

By: Raymond

H.B. No. 4232

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT

relating to the establishment of the COVID-19 Consumer and Investor Fraud Task Force.

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

SECTION 1. DEFINITIONS. In this Act:

(1) "COVID-19" means the 2019 novel coronavirus disease.

(2) "COVID-19 public health emergency" means a state of disaster declared in a proclamation or executive order issued by the governor in response to COVID-19, including a continuation of the state of disaster under a renewal of the proclamation or executive order.

(3) "Task force" means the COVID-19 Consumer and Investor Fraud Task Force established under this Act.

SECTION 2. ESTABLISHMENT OF TASK FORCE. The COVID-19 Consumer and Investor Fraud Task Force is established to help protect consumers and investors by preventing and reducing the incidences of fraud related to the COVID-19 public health emergency.

SECTION 3. TASK FORCE MEMBERSHIP. (a) The task force is composed of representatives of the following agencies:

- (1) the office of the attorney general;
- (2) the Office of Consumer Credit Commissioner;
- (3) the Texas Department of Banking;

1           (4) the Department of Savings and Mortgage Lending;  
2 and

3           (5) the State Securities Board.

4           (b) The executive head of each agency listed in Subsection  
5 (a) of this section shall appoint a representative to serve as the  
6 agency's representative on the task force not later than October 1,  
7 2021.

8           SECTION 4. PRESIDING OFFICER; MEETINGS. (a) The members of  
9 the task force shall select the presiding officer of the task force.

10           (b) The presiding officer shall call the initial meeting of  
11 the task force on or before January 1, 2022. Subject to Subsection  
12 (c) of this section, the task force shall meet at the times and  
13 places that the presiding officer determines are appropriate.

14           (c) Notwithstanding Chapter 551, Government Code, or any  
15 other law, the task force may meet by telephone conference call,  
16 videoconference, or other similar telecommunication method. A  
17 meeting held by telephone conference call, videoconference, or  
18 other similar telecommunication method is subject to the  
19 requirements of Sections 551.125(c), (d), (e), and (f), Government  
20 Code.

21           SECTION 5. DUTIES OF TASK FORCE. (a) The task force shall  
22 facilitate collaboration between the agencies represented on the  
23 task force to:

24           (1) provide information and resources to help  
25 consumers and investors avoid becoming a victim of fraud related to  
26 the COVID-19 public health emergency;

27           (2) provide information and resources, including

1 legal aid resources, to help consumers and investors who have been  
2 victims of fraud during the COVID-19 public health emergency; and

3 (3) recommend further action to reduce and combat the  
4 prevalence of fraud relating to the COVID-19 public health  
5 emergency.

6 (b) The task force shall coordinate and collaborate with  
7 other state agencies not participating in the task force as  
8 appropriate.

9 SECTION 6. REPORT. The task force shall submit a quarterly  
10 written report to the governor, the lieutenant governor, the  
11 speaker of the house of representatives, and each member of the  
12 legislature, detailing:

13 (1) the information and resources made publicly  
14 available to consumers by the agencies represented on the task  
15 force;

16 (2) the number of consumer complaints received by the  
17 agencies represented on the task force that allege fraud that  
18 occurred during the COVID-19 public health emergency;

19 (3) the nature of the consumer complaints described by  
20 Subdivision (2) of this section; and

21 (4) recommendations of further action that can be  
22 taken by the state to prevent and reduce the incidence of fraud  
23 during the COVID-19 public health emergency.

24 SECTION 7. EXPIRATION. The task force is abolished and this  
25 Act expires on the one-year anniversary of the date the final  
26 COVID-19 public health emergency declaration terminates.

27 SECTION 8. EFFECTIVE DATE. This Act takes effect

H.B. No. 4232

1 immediately if it receives a vote of two-thirds of all the members  
2 elected to each house, as provided by Section 39, Article III, Texas  
3 Constitution. If this Act does not receive the vote necessary for  
4 immediate effect, this Act takes effect September 1, 2021.