

## **BILL ANALYSIS**

C.S.H.B. 2976

By: Chavez

Border and International Affairs  
Committee Report (Substituted)

### **BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE**

Currently, Texas is the second most visited state in the nation. According to the Senate Subcommittee on Border Affairs Interim Report to the 78th Legislature, travel spending in 2000 added \$40.4 billion to the state's economy and \$2.6 billion to state taxes. The report states that Mexican visitors account for a large portion of those visiting the state and that 70% of all international visitors to the state are Mexican tourists. Bird watchers from all over the world spend over \$100 million annually in South Texas. Given its proximity to Mexico, the border could gain from the economic stimulus associated with heritage and nature tourism. In addition, President Bush has indicated his support of tourism development through Executive Order 13287, Preserve America, signed on March 3, 2003.

C.S.H.B. 2976 would establish a Borderland Heritage Tourism Council under the Texas Economic Development to provide state leadership in preserving the historic properties and developing the heritage tourism of the border region.

### **RULEMAKING AUTHORITY**

It is the committee's opinion that this bill does not expressly grant any additional rulemaking authority to a state officer, department, agency, or institution.

### **ANALYSIS**

SECTION 1. C.S.H.B. 2976 amends the Government Code to require Texas Economic Development (the department) to establish and administer the Borderlands Heritage Tourism Council (council). C.S.H.B. 2976 provides for the appointment and composition of the council. The bill sets forth certain duties and responsibilities for the council. In addition, the bill prohibits the council from interfering with the rights of owners of property and does not require or encourage a person to take any action or disclose any information which would conflict with or compromise national and state homeland security goals, policies, programs or legally sanctioned activities. The bill also provides that this subchapter does not authorize the encumbrance of revenue generated by a municipal or county hotel occupancy tax. The bill requires and provides for the council to hold at least five public meetings in the border region for local governments and local stakeholders.

SECTION 2. C.S.H.B. 2976 amends the Transportation Code to authorize the Texas Department of Transportation to issue specially designed license plates for passenger cars and light trucks to support the activities of the council. The bill provides for fees to be levied for the original issuance, renewal and replacement of these license plates and sets forth provisions for the deposit and use of the fees collected.

SECTION 3. C.S.H.B. 2976 requires the Texas Department of Transportation to work with federal and local authorities that have an interest in port of entry issues to develop recommendations for the 79th Legislature, and to deliver them not later than December 1, 2004, to assert the state's interest in historical and traditional border crossings, so that the crossing may be preserved and may provide a regulated link for movement of people between communities on both side of the border.

SECTION 4. C.S.H.B. 2976 requires the Texas Department of Economic Development to develop the

council on or before September 1, 2003.

SECTION 5. Effective Date.

**EFFECTIVE DATE**

On passage or, if this Act does not receive the necessary vote, this Act takes effect September 1, 2003.

**COMPARISON OF ORIGINAL TO SUBSTITUTE**

SECTION 1. The substitute amends the original by altering the composition and the duties of the council. The substitute also adds language clarifying that this subchapter does not authorize the encumbrance of revenue generated by a municipal or county hotel occupancy tax and language requiring the council to hold public meetings with local governments.

SECTION 2. The substitute amends the original by authorizing, rather than requiring, the Texas Department of Transportation to issue specially designed license plates for passenger cars and light trucks to support the activities of the council. The substitute also increases from \$5 to \$8 the amount that the department may use to defray the cost of administering the program.

The substitute also amends the original by making non-substantive technical changes.

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