

BILL ANALYSIS

C.S.H.B. 515
By: Vaught
County Affairs
Committee Report (Substituted)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

Currently, the Dallas County Hospital District provides unreimbursed health care to residents outside the county who do not pay taxes to fund the county's hospital. Dallas County taxpayers are paying for this unreimbursed care. Dallas County's Parkland Memorial Hospital provides more than \$20 million in unreimbursed health care annually to residents outside the county, a large portion of which comes from serving the area's indigent population.

C.S.H.B. 515 authorizes surrounding counties to join the Dallas County Hospital District to better serve its population, more evenly distribute the cost of health care in the area, and alleviate the tax burden to Dallas County taxpayers. The bill authorizes the Dallas County Commissioners Court to hold a hearing to decide whether to annex certain areas into the hospital district, subject to approval by voters of all affected areas and counties.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

It is the committee's opinion that this bill does not expressly grant any additional rulemaking authority to a state officer, department, agency, or institution.

ANALYSIS

C.S.H.B. 515 amends the Health and Safety Code to authorize registered voters of a defined territory composed of one or more counties contiguous to Dallas County, Texas, that is not included in the boundaries of the Dallas County Hospital District to file a petition with the Commissioners Court of Dallas County requesting inclusion in the hospital district. The bill requires a petition to be signed by at least 50 registered voters of the defined territory or a majority of the voters, whichever is less. The bill authorizes the commissioners court to pursue the issue of annexing territory to the district, regardless of whether a petition is filed.

C.S.H.B. 515 requires the commissioners court to set a time and place to hold a hearing on the issue of annexing territory to the district and requires the commissioners court to set a date for the hearing that is not earlier than the 31st day after the date the court issues the order. The bill authorizes the commissioners court, if after the hearing the commissioners court finds that annexation of the territory into the district would be feasible and would benefit the district, to approve the annexation by resolution. The bill provides that the commissioners court, if acting in response to a petition, is not required to include all of the territory described in the petition if a modification or change is found to be necessary or desirable. The bill requires the Commissioners Court of Dallas County to send a copy of the resolution to the commissioners court of the county in which the territory to be annexed is included.

C.S.H.B. 515 provides that annexation of the territory is final when approved by a majority of the voters at an election held in the district and by a majority of the voters at a separate election held in the territory to be annexed. The bill requires the voters in the election to approve the annexation, if the district has outstanding debts or taxes, also to determine if the annexed territory will assume its proportion of the debts or taxes if added to the district. The bill requires a commissioners court that receives a copy of a resolution approving an annexation to cooperate

with the commissioners court in holding the required elections.

C.S.H.B. 515 sets out the specific ballot language for an election to determine annexation. The bill provides that if territory to be included in the district is included in the boundaries of another hospital district, the election to approve adding the territory to the Dallas County Hospital District is to be treated for all purposes as an election to dissolve the other hospital district in accordance with provisions of the Texas Constitution and other state law. The bill requires the ballot language at an election to clearly state that the final approval of the annexation of the territory will result in the dissolution of the other hospital district.

C.S.H.B. 515 requires the commissioners court, once annexation is approved, to appoint an advisory committee with representatives from each county included in the annexed territory to represent the interests of the county. The bill provides that these provisions do not affect the authority given to the Commissioners Court of Dallas under other law.

EFFECTIVE DATE

The date on which the constitutional amendment to allow the Dallas County Hospital District to expand its boundaries takes effect, if approved by the voters.

COMPARISON OF ORIGINAL AND SUBSTITUTE

C.S.H.B. 515 omits all provisions included in the original providing for the expansion of the Tarrant County Hospital District.