

By: Davis of Dallas

H.B. No. 947

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

1 AN ACT

2 relating to a bill of rights for the underprivileged.

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

4 SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE. This Act shall be known as the Bill
5 of Rights for the Underprivileged.

6 SECTION 2. GENERAL POLICY AND PURPOSE. (a) It is the
7 policy of this state that:

8 (1) all forms of human oppression be dismantled; and

9 (2) all people, especially the underprivileged, have
10 the right to pursue life, liberty, and happiness without
11 institutional barriers.

12 (b) The legislature finds that racism, sexism, classism,
13 and imperialism and discrimination against disabled people must be
14 addressed and eliminated if the underprivileged are to escape
15 impoverishment.

16 SECTION 3. ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY. (a) The legislature
17 finds that the underprivileged have a right to a public policy
18 agenda that invests in human beings.

19 (b) The legislature intends that:

20 (1) "communities of opportunity" be created for the
21 purpose of eliminating economic predators that preclude economic
22 development in areas of this state that have historically
23 experienced neglect and economic disparity;

24 (2) federal, state, and local resources be made

1 available to community-based groups and other persons that create
2 economic opportunity in communities of opportunity; and

3 (3) partnerships between corporate and
4 community-based groups that provide and invest in opportunities for
5 the underprivileged should be encouraged and rewarded.

6 (c) The legislature recognizes that creation of communities
7 of opportunity will necessitate a comprehensive economic policy on
8 the national, state, and local levels that places the interests of
9 people in need over the interest of corporate greed.

10 (d) The legislature declares that it is necessary to
11 regulate corporations to:

12 (1) end the transfer of jobs out of this state and the
13 country;

14 (2) prohibit the closing of plants and business
15 headquarters without a public hearing; and

16 (3) ensure compensation for those who suffer job loss.

17 SECTION 4. RIGHTS OF CHILDREN. (a) The legislature finds
18 that:

19 (1) one in every six children in the United States is a
20 victim of poverty; and

21 (2) one in every three children of color is growing up
22 in poverty.

23 (b) It is the intent of the legislature that each child in
24 this state have access to quality health care, education, and
25 housing and live in a safe community.

26 SECTION 5. CIVIL AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE; LAW ENFORCEMENT.

27 (a) It is the policy of this state that all people have a right to

1 equal protection under the law, and, to that end, the
2 underprivileged must be protected from injustice in the legal
3 system.

4 (b) The legislature finds that the underprivileged are
5 often warehoused in the nation's prison industrial complex, which
6 has become the 21st century's version of slavery. It is the policy
7 of this state that the underprivileged be guaranteed competent
8 representation and equal justice and be assured of justice in civil
9 and criminal courts of this state.

10 (c) The legislature recognizes that the underprivileged
11 must be protected from state-sponsored terrorism in the form of
12 police brutality and that the underprivileged have a right to be
13 protected and served, as opposed to being abused and exploited.
14 Therefore, it is the intent of the legislature that:

15 (1) unequivocal civilian control exist over
16 neighborhoods;

17 (2) citizen review boards with the power to discipline
18 police abuse and misconduct be established; and

19 (3) a partnership for the elimination of crime and
20 violence in impoverished communities be established between the
21 police and community-based groups.

22 SECTION 6. EMPLOYMENT AND INCOME. The legislature finds
23 and declares that the underprivileged have the right to full
24 employment and a guaranteed income that enables them to rise above
25 the poverty level. Therefore, the legislature pledges to:

26 (1) support investment in community-based and
27 cooperating partnerships that generate jobs; and

1 (2) make a concentrated effort to bring jobs and
2 opportunity to areas of concentrated unemployment in this state.

3 SECTION 7. RACIAL AND SEXUAL EQUALITY. (a) It is the
4 policy of this state that:

5 (1) the underprivileged not be victimized by
6 inequality of opportunity; and

7 (2) women be protected by law from:

8 (A) sexual harassment and abuse in the workplace;
9 and

10 (B) domestic violence.

11 (b) The legislature intends that equal pay for women and
12 people of color exist in this state.

13 SECTION 8. ENVIRONMENTAL EQUALITY. (a) The legislature
14 finds that:

15 (1) an unhealthy economic community has repercussions
16 on the physical and mental health of that community's residents;
17 and

18 (2) thousands of African Americans, Latinos, and
19 Anglos are dying needlessly and prematurely as toxic chemicals are
20 released into the air and the drinking water of impoverished
21 communities.

22 (b) The legislature recognizes that the underprivileged
23 must be protected from environmental racism that
24 disproportionately targets impoverished communities with toxic
25 waste sites and other elements that adversely affect the atmosphere
26 and health of persons in those communities.

27 (c) It is the intent of the legislature that:

- 1 (1) toxic waste sites be cleaned up immediately; and
2 (2) environmentally unsafe facilities in impoverished
3 communities that have been victimized by environmental racism be
4 cleaned up, removed, or replaced.

5 SECTION 9. SUBSTANCE ABUSE TREATMENT. (a) The legislature
6 finds that the health of the underprivileged is often compromised
7 by:

- 8 (1) the proliferation of drugs that are allowed into
9 impoverished communities; and
10 (2) a lack of substance abuse treatment.

11 (b) It is the policy of this state that the underprivileged
12 have a right to substance abuse treatment and that substance abuse
13 treatment, rather than incarceration, be the first response to
14 substance abuse.

15 SECTION 10. HEALTH CARE SERVICES. (a) The legislature
16 finds that the underprivileged have a right to quality health care
17 that is affordable.

18 (b) The legislature recognizes that:

- 19 (1) the health of the nation is compromised when
20 pockets of poverty breed ill health; and
21 (2) this state can no longer afford to ignore the
22 economic maladies that end the lives of persons who have no access
23 to health care.

24 (c) It is the intent of the legislature to make available
25 affordable quality health care services and affordable hospitals in
26 neglected and impoverished communities.

27 SECTION 11. FOREIGN POLICY. The legislature declares that:

1 (1) oppressed people all over the world should be
2 liberated and empowered; and

3 (2) the foreign policy of the United States should be
4 based on justice and freedom and should ensure the elimination of
5 economic exploitation of impoverished people throughout the world.

6 SECTION 12. This Act takes effect immediately if it
7 receives a vote of two-thirds of all the members elected to each
8 house, as provided by Section 39, Article III, Texas Constitution.
9 If this Act does not receive the vote necessary for immediate
10 effect, this Act takes effect September 1, 2007.