

BILL ANALYSIS

C.S.H.B. 239
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Urban Affairs
Committee Report (Substituted)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

The purpose of the proposed committee substitute is to expand access on the part of the general public, in municipalities having a population of 50,000 persons or more, to the Internet. As time goes by, more and more information needed to live on a daily basis is being offered only in an electronic format as print publications (newspapers, books, journals, magazines, and so forth) are utilized less and less. There are people in Texas who, being of modest financial means, do not have Internet access other than at a public facility such as a municipal library. The proposed committee substitute would encourage, but not require, libraries to provide for public use computers having high-speed Internet access.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

It is the opinion of the committee that the proposed committee substitute would not confer any additional rulemaking authority upon any state officer, department, agency or institution.

ANALYSIS

SECTION 1 of the proposed committee substitute would add a new subsection (d) to Section 441.127, Government Code, to require that accreditation standards adopted by the Texas State Library and Archives Commission under Subsection (a) provide that a public library with a service area of over 50,000 residents be furnished with computers having high-speed access to the Internet for use by the general public.

SECTION 2 of the proposed committee substitute provides that the Act would take effect September 1, 2007.

EFFECTIVE DATE

The proposed committee substitute would take effect September 1, 2007.

COMPARISON OF ORIGINAL TO SUBSTITUTE

The proposed committee substitute would amend Section 441.127 of the Government Code to use the accreditation process of the Texas State Library and Archives Commission as a mere incentive for libraries to offer, for public use, computers having high-speed Internet access; whereas, the original bill would amend Chapter 315 of the Local Government Code, to actually require that libraries do so. The original bill also would have authorized libraries to charge a "reasonable" fee for the use of such computers, but the proposed committee substitute makes no mention of any fee.