

- SUBJECT:** Creating the Advisory Council on Hispanic Affairs
- COMMITTEE:** International Trade and Intergovernmental Affairs — favorable, without amendment
- VOTE:** 5 ayes — Anchia, R. Anderson, Bernal, Burrows, Koop  
0 nays  
2 absent — Lozano, Scott Turner
- WITNESSES:** For — J.R. Gonzales, Texas Association of Mexican American Chambers of Commerce; Marc Rodriguez, United States Hispanic Chamber of Commerce  
Against — None
- BACKGROUND:** Almost 40 percent of the population in Texas is of Hispanic origin, compared to about 17 percent nationally, yet observers note that Hispanics in Texas are underrepresented in certain sectors, such as in business and on state boards and commissions.
- DIGEST:** HB 1543 would establish the Advisory Council on Hispanic Affairs to advise the Office of the Governor on furthering the economic, social, legal, and political contributions and equality of the Hispanic population of Texas.  
  
The council would be composed of nine members, including seven members appointed by the governor and two ex officio members of the Legislature, one of whom would be appointed by the speaker of the House and the other by the lieutenant governor. Appointing officials would have to make appointments by October 1, 2015, and would attempt to appoint members to achieve geographic representation of the Hispanic population from all areas of the state. The governor would designate a chair and vice chair of the council from the appointed members.

The bill would set out the term length each member would serve, depending on who appointed them, and would require the council to meet at least quarterly each fiscal year. Members would not be entitled to compensation for council duties under the bill.

HB 1543 would specify the duties of the Advisory Council on Hispanic Affairs. Among other responsibilities, the council would be required to:

- monitor existing programs and legislation designed to meet the needs of the Hispanic population;
- facilitate meetings with the office of the governor and certain caucuses of the House and Senate to address the legislative needs of the Hispanic population;
- recommend Hispanics to serve on appointed state boards and commissions;
- evaluate the development of initiatives to assure fuller employment options and greater opportunities;
- work with health and medical experts in the private sector and at institutions of higher education to identify health concerns for Hispanics; and
- address equal treatment of the Hispanic population in the educational, judicial, and health systems by analyzing laws and monitoring their implementation and educating members of the Hispanic population about their legal rights and duties.

The bill also would require the council to collaborate with business organizations, stakeholders, and the Texas Workforce Commission to review state and local policies affecting business creation and expansion to develop policy recommendations for:

- streamlining or eliminating unnecessary barriers to business to develop entrepreneurship opportunities;
- creating a better business climate to increase opportunities for job creation, retention, and expansion;
- assisting in revitalizing the industrial, manufacturing, and high-technology sectors of the state's economy to better address needs of

- the Hispanic workforce; and
- strengthening employment opportunities to increase participation of Hispanics in well-paying jobs and lower the unemployment rate within the Hispanic population.

The bill would require the council to submit a report of its recommendations to the governor, lieutenant governor, and speaker of the house of representatives by October 1 of each even-numbered year. The report would be required to include recommendations on the status and funding of state programs designed to address needs of the Hispanic population and recommendations on reforms, policies, and statutory changes to further the economic, social, legal, and political contributions of Hispanics in the state.

The bill would exempt the Council on Hispanic Affairs from Government Code, ch. 2110, which regulates the establishment, composition, and procedures of state agency advisory committees. The bill also would require state agencies and political subdivisions to cooperate with the council as much as practicable to implement the council's statutory duties.

This bill would take immediate effect if finally passed by a two-thirds record vote of the membership of each house. Otherwise, it would take effect September 1, 2015.