

By: Chavez

H.B. No. 2976

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT

1
2 relating to authorizing cooperative agreements between local,
3 state, and federal governments and the United Mexican States to
4 promote economic development and heritage tourism near the Rio
5 Grande.

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

7 SECTION 1. Subtitle F, Chapter 481, Subchapter L, Section
8 481.172, Government Code is amended by adding subdivision (9) to
9 read as follows:

10 (9) establish and oversee the duties of the
11 Borderlands Heritage Tourism Council as defined in Subchapter M.

12 SECTION 2. Subtitle F, Chapter 481, Government Code, is
13 amended by adding Subchapter M to read as follows:

14 Subchapter M. Borderlands Heritage Tourism Council

15 481.500. Definitions In this section:

16 (a) "historic property" means any prehistoric or historic
17 district, site, building, structure or object that is included on
18 or eligible for inclusion on the National Register of Historic
19 Places and/or otherwise recognized by the State of Texas or local
20 jurisdiction within the state as being of historic or archeological
21 significance to the heritage of the State of Texas.

22 (b) "natural or historical asset" means properties,
23 locales, collections, itineraries, vistas, landscapes, cultural
24 phenomena, geological formations, byways, trails, waterways,

1 rivers and streams that or, or might become, of unique, unusual or
2 pronounced interest to residents and visiting travelers and
3 tourists.

4 (c) "heritage tourism" means the business and practice of
5 attracting and accommodating visitors to a place or area based
6 especially upon the unique or special aspects of that locale's
7 history, landscape, trail systems, culture, parks and natural
8 preserves.

9 481.501. Duties The Council shall:

10 1) Provide leadership in preserving historic
11 properties and developing the heritage tourism potentials of the
12 border region as defined by Sec. 481.001, Government Code, through
13 cooperative agreements with local jurisdictions, Native American
14 governments, and agencies of the United States federal government
15 consistent with Executive Order 13287, signed by President George
16 W. Bush on March 3, 2003.

17 2) Develop cooperative agreements with agencies of the
18 United Mexican States sharing the international boundary with Texas
19 for the purpose of advancing the protection, enhancement and
20 contemporary use of historic sites and natural assets pertaining to
21 the common heritage of the border region, as well as develop
22 mutually beneficial tourism development strategies.

23 3) Develop strategies designed to promote the use of
24 the internet in tourism promotion strategies by the State of Texas.

25 4) Designate a "Borderlands Heritage Corridor"
26 composed of the counties that make up the Texas-Mexico border as
27 defined by and Chapter 2056, Section 2056.002 (e)(3), and develop

1 itineraries and maps to guide tourists to the border region's
2 historic and nature sites.

3 5) Establish a training and licensing program for
4 Border Heritage Guides and Artisans to be administered by locally
5 based Heritage Guides and Artisans Cooperatives.

6 6) Coordinate public-private partnerships that invest
7 in the use, reuse and rehabilitation of historic properties or
8 assets of significant natural interest.

9 7) Identify specific opportunities for asset
10 preservation and heritage tourism development in conjunction with a
11 state sponsored trails system and the heritage sites and
12 itineraries identified by the Borderlands Heritage Tourism
13 Council.

14 8) Develop and coordinate local public-private
15 partnerships to facilitate heritage tourism in the Borderlands
16 Heritage Corridor.

17 9) Develop and publish a working list of existing
18 public and private funds available for nature and historical site
19 preservation projects.

20 10) Study the feasibility of working with state
21 agencies, universities, colleges and with private corporations to
22 identify cash and in-kind resources that can be offered as matching
23 contributories for projects overseen by the Borderlands Heritage
24 Tourism Council.

25 481.502. Selection of the Borderlands Heritage Tourism
26 Council. (a) The Borderlands Heritage Tourism Council shall
27 consist of:

1 (1) one representative of the Governor, appointed by
2 the Governor.

3 (2) one representative of the Lt. Governor, appointed
4 by the Lt. Governor.

5 (3) one representative of the Secretary of State,
6 appointed by the Secretary of State;

7 (4) one representative of the Tourism Division of
8 Texas Economic Development;

9 (5) one representative from the Speaker of the House
10 of Representatives, appointed by the Speaker of the House of
11 Representatives;

12 (6) one representative of the Texas Historical
13 Commission, appointed by the commissioner of the Texas Historical
14 Commission;

15 (7) one representative of Texas Parks and Wildlife;

16 (8) one representative of the Texas Department of
17 Transportation; and

18 (9) one representative from each Council of Government
19 as defined by Chapter 391, Sec. 391.003, Local Government Code,
20 with member jurisdictions within the border region appointed by
21 each Council of Government.

22 Section 481.503. Restrictions. (a) No actions of the
23 Borderlands Heritage Tourism Council shall interfere with rights of
24 owners of private property.

25 (b) Nothing in this bill shall be construed to require or
26 encourage any agency or any other party to take any action or
27 disclose any information that would conflict with or compromise

1 national and state homeland security goals, policies, programs or
2 legally sanctioned activities.

3 SECTION 3. Subchapter F, Chapter 502, Transportation Code,
4 is amended by adding Section 502.304 to read as follows:

5 Sec. 502.304. Preserve America's Borderland License Plates

6 (a) The department shall issue specially designed license plates
7 for passenger cars and light trucks to support the activities of the
8 Border Heritage Tourism Council.

9 (b) The department shall issue license plates under this
10 section to a person who:

11 (1) applies to the county assessor-collector of the
12 county in which the person resides on a form provided by the
13 department; and

14 (2) pays a fee of \$50 for an original issuance of
15 license plates under this section or \$40 for a renewal of issuance
16 of license plates under this section, in addition to the fee
17 prescribed by Section 502.161 or 502.162, and, if personalized
18 prestige license plates are issued, in addition to the fee
19 prescribed by Section 502.251.

20 (c) The fee for replacement of a lost, stolen, or mutilated
21 plate issued under this section is \$35, in addition to the fee
22 prescribed by Section 502.184(a).

23 (d) Of each fee collected under this section, \$5 may be used
24 to defray the cost of administering this section by the department.
25 The department shall deposit the remainder of each fee collected
26 under this section to the credit of an account in the state
27 treasury. Money in this account may be used only by the Texas

1 Department Economic Development for projects overseen by the
2 Borderlands Heritage Tourism Council. The Texas Department of
3 Economic Development shall establish reporting and other
4 mechanisms necessary to ensure that the money is spent for purposes
5 for which it is dedicated.

6 (e) If the owner of a vehicle registered under this section
7 disposes of the vehicle during the registration year, the owner
8 shall return the special license plates to the department.

9 SECTION 4. Title 7, Government Code, is amended by adding
10 Chapter 793 to read as follows:

11 (a) Working with the appropriate federal and local
12 jurisdictions with an interest in port of entry issues, the Texas
13 Department of Transportation shall develop recommendations for the
14 79th Legislature to assert the state's interest in historical and
15 traditional border crossings so the crossing may be preserved and
16 may provide a regulated link for movement of people between
17 communities on both sides of the border.

18 SECTION 5. This Act takes effect immediately if it receives
19 a vote of two-thirds of all the members elected to each house, as
20 provided by Section 39, Article III, Texas Constitution. If this
21 Act does not receive the vote necessary for immediate effect, this
22 Act takes effect September 1, 2003.