

## **BILL ANALYSIS**

Senate Research Center  
87R1864 MP-D

S.B. 526  
By: Kolkhorst  
Local Government  
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As Filed

### **AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT**

#### Statement of Purpose:

To provide transparency for residents of certain special purpose districts similar to that of other taxing entities in the State of Texas.

#### Background:

Hundreds of thousands of Texans live in political subdivisions including water control and improvement districts, freshwater supply districts, municipal utility districts, and water improvement districts. For many residing in one of these districts, finding out who serves on a district's board, when these political subdivision boards meet, when they set a tax rate, or finding out the district's budget is nearly impossible. During COVID-19, many residents of municipal utility districts and other special purpose districts were unable to participate in the governance of their district.

In 2019, S.B. 239 by Senator Nelson provided residents with district meeting information on their water bills, recordings of meetings on a district Internet site if the district maintains one, and a process to petition the district to hold board meetings inside the district.

This legislation builds on the reforms passed by the 86th Legislature to add more transparency to special districts throughout the state. S.B. 526 ensures the local availability and transparency of municipal utility districts and other special purpose districts and other certain water district board meetings and other information. The bill will allow residents of special purpose districts to remain informed on the administration of the district they reside in.

#### Key Provisions:

Requires every district created under Chapter 51 (Water Control Improvement Districts), 53 (Fresh Water Supply Districts), 54 (Municipal Utility Districts), or 55 (Water Improvement Districts), Water Code, that has a population of 500 or more to maintain a district Internet site.

Requires districts to post on their Internet website:

contact information for board members;

the time and place of the next meeting of the board;

a live video stream of each meeting of the board;

a video recording of each meeting of the board posted not later than the fifth business day after the date of the meeting and maintained for not less than one year;

minutes of each meeting of the board; and

information about: the budget set by the district; and any tax rate set by the district.

Amends 49.062(b), Water Code to require districts to designate a meeting place inside the district. Eliminates the need for citizens to petition the board to make the designation. Allows the board to hold a meeting outside the district if no suitable location is available inside the district.

As proposed, S.B. 526 amends current law relating to the requirements for meetings held and Internet websites developed by certain special purpose districts.

### **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 551.1283, Government Code, as follows:

Sec. 551.1283. New heading: GOVERNING BODY OF CERTAIN WATER DISTRICTS: INTERNET WEBSITES; RECORDING OF MEETINGS. (a) Defines "board."

(a-1) Creates this subsection from existing text.

(b) Requires certain special purpose districts to develop and maintain an Internet website. Deletes existing text relating to the requirements that the district make, provide, and maintain audio recordings of certain public hearings.

(c) Requires a district to make available on the district's Internet website:

(1) contact information for each member of the board;

(2) the time and place of the next meeting of the board;

(3) a live video stream of each meeting of the board;

(4) a video recording of each meeting of the board posted not later than the fifth business day after the date of the meeting and maintained for not less than one year;

(5) the minutes of each meeting of the board; and

(6) information about the budget set by the district and any tax rate set by the district. Makes conforming changes.

SECTION 2. Amends Section 49.062(b), Water Code, as follows:

(b) Requires the board to designate one or more places inside, rather than inside or outside, the district for conducting the meetings of the board. Authorizes the board to designate a meeting place or places outside the district if the board establishes that no suitable place exists for meeting inside the district. Makes conforming changes.

SECTION 3. Repealers: Sections 49.062(c), (c-1), (e), (f), and (g) (relating to the process and requirements of the board for designating a meeting place inside or outside of the district on request of qualified electors), Water Code.

SECTION 4. Effective date: September 1, 2021.