

- SUBJECT:** Studying the availability of natural gas service in certain counties
- COMMITTEE:** Energy Resources — committee substitute recommended
- VOTE:** 9 ayes — Darby, Paddie, Anchia, Canales, Herrero, Keffer, Landgraf, Meyer, Wu
- 3 nays — Craddick, Dale, P. King
- 1 absent — Riddle
- WITNESSES:** For — (*Registered, but did not testify:* Lindsey Baker, City of Denton, Denton Municipal Electric; Lon Burnam, Public Citizen)
- Against — (*Registered, but did not testify:* William Van Hoy, Texas Propane Gas Association)
- DIGEST:** CSHB 1125 would require the Texas Railroad Commission (RRC) to conduct a study on the availability of natural gas utility services in counties that met the description in the bill (El Paso County). The study would:
- identify each census-designated place with a population of at least 500 people that lacked natural gas utility service;
 - consider the reasons for lack of availability of natural gas utility service in those places;
 - estimate the cost of expanding availability of natural gas utility service in those places; and
 - study methods for making natural gas utility service available throughout the county.
- By November 30, 2016, the RRC would be required to provide a written report to the Legislature, the lieutenant governor, the speaker of the House, and the presiding officers of standing Senate and House committees with jurisdiction over the commission. The report would

include the commission's findings and recommendations for changes in policies, rules, and statutes needed to provide for the extension of natural gas utility service in a county that lacked it.

This bill would take effect September 1, 2015, and would expire December 1, 2016.

**SUPPORTERS
SAY:**

CSHB 1125 would be an important step toward securing a cheaper and more dependable source of gas for an historically underserved community. The alternative to natural gas is propane gas, which is expensive and comparatively more dangerous. It costs local school districts and municipalities thousands of dollars to keep the heat on during the winter when propane costs spike and natural gas service is not in the area. But residents of these underserved communities, who often must pay exorbitant prices, are most affected.

By studying and publishing information about extending service to parts of El Paso County, this bill would raise awareness about this issue that greatly impacts several Texas communities.

**OPPONENTS
SAY:**

CSHB 1125 is unnecessary and would not result in any actionable knowledge. Ultimately, the providers of natural gas utilities are private companies who already have conducted similar studies and determined that it is not yet commercially feasible to extend their business to the portions of El Paso County to be studied under the bill.