

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center
86R28013 SRA-F

H.B. 2971
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Natural Resources & Economic Development
5/15/2019
Engrossed

AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

H.B. 2971 will update outdated provisions requiring the agency to maintain printed abstract books. The Texas General Land Office (GLO) previously maintained and distributed abstract information in printed form. The Abstracts of Texas and Titles are an eight volume set of information that comprises grants and locations, compiled by county. Information contained in this original eight volume set include: abstract number, name of original grantee, name of patentee, patent number and volume, acres, survey, section, block and township, and GLO file number. This information was maintained in abstract books through about 1934 and was updated in supplements through the 1990s, when the transition to a database began. In 2003, this section was updated to allow the agency to maintain the records electronically. The grant information has since been queried out of a database, which is now known as the Land Grant Database.

H.B. 2971 removes the requirement that the agency maintain the printed abstract books. The information has not been maintained in printed form since 2000, and the information is now located in a database. This change merely updates the code to reflect current practice.

In 2004, the Save Texas History program was created to rally public support and private funding for the preservation and promotion of historic maps and documents in the GLO Archives. To assist the GLO in furthering its preservation, conservation, acquisition, and education related responsibilities, H.B. 2971 will allow the GLO to expand the Save Texas History program to the greatest extent feasible to enhance the performance of its duties. No money is appropriated for the conservation of historic maps and documents; this program is entirely funded through grants and public donations.

H.B. 2971 will allow more discretion on what donated funds can be used for within the Save Texas History program. Currently, this money can only be used for conservation unless specified otherwise. H.B. 2971 will allow the program to use the funds they already receive for education, digitization, and acquisition of historic items. This discretion will allow the Save Texas History program to expand their public outreach and operate more effectively.

H.B. 2971 amends current law relating to powers and duties concerning records of the General Land Office.

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 31.056(a) and (b), Natural Resources Code, as follows:

- (a) Authorizes, rather than requires, the commissioner of the Texas General Land Office (commissioner; GLO), to prepare a revision and compilation of the various volumes of the abstracts of patented, titled, and surveyed real property which were previously made by GLO.

(b) Authorizes the various counties of the state to be apportioned into districts for the purpose of revising and compiling the abstracts and authorizes the abstracts of each of the districts to be compiled in a separate volume, rather than requiring the various counties of the state to be apportioned into one of not more than eight districts for the purpose of revising and compiling the abstracts and requiring the abstracts of each of the districts to be compiled in a separate volume.

SECTION 2. Amends Section 31.0655, Natural Resources Code, as follows:

Sec. 31.0655. New heading: SAVE TEXAS HISTORY AND ADOPT-A-BEACH PROGRAMS. (a) Creates this subsection from existing text and makes no further changes.

(b) Authorizes GLO to use cash, gifts, grants, donations, or in-kind contributions GLO receives through the administration of the Save Texas History program to:

- (1) preserve, conserve, and promote GLO's records;
- (2) provide educational programming and resources on Texas history; and
- (3) acquire additional records to complement GLO's records.

SECTION 3. Effective date: upon passage or September 1, 2019.