

BILL ANALYSIS

S.B. 824
By: Lucio
Economic & Small Business Development
Committee Report (Unamended)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

Over the last several years, the Senate Committee on International Relations and Trade (IRT) conducted interim studies concerning the needs of small and rural communities of the state. By working with stakeholders, agencies, and rural officials/advocates, IRT has discovered that there are a number of state agencies that have a variety of programs and services impacting small and rural communities. Although a number of different programs serve these communities, there is little or no meaningful coordination at the state level, which decreases program access and efficiency. IRT has developed and issued recommendations during the last several interims designed to more effectively and efficiently address the needs of Texans' small and rural communities.

S.B. 824 provides for better coordination of services and programs, and cooperation between different state agencies to ensure that the state's effort to address the needs of small and rural communities has the maximum impact upon the communities they are designed to serve.

S.B. 824 amends current law relating to the coordination of rural and small community initiatives.

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

SECTION 1. Amends Title 7, Government Code, by adding Chapter 793, as follow:

CHAPTER 793. COORDINATION OF RURAL AND SMALL COMMUNITIES

Sec. 793.001. DEFINITIONS. Defines "agency" and "coordinator," in this chapter.

Sec. 793.002. INTERAGENCY COORDINATION OF RURAL AND SMALL COMMUNITY INITIATIVES. (a) Authorizes the governor to designate an employee of the governor's office, an agency, or the office of the secretary of state to act as the state's rural and small community coordinator (coordinator). Requires the coordinator to:

- (1) examine state and federal programs that address the needs of rural and small communities;
- (2) act as an ombudsman for governmental agencies within the state to help reduce regulations by improving communication and cooperation between federal, state, and local governments;
- (3) study the best practices found in other states and within the state and work with agencies to develop a coordinated state plan to implement similar programs tailored to the needs of the state's rural and small communities; and

(4) work with federal, state, and local governmental entities to resolve any infrastructure, capacity, and economic development programs to allow rural and small communities to manage better guided growth and become less dependent on state funds and services.

(b) Requires the coordinator to coordinate programs and initiatives that address the needs of rural and small communities within the agency and with other agencies and local officials involved in rural and small community projects in the state.

(c) Requires the coordinator to work with other agencies and local officials involved in rural and small community projects in the state to:

(1) coordinate efforts to address rural and small community issues;

(2) identify nonprofit self-help groups and community development organizations to help with rural and small community initiatives;

(3) set goals for each state fiscal year for rural and small community initiatives in the state, including goals to:

(A) address regional asset identification and development;

(B) ensure access to state and federal programs through better outreach and application streamlining;

(C) increase international competitiveness, import capacity, and export capacity;

(D) increase potential for entrepreneurial and small business development opportunities;

(E) improve technical assistance needed to build local capacity;

(F) assist efforts for youth retention and workforce skill development; and

(G) increase regional planning and coordination;

(4) ensure that the goals set under this subsection are met each state fiscal year; and

(5) coordinate state outreach efforts to rural and small communities and to stakeholders capable of providing needed services.

(d) Requires the following agencies, if the governor designates a coordinator under Subsection (a), to designate an officer or employee of the agency to serve as the agency's liaison to the coordinator:

(1) the Texas Department of Rural Affairs;

(2) the Texas Water Development Board;

(3) the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality;

(4) the Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs;

(5) the Health and Human Services Commission;

(6) the Parks and Wildlife Department;

- (7) the Texas Department of Transportation;
- (8) the Department of Public Safety of the State of Texas;
- (9) the office of the secretary of state;
- (10) the Department of Agriculture;
- (11) the office of the comptroller; and
- (12) the Texas Workforce Commission.

(e) Requires each agency's liaison under Subsection (d) to be a deputy executive director or a person of equivalent or higher authority at the agency. Provides that this subsection does not authorize the creation of a new position for rural and small community coordination at a state agency.

(f) Requires the coordinator, in coordinating rural and small community initiatives under this section, to consider the advice and recommendations of the task force under Section 793.003.

Sec. 793.003. TEXAS RURAL AND SMALL COMMUNITY ADVISORY COMMITTEES. (a) Authorizes the coordinator to appoint advisory committees as necessary to assist the coordinator in the coordinator's duties. Authorizes an advisory committee to be composed of private citizens and representatives from state and local governmental entities. Requires a state or local governmental entity to appoint a representative to an advisory committee at the request of the coordinator.

(b) Requires the coordinator to create a rural advisory committee to advise the coordinator in rural policy priorities and administration of community development and health programs that impact rural communities. Requires the coordinator to appoint elected officials and community members with expertise in community development, economic development, and rural health to serve as members of the committee. Authorizes the coordinator to appoint individuals with expertise in education or transportation, as determined by the coordinator, to serve as members of the committee.

(c) Provides that Chapter 2110 (State Agency Advisory Committees) does not apply to an advisory committee created under this section.

Sec. 793.004. QUARTERLY REPORTS. Requires each entity represented on an advisory committee established under Section 793.003 to submit quarterly reports to the coordinator regarding any action taken by the entity on behalf of the advisory committee or in furtherance of a plan or recommendation adopted by the advisory committee, including:

- (1) the status of projects;
- (2) the funding of expenditures;
- (3) the planning and research conducted;
- (4) the community and technical assistance provided;
- (5) the information collected; and
- (6) the direct role of the entity in promoting community and economic development through federal, state, and local government funding.

EFFECTIVE DATE

Upon passage, or, if the Act does not receive the necessary vote, the Act takes effect September 1, 2011.