

SUBJECT: Development of a cultural and fine arts district program

COMMITTEE: Culture, Recreation, and Tourism — favorable, without amendment

VOTE: 5 ayes — Hilderbran, Kuempel, Baxter, Dukes, Dunnam
0 nays
2 absent — Gallego, Phillips

WITNESSES: For — None
Against — None
On — Ricardo Hernandez, Texas Commission on the Arts

BACKGROUND: Among its duties under Government Code, ch. 444, the Texas Commission on the Arts is charged with fostering the development of a receptive climate for the arts that culturally enriches and benefits Texans and make visits and vacations to the state more appealing to tourists.

DIGEST: HB 2208 would direct the Texas Commission on the Arts to develop a cultural and fine arts district program to designate districts that significantly contribute to Texas culture and fine arts. The commission would develop eligibility criteria for such a designation and procedures to administer the program.

The bill would take effect September 1, 2005.

SUPPORTERS SAY: HB 2208 would help boost the state economy by enhancing cultural and fine arts in Texas. It would support economic development and expand tax bases in communities that contained districts. According to a recent economic impact study, the arts account for more than 12 percent of total expenditures in the state economy. The arts are important to long-term economic development initiatives of Texas communities. This is especially true in areas characterized by low incomes, inferior workforce skills, or a lack of diversification.

The bill also would help encourage tourism by allowing cities to market their cultural resources. The cultural arts are responsible for about 20 percent of total tourism in the state. The creation of fine arts districts in cities known for their cultural resources, such as Alpine and Kerrville, as well as the areas near museums and performing arts centers in the larger cities, would help these communities market their assets and generate even more tourism by assuring a high-quality experience and a certain level of accommodation to visitors.

The commission's current budget can absorb any costs associated with carrying out this program. Therefore the state would reap great benefits without the need for additional funding.

OPPONENTS
SAY:

No apparent opposition.