

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center

H.B. 2497
By: Parker et al. (Creighton)
Education
5/17/2021
Engrossed

AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

There are concerns that civics education in this state does not sufficiently address the storied and unique history of Texas, reaching back before the founding of the Republic of Texas following independence from Mexico in 1836. Every Texan, regardless of age, will benefit from having a deeper understanding of state history and the policy decisions that have allowed the state to flourish.

H.B. 2497 seeks to increase civic literacy and an understanding of the importance of Texas' unique history by establishing the 1836 Project as an advisory committee to promote patriotic education and increase awareness of Texas values.

H.B. 2497 amends current law relating to the establishment and duties of the Texas 1836 Project.

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 Subtitle D, Title 4, Government Code, by adding Chapter 451, as follows:

CHAPTER 451. TEXAS 1836 PROJECT

Sec. 451.001. DEFINITIONS. Defines "1836 project," "patriotic education," and "state agency."

Sec. 451.002. ESTABLISHMENT. (a) Provides that the 1836 Project is established as an advisory committee to promote patriotic education and increase awareness of the Texas values that continue to stimulate boundless prosperity across this state.

(b) Provides that the 1836 Project is composed of nine members. Requires the governor, lieutenant governor, and speaker of the Texas House of Representatives (House) to each appoint three members. Authorizes the appointees to include persons in the private sector with relevant experience or subject matter expertise.

(c) Provides that members serve two-year terms and are prohibited from being removed except for inefficiency, neglect of duty, or malfeasance.

(d) Requires the governor to appoint one member of the 1836 Project as the presiding officer.

(e) Requires the presiding officer to convene regular meetings of the 1836 Project, and coordinate and direct the activities of the 1836 Project.

Sec. 451.003. DUTIES. (a) Requires the 1836 Project to:

(1) promote awareness among residents of this state of the following as they relate to the history of prosperity and democratic freedom in this state:

(A) Texas history, including the indigenous peoples of this state, the Spanish and Mexican heritage of this state, Tejanos, the Texas War for Independence, annexation of Texas by the United States, the Christian heritage of this state, this state's heritage of keeping and bearing firearms in defense of life and liberty and for use in hunting, and Juneteenth;

(B) the founding documents of this state;

(C) the founders of this state;

(D) state civics; and

(E) the role of this state in passing and reauthorizing the federal Voting Rights Act of 1965 (52 U.S.C. Section 10101 et seq.), highlighting:

(i) President Lyndon B. Johnson's signing of the act;

(ii) President George W. Bush's 25-year extension of the act; and

(iii) Congresswoman Barbara Jordan's successful efforts to broaden the act to include Spanish-speaking communities;

(2) advise the governor on the core principles of the founding of this state and how those principles further enrich the lives of its residents;

(3) facilitate the development and implementation of the Gubernatorial 1836 Award to recognize student knowledge of Texas Independence and other items listed in Subdivisions (1)(A)-(D);

(4) advise state agencies with regard to their efforts to ensure patriotic education is provided to the public at state parks, battlefields, monuments, museums, installations, landmarks, cemeteries, and other places important to the Texas War for Independence and founding of this state, as appropriate and consistent with applicable law; and

(5) facilitate, advise on, and promote other activities to support public knowledge of and patriotic education on the Texas War for Independence and founding of this state, as appropriate and consistent with applicable law.

(b) Authorizes the project, in carrying out its duties under Subsection (a)(2), to solicit statements and contributions from intellectual and cultural figures.

Sec. 451.004. FUNDING; COMPENSATION. (a) Requires the Texas Education Agency (TEA) to provide funding and administrative support for the 1836 Project, including for the pamphlets described by Section 451.005, to the extent funds are available for those purposes.

(b) Provides that a member of the 1836 Project is not entitled to compensation but is entitled to reimbursement for the travel expenses incurred by the member while transacting project business, as provided by the General Appropriations Act.

Sec. 451.005. PAMPHLET. Requires the 1836 Project, not later than September 1, 2022, to provide a pamphlet to the Department of Public Safety of the State of Texas (DPS) that explains the significance of policy decisions made by this state that promote liberty and freedom for businesses and families. Requires that the contents include:

- (1) an overview of Texas history and civics;
- (2) the legacy of economic prosperity in this state; and
- (3) the abundant opportunities for businesses and families in this state.

Sec. 451.006. REPORT. (a) Requires the 1836 Project, not later than September 1, 2022, to prepare and produce a written report that includes:

- (1) a description of the activities of the project;
- (2) the findings and recommendations of the project;
- (3) a plan that identifies the best method of carrying out the duties under Sections 451.003(a)(1), (4), and (5);
- (4) any proposals for legislation; and
- (5) any other matter the project considers appropriate.

(b) Authorizes the 1836 Project, subsequent to the report required under Subsection (a), to prepare and produce additional reports the project considers appropriate.

(c) Requires TEA to make a report described by this section available to the public on TEA's Internet website.

(d) Authorizes TEA, to the extent existing TEA resources are available for this purpose, to provide to the 1836 Project any TEA resources necessary to prepare or produce a report described by this section.

Sec. 451.007. ABOLITION; EXPIRATION. Provides that the 1836 Project is abolished and this chapter expires September 1, 2036.

SECTION 2. Amends Subchapter A, Chapter 521, Transportation Code, by adding Section 521.013, as follows:

Sec. 521.013. TEXAS 1836 PROJECT PAMPHLET. (a) Requires DPS to provide the pamphlet described by Section 451.005, Government Code, to persons who receive a driver's license:

- (1) after applying under Section 521.144 (Application by New State Resident); or
- (2) with an expiration provided by Section 521.271(a-2) (relating to providing that each original driver's license issued to an applicant who is not a citizen, national, or legal permanent resident of the United States or a refugee or asylee lawfully admitted into the United States expires on a certain date) or (a-3) (relating to providing that each original provisional license or learner license issued to an applicant who is not a citizen, national, or legal permanent resident of the United States or a refugee or asylee lawfully admitted into the United States expires on a certain date).

(b) Requires DPS to make the pamphlet described by Section 451.005, Government Code, available to the public on DPS's Internet website.

SECTION 3. Requires the governor, the lieutenant governor, and the speaker of the house, as soon as possible after the effective date of this Act, to make the appointments to the 1836 Project under Section 451.002, Government Code, as added by this Act.

SECTION 4. Effective date: September 1, 2021.