

BILL ANALYSIS

H.B. 464
By: Anchia
General Investigating & Ethics
Committee Report (Unamended)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

Interested parties note there are insufficient limits and restrictions on political contributions to members of the Railroad Commission of Texas and contend that the current situation could lead to corruption or to the appearance of corruption, particularly as commissioners and candidates for commissioner raise money from the interests they are regulating. H.B. 464 seeks to prevent any appearance of corruption by prohibiting such members from accepting certain political contributions and requiring the return of any such contributions received.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE IMPACT

It is the committee's opinion that this bill does not expressly create a criminal offense, increase the punishment for an existing criminal offense or category of offenses, or change the eligibility of a person for community supervision, parole, or mandatory supervision.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

It is the committee's opinion that rulemaking authority is expressly granted to the Railroad Commission of Texas in SECTION 1 of this bill.

ANALYSIS

H.B. 464 amends the Natural Resources Code to prohibit a commissioner of the Railroad Commission of Texas from knowingly accepting a political contribution given or offered with the intention that it be used in connection with a campaign for or the holding of any elective office, including the office of commissioner, except during a specified period. The bill prohibits a person other than a commissioner from knowingly accepting a political contribution given or offered with the intention that it be used in connection with a campaign for the office of commissioner, except during specified periods.

H.B. 464 prohibits a commissioner from knowingly accepting a political contribution, and requires a commissioner to refuse a political contribution that is received, from a party in a contested case before the railroad commission or a political committee affiliated with such a party during a specified period. The bill requires a commissioner to return such a political contribution that is received and refused not later than the 30th day after the date the commissioner received the contribution. The bill requires the railroad commission to adopt all rules necessary to implement these provisions relating to a political contribution related to a contested case, including rules that direct the railroad commission to maintain a list of the contested cases before the railroad commission and the parties to each case in order to aid the commissioners in complying with such provisions and ensure that each notice of a hearing in a contested case that is issued by the railroad commission or a commissioner contains information about the prohibited political contributions.

EFFECTIVE DATE

September 1, 2017.

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