

BILL ANALYSIS

H.B. 4179
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Ways & Means
Committee Report (Unamended)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

During the equalization phase of the tax calendar, county appraisal districts (CAD) send appraisal notices whenever a value increase would increase the tax liability. For decades, many CADs have allowed property owners to meet informally with an appraiser to share information regarding proposed value increases. These informal meetings resulted in high percentages of settlements and eliminated the need for formal appraisal review board hearings. This process is even referred to and suggested in multiple forms administered by the comptroller of public accounts. Some CADs also make reference to informal conferences in their online documents regarding property tax protests and appeal procedures. However, during the COVID-19 pandemic, many CADs failed to give notice that they would not conduct informal conferences or that they intended to close to the public when appraisal notices were mailed. This change generated a tremendous amount of confusion for Texas property owners, revealing the need to standardize the informal conference process statewide. H.B. 4179 seeks to address this issue by standardizing procedures used by a CAD in resolving a protest following the filing of a notice of protest by a property owner.

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. 4179 amends the Tax Code to require an appraisal review board (ARB) to schedule an informal conference with the appraisal office for each property owner who files a notice of protest with the ARB, to be held before the hearing on the protest. The bill requires notice of the date, time, and location of the conference to be delivered to the property owner with the requisite notice of protest hearing and prohibits the conference from being scheduled to be held on the same date as the hearing on the protest or during the five-day period preceding that date. The bill requires the appraisal office to reschedule the conference for a later date that is before the date of the protest hearing on the property owner's written request to the appraisal office with good cause shown and authorizes the rescheduled date to be during the five-day period preceding the date of the protest hearing, with the property owner's consent. The bill expressly does not require the delivery of additional written notice to the property owner on the rescheduling of the conference.

H.B. 4179 requires the appraisal office to cancel the informal conference if the property owner informs the appraisal office in writing that the property owner elects not to participate in the

conference. The bill establishes that the property owner's failure to appear at the conference does not prevent the ARB from hearing the protest and issuing an order determining the protest. The bill removes the condition requiring the ARB to conduct a hearing on a protest by telephone conference call if an ARB proposes the hearing to be conducted by that method and the property owner agrees.

EFFECTIVE DATE

September 1, 2021.