

By: Lucio

S.B. No. 824

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT

relating to the coordination of rural and small community initiatives.

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

SECTION 1. Title 7, Government Code, is amended by adding Chapter 793 to read as follows:

CHAPTER 793. COORDINATION OF RURAL AND SMALL COMMUNITIES

Sec. 793.001. DEFINITIONS. In this chapter:

(1) "Agency" means a state office, institution, or other state governmental entity that is in the executive branch of state government.

(2) "Coordinator" means the rural and small community coordinator.

Sec. 793.002. INTERAGENCY COORDINATION OF RURAL AND SMALL COMMUNITY INITIATIVES. (a) The governor may 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. The coordinator shall:

(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;

1 (3) study the best practices found in other states and
2 within the state and work with agencies to develop a coordinated
3 state plan to implement similar programs tailored to the needs of
4 the state's rural and small communities; and

5 (4) work with federal, state, and local governmental
6 entities to resolve any infrastructure, capacity, and economic
7 development problems to allow rural and small communities to:

8 (A) manage better guided growth; and

9 (B) become less dependent on state funds and
10 services.

11 (b) The coordinator shall coordinate programs and
12 initiatives that address the needs of rural and small communities:

13 (1) within the agency; and

14 (2) with other agencies and local officials involved
15 in rural and small community projects in the state.

16 (c) The coordinator shall work with other agencies and local
17 officials involved in rural and small community projects in the
18 state to:

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

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

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

26 (A) address regional asset identification and
27 development;

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

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

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

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

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

11 (G) increase regional planning and coordination;
12 (4) ensure that the goals set under this subsection
13 are met each state fiscal year; and

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

17 (d) If the governor designates a coordinator under
18 Subsection (a), the following agencies shall designate an officer
19 or employee of the agency to serve as the agency's liaison to the
20 coordinator:

21 (1) the Texas Department of Rural Affairs;

22 (2) the Texas Water Development Board;

23 (3) the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality;

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

26 (5) the Health and Human Services Commission;

27 (6) the Parks and Wildlife Department;

1 (7) the Texas Department of Transportation;

2 (8) the Department of Public Safety of the State of
3 Texas;

4 (9) the office of the secretary of state;

5 (10) the Department of Agriculture;

6 (11) the office of the comptroller; and

7 (12) the Texas Workforce Commission.

8 (e) Each agency's liaison under Subsection (d) must be a
9 deputy executive director or a person of equivalent or higher
10 authority at the agency. This subsection does not authorize the
11 creation of a new position for rural and small community
12 coordination at a state agency.

13 (f) In coordinating rural and small community initiatives
14 under this section, the coordinator shall consider the advice and
15 recommendations of an advisory committee established under Section
16 793.003.

17 Sec. 793.003. TEXAS RURAL AND SMALL COMMUNITY ADVISORY
18 COMMITTEES. (a) The coordinator may appoint advisory committees
19 as necessary to assist the coordinator in the coordinator's duties.
20 An advisory committee may be composed of private citizens and
21 representatives from state and local governmental entities. A
22 state or local governmental entity shall appoint a representative
23 to an advisory committee at the request of the coordinator.

24 (b) The coordinator shall create a rural advisory committee
25 to advise the coordinator in rural policy priorities and
26 administration of community development and health programs that
27 impact rural communities. The coordinator shall appoint elected

1 officials and community members with expertise in community
2 development, economic development, and rural health to serve as
3 members of the committee. The coordinator may appoint individuals
4 with expertise in education or transportation, as determined by the
5 coordinator, to serve as members of the committee.

6 (c) Chapter 2110 does not apply to an advisory committee
7 created under this section.

8 Sec. 793.004. QUARTERLY REPORTS. Each entity represented
9 on an advisory committee established under Section 793.003 shall
10 submit quarterly reports to the coordinator regarding any action
11 taken by the entity on behalf of the advisory committee or in
12 furtherance of a plan or recommendation adopted by the advisory
13 committee, including:

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

22 SECTION 2. This Act takes effect immediately if it receives
23 a vote of two-thirds of all the members elected to each house, as
24 provided by Section 39, Article III, Texas Constitution. If this
25 Act does not receive the vote necessary for immediate effect, this
26 Act takes effect September 1, 2011.