

By: Uresti, Shapleigh, West

S.B. No. 1457

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

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AN ACT

relating to the establishment of a strategy for reducing child abuse and neglect and improving child welfare.

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

SECTION 1. In this Act, "task force" means the task force established under this Act to establish a strategy for reducing child abuse and neglect and improving child welfare.

SECTION 2. (a) The task force consists of 15 members appointed as follows:

(1) five members appointed by the governor;

(2) five members appointed by the lieutenant governor;

and

(3) five members appointed by the speaker of the house of representatives.

(b) Members of the task force must be individuals who are actively involved in the fields of the prevention of child abuse and neglect and child welfare. The appointment of members must reflect the geographic diversity of the state.

(c) A member of the task force may not be appointed to, or be an employee of, a state agency.

(d) A member of the task force is not entitled to compensation for service on the task force but is entitled to reimbursement for travel expenses as provided by Chapter 660, Government Code, and the General Appropriations Act.

1 (e) The task force shall elect a presiding officer by a
2 majority vote of the membership of the task force.

3 (f) The task force shall meet at the call of the presiding
4 officer.

5 (g) Chapter 2110, Government Code, does not apply to the
6 task force.

7 SECTION 3. (a) The task force shall establish a strategy
8 for reducing child abuse and neglect and for improving child
9 welfare in this state. In establishing that strategy, the task
10 force shall:

11 (1) gather information concerning child safety, child
12 abuse and neglect, and child welfare throughout the state;

13 (2) review the exemptions from criminal liability
14 provided under the Penal Code to a mother who injures her unborn
15 child by using a controlled substance, as defined by Chapter 481,
16 Health and Safety Code, other than a controlled substance legally
17 obtained by prescription, during her pregnancy and examine the
18 effect that repealing the exemptions will have on reducing the
19 number of babies who are born addicted to a controlled substance;

20 (3) receive reports and testimony from individuals,
21 state and local agencies, community-based organizations, and other
22 public and private organizations;

23 (4) create goals for state policy that would improve
24 child safety, prevent child abuse and neglect, and improve child
25 welfare; and

26 (5) submit a strategic plan to accomplish those goals.

27 (b) The strategic plan submitted under Subsection (a) of

1 this section may include proposals for specific statutory changes,
2 the creation of new programs, and methods to foster cooperation
3 among state agencies and between the state and local government.

4 SECTION 4. (a) The task force shall consult with employees
5 of the Department of Family and Protective Services, the Department
6 of State Health Services, and the Texas Department of Criminal
7 Justice as necessary to accomplish the task force's
8 responsibilities under this Act.

9 (b) The task force may cooperate as necessary with any other
10 appropriate state agency.

11 SECTION 5. (a) The governor, lieutenant governor, and
12 speaker of the house of representatives shall appoint the members
13 of the task force not later than October 1, 2007.

14 (b) Not later than August 1, 2009, the task force shall
15 submit the strategic plan required by Section 3 of this Act to the
16 governor, lieutenant governor, and speaker of the house of
17 representatives.

18 (c) The task force is abolished and this Act expires on
19 September 1, 2009.

20 SECTION 6. This Act takes effect September 1, 2007.