By:  Leach, Thompson of Harris, Dutton, H.B. No. 1340

     Smithee, Collier, et al.

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT

relating to the extent of a defendant's criminal responsibility for the conduct of a coconspirator in a capital murder case and the review of certain convictions by the Board of Pardons and Paroles.

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

SECTION 1.  Section 2(b), Article 37.071, Code of Criminal Procedure, is amended to read as follows:

(b)  On conclusion of the presentation of the evidence, the court shall submit the following issues to the jury:

(1)  whether there is a probability that the defendant would commit criminal acts of violence that would constitute a continuing threat to society; and

(2)  in cases in which the jury charge at the guilt or innocence stage permitted the jury to find the defendant guilty as a party under Sections 7.01 and 7.02, Penal Code, whether the defendant actually caused the death of the deceased or did not actually cause the death of the deceased but intended to kill the deceased or another [~~or anticipated that a human life would be taken~~].

SECTION 2.  Section 7.02(b), Penal Code, is amended to read as follows:

(b)  If, in the attempt to carry out a conspiracy to commit one felony, another felony is committed by one of the conspirators, all conspirators are guilty of the felony actually committed, though having no intent to commit it, provided that [~~if~~] the offense was committed in furtherance of the unlawful purpose and was one that should have been anticipated as a result of the carrying out of the conspiracy. This subsection does not apply to the prosecution of the offense of capital murder.

SECTION 3.  Subchapter A, Chapter 7, Penal Code, is amended by adding Section 7.021 to read as follows:

Sec. 7.021.  CRIMINAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR CONDUCT OF ANOTHER CONSPIRATOR IN CAPITAL MURDER CASES. (a) If, in the attempt to carry out a conspiracy to commit one felony, a capital murder is committed by one of the conspirators, a conspirator is guilty of the capital murder, though having no intent to commit it, provided that:

(1)  the conspirator is a major participant in the conspiracy;

(2)  in attempting to carry out the conspiracy, the conspirator acts with reckless indifference to human life; and

(3)  the capital murder was committed in furtherance of the unlawful purpose of the conspiracy.

(b)  For purposes of Subsection (a):

(1)  a conspirator is a major participant if the conspirator plans, organizes, directs, or otherwise substantially participates in the specific conduct that results in the death of a victim; and

(2)  a conspirator acts with reckless indifference to human life if the conspirator is aware of but consciously disregards a substantial and unjustifiable risk that another conspirator intends to commit an act that is clearly dangerous to human life.

SECTION 4.  Not later than January 1, 2022, the Board of Pardons and Paroles shall review the criminal conviction of each inmate who is serving a sentence of death and found guilty only as a party under Section 7.02(b), Penal Code, to identify appropriate inmates to recommend to the governor for purposes of granting clemency.

SECTION 5.  The change in law made by this Act applies only to the prosecution of an offense committed on or after the effective date of this Act. The prosecution of an offense committed before the effective date of this Act is governed by the law in effect on the date the offense was committed, and the former law is continued in effect for that purpose. For purposes of this section, an offense was committed before the effective date of this Act if any element of the offense occurred before that date.

SECTION 6.  This Act takes effect September 1, 2021.