

BILL ANALYSIS

S.B. 786
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Border and International Affairs
Committee Report (Unamended)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

Over the past 15 years, U.S. trade with Mexico has increased 400 percent, from \$48 billion to \$239 billion. Eighty percent of all U.S. trade with Mexico passes through Texas' ports-of-entry, making Mexico the state's most important trading partner, accounting for one in every five jobs in the state and 14 percent of the state's gross product. It is estimated that approximately 70,000 to 75,000 commercial vehicles made more than 7 million trips across the Texas-Mexico border in 2001. Neither the U.S. nor Mexico has made the adjustments necessary to handle growing traffic. Inspection and customs procedures at our ports-of-entry are outdated, leading to restricted movement of goods and people across the border. To facilitate overland trade with Mexico, the state must identify the current barriers, both procedural and infrastructure-related, to border crossings at each of Texas' ports-of-entry.

S.B. 786 requires the lieutenant governor and speaker of the house to establish a border community trade task force for each of the four municipalities with the largest populations in the border region to identify procedural and infrastructure barriers to the flow of commerce between the U.S. and Mexico at Texas ports-of-entry, and study procedures to expedite the process. This bill also requires the task force to include representatives from U.S. and Mexican federal and state agencies, and business communities.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

This bill does not expressly grant any additional rulemaking authority to a state officer, institution, or agency.

ANALYSIS

SECTION 1. S.B. 786 defines "border region" and "task force."

SECTION 2. S.B. 786 requires the lieutenant governor and speaker of the house of representatives to establish a border community task force for each of the four municipalities with the largest populations in the border region to identify procedural and infrastructure impediments to the free flow of trade between the United States and Mexico. The bill requires the task force to make findings and recommendations regarding those impediments.

SECTION 3. S.B. 786 requires the lieutenant governor and speaker of the house of representatives to appoint certain persons to the task force, as soon as practicable after the effective date of this Act. The bill requires the lieutenant governor and speaker of the house of representatives to jointly select the presiding officer of each task force from the members and authorizes a task force to designate other officers as it deems appropriate.

SECTION 4. S.B. 786 authorizes each task force to request assistance and information, other than confidential information relating to an individual, from the Department of Public Safety (DPS) and the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT). The bill requires DPS and TxDOT to provide the assistance and information requested, to the extent practicable. The bill provides that both TxDOT and DPS are

responsible for the expenses of their respective representative's service on each task force.

SECTION 5. S.B. 786 requires each task force to study and evaluate the procedures and practices maintained at the port of entry between Texas and Mexico nearest each task force's represented municipality, to determine possible modifications to expedite the flow of goods. The bill sets forth some evaluation criteria. The bill requires each task force to study primary and secondary inspection processes related to DPS administered motor carrier safety regulations and commercial driver's license requirements to determine possible areas for automation to expedite the free flow of trade. The bill requires each task force to analyze current situations and developing solutions in anticipation of removal of geographical access barriers on Mexican commercial trucks.

SECTION 6. S.B. 786 requires each task force to file a report on its findings and recommendations, including those for legislative or administrative action, with the lieutenant governor and the speaker of the house of representatives, not later than December 31, 2004.

SECTION 7. S.B. 786 provides that the task forces are abolished and this Act expires on September 1, 2005.

SECTION 8. Effective Date.

EFFECTIVE DATE

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