

BILL ANALYSIS

H.B. 160
By: Larson
State Affairs
Committee Report (Unamended)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

Interested parties observe that certain officeholders may use state funds to pay for security and travel costs and other expenses relating to personal or political campaign events or when conducting out-of-state travel for political or personal reasons. These interested parties have questioned the use of taxpayer dollars for personal and political trips and contend that the practice should be expressly prohibited through legislation. The parties contend that other states have introduced legislation to curb the use of state funds for security and travel costs incurred by an official for personal or campaign purposes. H.B. 160 seeks to address this issue relating to the reimbursement of state funds used on out-of-state travel by elected officers.

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

H.B. 160 amends the Government Code to require a member of the legislature or the holder of an office of state government that is voted on statewide, including a person appointed to fill a vacancy in such an office, who uses any state funds for transportation or security for travel outside Texas to electronically file a disclosure with the Texas Ethics Commission that includes the dates on which the travel occurred, the locations where the travel occurred, the cost of the travel, the purpose of the travel, and the use to which the state-funded transportation or security personnel was put. The bill requires such an elected officer to file a disclosure not later than July 15 for travel ending on or after January 1 and on or before June 30 and not later than January 15 for travel ending on or after July 1 and on or before December 31 of the previous year. The bill requires the commission to review the disclosure not later than the 90th day after the date the disclosure is filed. The bill requires such an elected officer to reimburse the state for the cost of the travel plus interest calculated at a rate equal to inflation if the commission determines that the state-funded transportation or security was not used for official state business. The bill requires the commission to administer and enforce the bill's provisions and to prepare a written opinion answering the request of an elected officer who is subject to the bill's provisions for an opinion about their application to the officer in regard to a specified existing or hypothetical factual situation.

EFFECTIVE DATE

September 1, 2013.