

## **BILL ANALYSIS**

S.B. 1204  
By: Rodríguez  
Agriculture & Livestock  
Committee Report (Unamended)

### **BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE**

It has been reported that there is an increasing interest in aquaponic educational programs in Texas schools. Aquaponic systems mix aquaculture, growing fish in a recirculating water system, with hydroponics, growing plants without soil. These systems typically include growing produce in conjunction with a fish ranch, where plants derive nutrients from water rich with fish excrement, rather than from the soil. Through this process students learn about water science, plant life, food technology, agribusiness, wildlife, and ecology management. Concerns have been raised, however, regarding certain state fees that may be incurred as a school builds such a program, creating a burden for small school programs already facing significant implementation costs. S.B. 1204 seeks to address these concerns.

### **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 rulemaking authority is expressly granted to the Department of Agriculture in SECTION 1 and to the Parks and Wildlife Commission in SECTION 2 of this bill.

### **ANALYSIS**

S.B. 1204 amends the Agriculture Code and the Parks and Wildlife Code to require the Department of Agriculture (the TDA) and the Parks and Wildlife Commission by rule to waive the initial and renewal fees for an aquaculture license and exotic species permit, as applicable, if the license or permit or the renewal of the license or permit is requested by a public school to establish and maintain an educational program that will give students experience with a sustainable system of agriculture that mixes aquaculture and hydroponics. The bill requires a school, in order to qualify for the fee waiver, to submit an application to the TDA or the Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD), as applicable, showing that the school's program meets the applicable TDA or TPWD requirements, including requirements for supervision, handling of the fish species or the exotic species, and control of wastes. The bill requires the TDA and TPWD, not later than December 31, 2015, to adopt rules required to implement the bill's provisions.

### **EFFECTIVE DATE**

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