

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center
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C.S.S.B. 259
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State Affairs
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Committee Report (Substituted)

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 same questionnaire in a digital format. 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 mandated to send a paper questionnaire regardless of whether or not they can facilitate the questionnaire online. 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 solely 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.

C.S.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 that a written jury summons 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, except as provided by this subsection. Authorizes the county, if the district and criminal district judges of a county adopt a plan for an electronic jury selection method under Section 62.011 (Electronic or Mechanical Method of Selection), to allow a person to complete and submit a jury summons questionnaire on the court's Internet website as authorized under Section 62.0111(b)(5) (relating to completion and submission by the prospective juror of the written jury summons questionnaire). Makes nonsubstantive changes.

SECTION 2. Makes application of this Act prospective.

SECTION 3. Effective date: September 1, 2017.