

By: Oliverson

H.B. No. 4572

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT

relating to the creation of the Religious Freedom Commission.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF TEXAS:

SECTION 1. Subtitle D, Title 4, Government Code, is amended by adding Chapter 452 to read as follows:

CHAPTER 452. RELIGIOUS FREEDOM COMMISSION

SUBCHAPTER A. GENERAL PROVISIONS

Sec. 452.001. DEFINITION. In this chapter, "commission" means the Religious Freedom Commission.

Sec. 452.002. ESTABLISHMENT. (a) The commission is established within the office of the governor.

(b) Chapter 2110 does not apply to the commission.

SUBCHAPTER B. COMPOSITION AND MEETINGS

Sec. 452.051. COMPOSITION OF COMMISSION. (a) The governor shall appoint seven members to the commission.

(b) A member of the commission must be a resident of this state.

(c) The commission must include members who:

(1) have demonstrated a significant interest in and are knowledgeable about issues related to religious liberty; or

(2) have served prominently as leaders of or spokespersons for organizations that serve members of religious communities, including the Christian, Hindu, Jewish, and Muslim communities.

1       Sec. 452.052. TERMS. (a) Commission members serve  
2 staggered six-year terms with the terms of approximately one-third  
3 of the members expiring February 1 of each odd-numbered year.

4       (b) Commission members are eligible for reappointment to  
5 another term or part of a term.

6       (c) The governor shall fill any vacancy in a position on the  
7 commission for the unexpired portion of the term.

8       Sec. 452.053. PRESIDING OFFICER. The governor shall  
9 designate a member of the commission as presiding officer of the  
10 commission to serve in that capacity at the pleasure of the  
11 governor.

12       Sec. 452.054. COMPENSATION; EXPENSES. A member of the  
13 commission is not entitled to compensation but is entitled to  
14 reimbursement for the travel expenses incurred by the member while  
15 transacting commission business, as provided by the General  
16 Appropriations Act.

17       Sec. 452.055. MEETINGS; QUORUM. (a) The commission shall  
18 meet at least quarterly at the times and places in this state the  
19 commission designates.

20       (b) Four members of the commission constitute a quorum for  
21 transacting commission business.

22                                   SUBCHAPTER C. DUTIES

23       Sec. 452.071. DUTIES OF COMMISSION. The commission shall:

24               (1) advance the right to freedom of religion within  
25 this state, denounce violations of that right, and recommend  
26 appropriate responses by the legislature to the violations;

27               (2) identify system-level challenges and solutions

1 relating to religious liberty for all faith communities;

2 (3) serve as a principal advisor to the governor  
3 regarding matters affecting religious freedom within this state;

4 (4) make recommendations regarding:

5 (A) local and state policies that violate freedom  
6 of religion or that fail to ensure the individual's right to  
7 religious belief and practice;

8 (B) policies that advance the right to freedom of  
9 religion in this state; and

10 (C) strategies to address and prevent  
11 faith-related bias incidents; and

12 (5) engage in education, advocacy, and outreach  
13 efforts to promote understanding and awareness of the importance of  
14 religious liberty.

15 SUBCHAPTER D. SUPPORT AND FUNDING

16 Sec. 452.072. SUPPORT. The office of the governor shall  
17 provide administrative support, including staff, to the  
18 commission.

19 Sec. 452.073. FUNDING. (a) The commission may accept gifts  
20 and grants from a public or private source on behalf of the  
21 commission for the commission to use in performing the duties  
22 assigned to the commission under this chapter.

23 (b) All legislative appropriations to support the functions  
24 and activities of the commission shall be made as part of the office  
25 of the governor's legislative appropriations request process and  
26 disbursed to the commission.

27 SECTION 2. As soon as practicable after the effective date

1 of this Act, the governor shall appoint members to the Religious  
2 Freedom Commission as provided by Chapter 452, Government Code, as  
3 added by this Act. To implement the staggering of terms of members  
4 of the commission provided by Section 452.052, Government Code, as  
5 added by this Act, in making the first appointments to the  
6 commission, the governor shall provide for two of the members to  
7 serve terms expiring February 1, 2025, two of the members to serve  
8 terms expiring February 1, 2027, and three of the members to serve  
9 terms expiring February 1, 2029. Subsequent appointments shall be  
10 for six-year terms, as provided by Section 452.052, Government  
11 Code, as added by this Act.

12 SECTION 3. This Act takes effect September 1, 2023.