarding removal from the policy board of TBPP. Creates this subsection from the existing text of Subsection (c) and deletes a reference to the policy board.
- (c) Created from the existing text of Subsection (d) with the deletion of a reference to the policy board.
- (d) Created from the existing text of Subsection (e).

(e) Created from the existing text of Subsection (f). Provides that it is a ground for removal from the TBPP that a member fails to comply with policies or rules adopted by TBPP, rather than the policy board.

SECTION 4. Amends Section 508.035, Government Code, by amending Subsection (c) and adding Subsection (d), as follows:

- (c) Deletes a reference to the policy board.
- (d) Authorizes the presiding officer to perform certain functions.

SECTION 5. Amends Section 508.036, Government Code, as follows:

Sec. 508.036. New heading: GENERAL ADMINISTRATIVE DUTIES. (a) Sets forth duties of the presiding officer, including developing and implementing policies that clearly separate the policy-making responsibilities of TBPP and the management responsibilities of the board administrator, parole commissioners, and the staff of TBPP, and establishing caseloads and required work hours for members of TBPP and parole commissioners. Deletes text regarding the governor's designation of members to serve on the policy board, granting rulemaking authority to the policy board, and assigning duties to the policy board. Makes conforming changes.

(b) Sets forth requirements for TBPP, including to adopt rules relating to the decision-making processes used by TBPP and parole panels; to prepare information of public interest describing the functions of TBPP; to comply with certain laws; and to prepare an annual report.

(c) Requires the board administrator to prepare and maintain a written plan that describes how a person who does not speak English can be provided reasonable access to TBPP's programs and services.

(d) Provides that TBPP, in performing its duties, is subject to the open meetings law, Chapter 551, and the administrative procedure law, Chapter 2001. Provides that this subsection does not affect the provisions of Section 2001.223 exempting hearings and interviews conducted by TBPP or the pardons and paroles division (division) from Section 2001.038 and Subchapters C-H, Chapter 2001.

SECTION 6. Amends Section 508.0362, Government Code, as follows:

- (a) Prohibits a parole commissioner employed by the board from voting or deliberating on a matter described by Section 508.0441 until the person completes at least one course of a training program that complies with this section. Makes conforming changes.
- (b) Makes conforming changes.
- (c) Makes a conforming change.

SECTION 7. Amends Section 508.040(a), Government Code, to provide that the presiding officer, rather than the policy board, is responsible for the employment and supervision of certain persons, including parole commissioners and personnel to assist in hearing matters. Makes conforming and nonsubstantive changes.

SECTION 8. Amends Section 508.041, Government Code, to make conforming changes.

SECTION 9. Amends Section 508.042, Government Code, as follows:

Sec. 508.042. New heading: TRAINING PROGRAM FOR MEMBERS AND PAROLE COMMISSIONERS. (a) Makes conforming changes.

(b) Prohibits a new parole commissioner from participating in a vote of a panel until the commissioner completes the training program. Provides that this subdivision does not apply to a new parole commissioner who as a board member completed the training program.

SECTION 10. Amends Subchapter B, Chapter 508, Government Code, by amending Section 508.044 and adding Section 508.0441, as follows:

Sec. 508.044. Makes nonsubstantive changes.

Sec. 508.0441. RELEASE AND REVOCATION DUTIES. Created from the existing text of Section 508.044. Authorizes the presiding officer, rather than the policy board, to provide a written plan for the administrative review of actions taken by a parole panel by a review panel, rather than the entire membership or by a subset of the entire membership of TBPP. Makes conforming and nonsubstantive changes.

SECTION 11. Amends Section 508.045, Government Code, to require the presiding officer to designate the composition of each panel, and authorizes the presiding officer to designate panels composed only of TBPP members, composed only of parole commissioners, or composed of any combination of members and parole commissioners. Makes conforming and nonsubstantive changes.

SECTION 12. Amends Section 508.047(a), Government Code, to make a conforming change.

SECTION 13. Amends Section 508.049, Government Code, to make conforming changes.

SECTION 14. Amends Section 508.082, Government Code, to make conforming changes.

SECTION 15. Amends Section 508.144(b), Government Code, to make conforming changes.

SECTION 16. Amends Section 508.153(b), Government Code, to make conforming and nonsubstantive changes.

SECTION 17. Amends Section 508.281(a), Government Code, to make a conforming change.

SECTION 18. Amends Section 508.313(c), Government Code, to make a conforming change.

SECTION 19. Amends Section 492.0131, Government Code, to make conforming changes.

SECTION 20. Repealer: Section 508.0361 (Policy Board: General Administrative Provisions), Government Code.

SECTION 21. (a) Requires the governor to appoint new members to TBPP on or before January 1, 2004, and provides that the terms of members serving on December 31, 2003, expire on the appointment of the new members. Authorizes but does not require the governor to appoint as new members persons who served on TBPP before January 1, 2004.

(b) Requires the governor, of the new members of TBPP, to appoint two to serve terms expiring February 1, 2005, two to serve terms expiring February 1, 2007, and three to serve terms expiring February 1, 2009. Provides that on the expiration of the terms of the initial members of the new TBPP, the term of a member appointed by the governor is six years.

(c) Provides that, on September 1, 2003, a rule of the policy board is a rule of TBPP.

SECTION 22. Effective date: September 1, 2003.