

SUBJECT: State symbol and place designations

COMMITTEE: State, Federal and International Relations — committee substitute recommended

VOTE: 7 ayes — Hunter, Chavez, Elkins, Madden, Miller, Najera, Raymond

0 nays

2 absent — Moreno, Berman

WITNESSES: For — Bill Sanders, Ennis Chamber of Commerce

Against — None

DIGEST: CSHB 1059 would add subtitle Z to Government Code, title 3, to provide guidelines for the Legislature in designating by resolution state symbols and places. CSHB 1059 would not apply to designations by resolution that were made before September 1, 2001, or by statute. Resolutions proposing the designation of an object as a state symbol or proposing a place designation would have to be referred to and reported by the appropriate committee in each house in the manner provided for bills.

CSHB 1059 would require the Legislature to specify an item's historical or cultural significance to the state before it could be designated as a state symbol. In addition, CSHB 1059 would prohibit the Legislature from designating an individual, an event, a place, or a commercial product or item as a state symbol.

CSHB 1059 would define a "place designation" as a special observance by the Legislature that recognized and honored an event or location in the state, including a municipality or county. The Legislature could not assign the same place designation to more than one event or location. While the Legislature could not assign more than one place designation to a municipality, county, or other location, it could assign more than one place designation within a county.

Before the Legislature could assign a place designation, persons supporting the designation would have to provide evidence of the historical or cultural significance of the event or location and documentation of support from a local chamber of commerce or locally elected governmental body representing the place to be designated.

Place designations assigned under subsection Z would expire after 10 years; however, the Legislature would be able to redesignate a place designation during or after this 10-year period.

CSHB 1059 also would amend Government Code, sec. 441.006(a) to require the State Library and Archives Commission to prepare and make available to the public a complete list of every state symbol and place designation.

This bill would take effect September 1, 2001 and would apply only to state symbol or place designations adopted by the Legislature after the effective date of the Act.

**SUPPORTERS
SAY:**

CSHB 1059 would provide stricter standards and create an orderly procedure for state symbol and place designations by the Legislature. Texas now has over 70 state symbol and place designations, with many of these designations having occurred in recent years. This gives Texas more state symbols designated by the Legislature than any other state. CSHB 1059 would result in increased uniformity and would provide an appropriate framework through which the Legislature could thoughtfully consider and analyze the proposals for such designations.

The guidelines in CSHB 1059 would be consistent with recommendations made in the House State, Federal, and International Relations Committee's interim report to the 76th Legislature. The committee recommended either establishing specific guidelines for the adoption of state symbols and place designations in the House Rules or enacting a bill to establish the guidelines in statute.

CSHB 1059 would promote tourism and economic development in many parts of Texas, and would be particularly beneficial for smaller communities and rural areas that receive such designations. A place designation provides

special recognition to communities that can be used as an effective marketing tool to boost tourism, commerce, and economic development.

CSHB 1059 also would ensure the historical and cultural significance of these designations. The requirements set forth in the bill would focus the Legislature's attention on the most worthwhile designations and would ensure that symbols were not adopted for the commercial gain of specific products.

CSHB 1059 also would prevent dual place designations when more than one community seeks a specific title thereby avoiding confusion and competition among cities in this process. For example, there are already three place designations for the official state shrub, the crape myrtle: Waxahachie, the Crape Myrtle Capital of Texas; Lamar County, the Crape Myrtle County Capital; and Paris, the Crape Myrtle City. In addition, there are three designations for the bluebonnet: Ennis, Bluebonnet City; Burnet County, Bluebonnet Co-capital of Texas; and Llano County, Bluebonnet Co-capital of Texas. CSHB 1059 also would ensure that such designations remain up to date, by providing for their expiration after 10 years.

CSHB 1059 also would require the Texas State Library and Archives Commission to prepare and make available to the public a complete list of every state symbol and place designation. Although this already is done voluntarily by the commission, this statutory requirement would ensure the continuation of this process and the expansion of this list to include all place designations, including events that may not currently be on the list.

OPPONENTS
SAY:

No apparent opposition.

NOTES:

The committee substitute modified the filed version of HB 1059 by providing that the bill would not affect the designation of a state symbol or place made by resolution before September 1, 2001.

A similar bill considered by the 76th Legislature, HB 2103, by Pitts and West, passed the House on the Local, Consent, and Resolutions Calendar on May 11, 1999, but died in the Senate State Affairs Committee.