

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center
85R3135 DMS-D

S.B. 259
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State Affairs
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As Filed

AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

The purpose of this legislation is to allow counties to choose whether they send prospective jurors paper jury questionnaires or, instead, provide the web address of a printable version of the questionnaire. Current law mandates that counties send jurors a copy of the uniform jury questionnaire in the mail along with the jury summons. As it is presently written, a county is prohibited from updating this procedure by providing the web address of an electronic, identical version of the uniform jury questionnaire. Thus, this proposal will bring choice to an area where it is absent and entrust county authorities to decide what would suit them best.

If the county wants to maintain current practice, they may. On the other hand, if the county would like to move the questionnaires online, they would now have the legal authority to do so. By supplying the questionnaires online, some counties have suggested they could increase efficiency, conserve staff resources, and save taxpayer money. For example, one county has estimated that they could save as much as \$2 million annually by offering the questionnaires online. Moreover, some counties report that jurors often do not fill out the mailed questionnaire as instructed. This renders the resources spent printing and mailing the documents a total waste, but this could be prevented by simply hosting the questionnaires online. This legislation mandates nothing, but, rather, provides greater freedom of choice by empowering counties to administer jury questionnaires in the way most beneficial to the needs of its residents. It will allow counties to expand on the services of e-government, which have already led to better service and lower costs.

As proposed, S.B. 259 amends current law relating to jury summons questionnaires.

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 Sections 62.0132(b) and (d), Government Code, as follows:

(b) Requires a written jury summons to include the electronic address of the court's website from which the questionnaire developed under this section may be easily printed.
Makes nonsubstantive changes.

(d) Requires a person who has received a written jury summons, rather than a person who has received a written jury summons and a written jury summons questionnaire, to complete and submit a jury summons questionnaire when the person reports for jury duty.
Makes nonsubstantive changes.

SECTION 2. Makes application of this Act prospective.

SECTION 3. Effective date: September 1, 2017.