

AN ACT

relating to the right of a member of the public to address the governing body of a political subdivision at an open meeting of the body.

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

SECTION 1. Subchapter A, Chapter 551, Government Code, is amended by adding Section 551.007 to read as follows:

Sec. 551.007. PUBLIC TESTIMONY. (a) This section applies only to a governmental body described by Sections 551.001(3)(B)-(L).

(b) A governmental body shall allow each member of the public who desires to address the body regarding an item on an agenda for an open meeting of the body to address the body regarding the item at the meeting before or during the body's consideration of the item.

(c) A governmental body may adopt reasonable rules regarding the public's right to address the body under this section, including rules that limit the total amount of time that a member of the public may address the body on a given item.

(d) This subsection applies only if a governmental body does not use simultaneous translation equipment in a manner that allows the body to hear the translated public testimony simultaneously. A rule adopted under Subsection (c) that limits the amount of time that a member of the public may address the governmental body must

1 provide that a member of the public who addresses the body through a
2 translator must be given at least twice the amount of time as a
3 member of the public who does not require the assistance of a
4 translator in order to ensure that non-English speakers receive the
5 same opportunity to address the body.

6 (e) A governmental body may not prohibit public criticism of
7 the governmental body, including criticism of any act, omission,
8 policy, procedure, program, or service. This subsection does not
9 apply to public criticism that is otherwise prohibited by law.

10 SECTION 2. This Act takes effect September 1, 2019.

President of the Senate

Speaker of the House

I certify that H.B. No. 2840 was passed by the House on May 3, 2019, by the following vote: Yeas 138, Nays 3, 1 present, not voting.

Chief Clerk of the House

I certify that H.B. No. 2840 was passed by the Senate on May 22, 2019, by the following vote: Yeas 31, Nays 0.

Secretary of the Senate

APPROVED: _____

Date

Governor