

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center
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S.B. 1210
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AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

This state has seen game rooms become a vehicle for illegal activity, such as gambling, which has led to decreased public safety because many of these game rooms are unregulated. Interested parties claim that some operators of these game rooms have set up redemption machines to give cash prizes, which is illegal in Texas. H.B. 2123 and H.B. 1127, 83rd Legislature, Regular Session, 2013, were passed to address the claim that some amusement redemption machine operators were setting up their machines to provide cash prizes illegally. These operators have circumvented undercover investigations, which is generally the method used to shut down illegal operations of such activities, by restricting access to these machines only to members or known referrals.

H.B. 2123 and H.B. 1127 addressed this concern by giving commissioners courts in certain counties the authority to regulate game rooms. H.B. 2123 applied to counties with a population of less than 25,000 that border the Gulf of Mexico and are located within 50 miles of an international border, while H.B. 1127 applied to counties with a population of four million or more.

Currently, there are duplicative statutes/subchapters in Subchapter E, Chapter 234, Local Government Code, that were added by these bills. Both are almost identical except for their scope of application.

While these bills were a good start, interested parties claim the problem is still pervasive in other counties. Specifically, H.B. 1127 gave Harris County the authority to regulate these game rooms. As a result, many of these illegal game rooms have migrated to adjacent counties that lack regulatory authority, including Fort Bend County. S.B. 1210 will allow Fort Bend County to regulate these game rooms while putting all the authorized counties under the same section of the code.

This bill cleans up the duplicative statutes mentioned above. S.B. 1210 will repeal the duplicative Subchapter E as established by H.B. 1127 and add its application to a county of four million or more people to the provisions of H.B. 2123. This bill will put all counties authorized to regulate game rooms under the same section of the code. Also, S.B. 1210 adds an additional means of application of this statute to a county that has a population of 550,000 or more and is adjacent to a county with a population of four million or more. This would add Fort Bend County to the list of counties that can regulate these game rooms.

As proposed, S.B. 1210 amends current law relating to the regulation of amusement redemption machine game rooms in certain counties.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

This bill does not expressly grant any additional rulemaking authority to a state officer, institution, or agency.

SECTION BY SECTION ANALYSIS

SECTION 1. Amends Section 234.132, Local Government Code, as added by Chapter 1284 (H.B. 2123), Acts of the 83rd Legislature, Regular Session, 2013, as follows:

Sec. 234.132. APPLICABILITY. Provides that this subchapter applies only to:

(1) a county that has a population of less than 25,000, is adjacent to the Gulf of Mexico, and is within 50 miles of an international border, rather than a county with a population of less than 25,000 that is adjacent to the Gulf of Mexico and is within 50 miles of an international border;

(2) a county that has a population of four million or more; and

(3) a county that has a population of 550,000 or more and is adjacent to a county described by Subdivision (2).

SECTION 2. Repealer: Subchapter E (Game Rooms), Chapter 234 (County Regulation of Business and Occupations), Local Government Code, as added by Chapter 1377 (H.B. 1127), Acts of the 83rd Legislature, Regular Session, 2013.

SECTION 3. Effective date: September 1, 2015.