

By: Woolley

H.B. No. 3723

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT

relating to the creation of an additional judicial district composed of Harris County and the preference given by the district court to domestic violence cases.

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

SECTION 1. Subchapter C, Chapter 24, Government Code, is amended by adding Section 24.60020 to read as follows:

Sec. 24.60020. 476TH JUDICIAL DISTRICT (HARRIS COUNTY). (a)

The 476th Judicial District is composed of Harris County.

(b) Subject to any jurisdictional limitations, the 476th District Court shall give preference to:

(1) domestic violence cases, including cases involving:

(A) dating violence, as defined by Section 71.0021, Family Code;

(B) family violence, as defined by Section 71.004, Family Code;

(C) abuse or neglect, as defined by Section 261.001, Family Code, of a child; or

(D) elder abuse;

(2) any matter in which pleadings are filed concurrently with an application for a protective order under Title 4, Family Code, that involves both parties;

(3) any matter involving minor children if one parent

1 is alleged to have caused the death of another parent and there is a  
2 history of domestic violence in the parents' relationship; and

3 (4) cases in which:

4 (A) a court has made an affirmative finding of  
5 family violence involving both parties; or

6 (B) a protective order has been issued under  
7 Title 4, Family Code, involving both parties.

8 (c) The 476th District Court shall:

9 (1) provide timely and efficient access to emergency  
10 protective orders and other court remedies for persons the court  
11 determines are victims of domestic violence;

12 (2) integrate victims' services for persons the court  
13 determines are victims of domestic violence who have a case before  
14 the court; and

15 (3) promote an informed and consistent court response  
16 to domestic violence cases to lessen the number of misdemeanors,  
17 felonies, and fatalities related to domestic violence in Harris  
18 County.

19 (d) The clerk for the 476th District Court shall create a  
20 form to transfer a domestic violence case that the 476th District  
21 Court is required to give preference to under this section to the  
22 476th District Court.

23 SECTION 2. The 476th Judicial District is created on the  
24 effective date of this Act.

25 SECTION 3. This Act takes effect September 1, 2009.