

BILL ANALYSIS

H.B. 1354
By: Howard
General Investigating & Ethics
Committee Report (Unamended)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

Currently, certain elected and appointed officials, candidates for certain elected offices, and certain state party officers must submit financial disclosure statements with the Texas Ethics Commission. The goal of the statements is to maintain transparency and to ensure that there are no conflicts of interest between an individual's business dealings and the person's conduct as a public official. Interested parties contend that potential gaps exist in the current reporting requirements and that a thorough consideration of these disclosure requirements is due. H.B. 1354 seeks to address this issue.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE IMPACT

It is the committee's opinion that this bill does not expressly create a criminal offense, increase the punishment for an existing criminal offense or category of offenses, or change the eligibility of a person for community supervision, parole, or mandatory supervision.

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. 1354 creates an 11-member select interim committee to study and review the procedures and effects of the filing of personal financial statements with the Texas Ethics Commission or other authorities under statutory provisions relating to personal finance disclosure, standards of conduct, and conflict of interest, or other similar laws. The bill requires the study to consider the purposes of the current disclosure statutes and whether the statutes accomplish those purposes, the effectiveness of the current disclosure scheme, and what changes, if any, should be made to more effectively accomplish the purposes of personal financial disclosures.

H.B. 1354 requires, not later than the 60th day after the bill's effective date, the members of the committee to be appointed as follows: five specified members appointed by the lieutenant governor; five specified members appointed by the speaker of the house of representatives; and one member of the Texas Ethics Commission, who serves as presiding officer of the committee, appointed by the presiding officer of the commission. The bill requires the committee to convene at the call of the presiding officer of the committee and grants the committee all other powers and duties provided to a special or select committee by senate and house rules, by the Legislative Reorganization Act, and by policies of the senate and house committees on administration.

H.B. 1354 requires the committee, not later than January 15, 2017, to report the committee's findings and recommendations to the lieutenant governor, the speaker of the house of representatives, and the governor. The bill requires the committee to include in its recommendations specific statutory and rule changes that appear necessary from the results of the committee's study. The bill requires the Texas Legislative Council and the Texas Ethics

Commission to provide any necessary staff and resources to the committee. The bill's provisions expire January 20, 2017, and the committee is abolished on that date.

EFFECTIVE DATE

On passage, or, if the bill does not receive the necessary vote, September 1, 2015.