

Suspending limitations on conference committee  
jurisdiction, S.B. No. 1639

By: Hope

H.R. No. 1738

RESOLUTION

BE IT RESOLVED by the House of Representatives of the State of Texas, 78th Legislature, Regular Session, 2003, That House Rule 13, Section 9(a), be suspended in part as provided by House Rule 13, Section 9(f), to enable the conference committee appointed to resolve the differences on Senate Bill No. 1639, relating to regulation of spacing and production of groundwater from aquifers by a groundwater district, to consider and take action on the following matter:

House Rule 13, Section 9(a)(4), is suspended to permit the committee to add new sections to the bill to read as follows:

SECTION 2. Subchapter B, Chapter 11, Water Code, is amended by adding Sections 11.0235, 11.0236, and 11.0237 to read as follows:

Sec. 11.0235. POLICY REGARDING WATERS OF THE STATE.

(a) The waters of the state are held in trust for the public, and the right to use state water may be appropriated only as expressly authorized by law.

(b) Maintaining the biological soundness of the state's rivers, lakes, bays, and estuaries is of great importance to the public's economic health and general well-being.

(c) The legislature has expressly required the

commission while balancing all other interests to consider and provide for the freshwater inflows necessary to maintain the viability of the state's bay and estuary systems in the commission's regular granting of permits for the use of state waters.

(d) The legislature has not expressly authorized granting water rights exclusively for:

(1) instream flows dedicated to environmental needs or inflows to the state's bay and estuary systems; or

(2) other similar beneficial uses.

(e) The fact that greater pressures and demands are being placed on the water resources of the state makes it of paramount importance to reexamine the process for ensuring that these important priorities are effectively addressed in clear delegations of authority to the commission.

Sec. 11.0236. STUDY COMMISSION ON WATER FOR ENVIRONMENTAL FLOWS. (a) In recognition of the importance that the ecological soundness of our riverine, bay, and estuary systems and riparian lands has on the economy, health, and well-being of the state there is created the Study Commission on Water for Environmental Flows.

(b) The study commission is composed of 15 members as follows:

(1) two members appointed by the governor;

(2) five members appointed by the lieutenant governor;

(3) five members appointed by the speaker of the

house of representatives;

(4) the presiding officer of the commission or the presiding officer's designee;

(5) the chairman of the board or the chairman's designee; and

(6) the presiding officer of the Parks and Wildlife Commission or the presiding officer's designee.

(c) Of the members appointed under Subsection (b)(2):

(1) one member must represent a river authority or municipal water supply agency or authority;

(2) one member must represent an entity that is distinguished by its efforts in resource protection; and

(3) three members must be members of the senate.

(d) Of the members appointed under Subsection (b)(3):

(1) one member must represent a river authority or municipal water supply agency or authority;

(2) one member must represent an entity that is distinguished by its efforts in resource protection; and

(3) three members must be members of the house of representatives.

(e) Each appointed member of the study commission serves at the will of the person who appointed the member.

(f) The appointed senator with the most seniority and the appointed house member with the most seniority serve together as co-presiding officers of the study commission.

(g) A member of the study commission is not entitled to receive compensation for service on the study commission but is

entitled to reimbursement of the travel expenses incurred by the member while conducting the business of the study commission, as provided by the General Appropriations Act.

(h) The study commission may accept gifts and grants from any source to be used to carry out a function of the study commission.

(i) The commission shall provide staff support for the study commission.

(j) The study commission shall conduct public hearings and study public policy implications for balancing the demands on the water resources of the state resulting from a growing population with the requirements of the riverine, bay, and estuary systems including granting permits for instream flows dedicated to environmental needs or bay and estuary inflows, use of the Texas Water Trust, and any other issues that the study commission determines have importance and relevance to the protection of environmental flows. In evaluating the options for providing adequate environmental flows, the study commission shall take notice of the strong public policy imperative that exists in this state recognizing that environmental flows are important to the biological health of our parks, game preserves, and bay and estuary systems and are high priorities in the permitting process. The study commission shall specifically address ways that the ecological soundness of these systems will be ensured in the water allocation process.

(k) The study commission:

(1) shall appoint an advisory scientific committee

that will:

(A) serve as impartial scientific advisors and reviewers for the study commission; and

(B) have a membership of no fewer than five and no more than nine total members chosen by the study commission to represent a variety of areas of relevant technical expertise;

(2) may appoint additional advisory committees to assist the study commission; and

(3) may draft proposed legislation to modify existing water-rights permitting statutes.

(1) Not later than December 1, 2004, the study commission shall issue a report summarizing:

(1) any hearings conducted by the study commission;

(2) any studies conducted by the study commission;

(3) any legislation proposed by the study commission; and

(4) any other findings and recommendations of the study commission.

(m) The study commission shall promptly deliver copies of the report to the governor, lieutenant governor, and speaker of the house of representatives.

(n) The study commission shall adopt rules to administer this section.

(o) The study commission is abolished and this section expires September 1, 2005.

Sec. 11.0237. WATER RIGHTS FOR INSTREAM FLOWS DEDICATED TO ENVIRONMENTAL NEEDS OR BAY AND ESTUARY INFLOWS. (a) The

commission may not issue a new permit for instream flows dedicated to environmental needs or bay and estuary inflows. This section does not prohibit the commission from issuing an amendment to an existing permit or certificate of adjudication to change the use to or add a use for instream flows dedicated to environmental needs or bay and estuary inflows.

(b) This section does not alter the commission's obligations under Section 11.042(b), 11.046(b), 11.085(k)(2)(F), 11.134(b)(3)(D), 11.147, 11.1491, 16.058, or 16.059.

(c) This section expires September 1, 2005.

SECTION 3. Subsections (d) and (e), Section 11.147, Water Code, are amended to read as follows:

(d) In its consideration of an application to store, take, or divert water, the commission shall include in the permit, to the extent practicable when considering all public interests, those conditions considered by the commission necessary to maintain [~~consider the effect, if any, of the issuance of the permit on~~] existing instream uses and water quality of the stream or river to which the application applies.

(e) The commission shall include in the permit, to the extent practicable when considering all public interests, those conditions considered by the commission necessary to maintain [~~also consider the effect, if any, of the issuance of the permit on~~] fish and wildlife habitats.

Explanation: This added text is necessary in order to provide for permitting of water rights for instream flows.