

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center
84R11163 EES-F

S.B. 1192
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As Filed

AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

The software that the Texas Ethics Commission (TEC) currently provides to appointed and elected officials, candidates, political committees, legislative caucuses, and lobbyists for electronic filings requires the user to install the program on the user's computer and fill out the report from that computer. TEC is transitioning to a new web-based filing application that would allow users to save electronic data online for later retrieval and editing, before sending the finalized report to TEC. This new filing application will allow filers to prepare their reports online from any computer.

Some filers may be apprehensive about using this new application to prepare their reports because of confidentiality concerns. Filers using the online application to prepare a report may fear that information uploaded during the preparation process could be disclosed publicly, resulting in the potential misuse or misinterpretation of that preliminary information.

S.B. 1192 would clarify that information uploaded to TEC's electronic software during the preparation of a report is confidential and not subject to the Public Information Act. Once the finalized report is filed, it would become a public document, just like any filed report is today. This bill also applies to persons using the commission's software to file a report with local filing authorities.

These changes would increase filers' trust and usage of TEC's new electronic software, increasing the statewide filing system's efficiency.

As proposed, S.B. 1192 amends current law relating to the confidentiality of certain information stored as part of the preparation of reports required to be filed with the Texas Ethics Commission and other authorities.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

This bill does not expressly grant any additional rulemaking authority to a state officer, institution, or agency.

SECTION BY SECTION ANALYSIS

SECTION 1. Amends Section 571.0671, Government Code, by adding Subsection (d), as follows:

(d) Provides that electronic report data saved in a temporary storage location with the Texas Ethics Commission (TEC) or another filing authority for later retrieval and editing before the report is filed with TEC or other authority is confidential and may not be disclosed. Provides that, after the report is filed, the information disclosed in the report is subject to the law requiring the filing of the report.

SECTION 2. Effective date: September 1, 2015.