

BILL ANALYSIS

S.B. 304
By: Brimer
Government Reform
Committee Report (Unamended)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

The Central Travel Office of the Texas Building and Procurement Commission negotiates with private travel agents and transportation providers to obtain reduced travel rates for certain public employees traveling on official business. The law permits numerous governmental entities to take advantage of these rates including employees of the state's legislative and executive branch, employees of higher education institutions, and employees of Employee Retirement System. The 76th Legislature passed SB 204, authorizing county officers and employees to also participate in the state's contract for travel services thus reducing the cost of travel expenses incurred by a county.

Based on the inclusiveness of the statute, it seems logical to extend these cost-saving benefits to municipal employees as well, since they, too, are required to travel, sometimes extensively, on official business. Travel expenses can represent a sizable portion of a municipal budget and, as such, represent an ever-increasing expense to the taxpayers. Allowing municipalities to participate in travel service contracts could significantly reduce expense to local governments, as well as potentially strengthen the State's negotiating position by increasing the volume of travelers pooled.

SB 304 would allow municipal employees and officers to participate in the State's travel pool to obtain reduced rates for official travel duties.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

It is the opinion of the Committee that this bill expressly delegates authority to the Building and Procurement Commission to adopt rules to administer the travel services program in Section 1 of the bill.

ANALYSIS

SECTION 1 - Amends Section 2171.055, Government Code by adding Subsection (f) which allows municipal officers or employees to utilize the commission's contract for reduced airline and travel agent fees when traveling on official municipal business. The commission may charge a municipality an adjustable fee that does not exceed the commission's cost. Directs the commission to deposit fees to a municipality airline fares account in the general revenue fund, but makes those funds only useable for purposes of this chapter. Directs the commission to adopt rules and make or amend contracts as necessary.

SECTION 2 - Effective date.

EFFECTIVE DATE

This act has immediate effect if it receives a vote of two-thirds of all members elected to each house. If this Act does not receive the vote necessary for immediate effect, it takes effect September 1, 2003.

