

By: Menéndez

S.J.R. No. 17

A JOINT RESOLUTION

1 proposing a constitutional amendment providing for the
2 establishment of the Texas Research Consortium to Cure Infectious
3 Diseases (TRANSCEND) and authorizing the issuance of general
4 obligation bonds to fund collaborative research on and development
5 of infectious disease treatments and cures for humans.

6 BE IT RESOLVED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF TEXAS:

7 SECTION 1. Article III, Texas Constitution, is amended by
8 adding Section 69 to read as follows:

9 Sec. 69. (a) In this section:

10 (1) "Consortium" means the Texas Research Consortium
11 to Cure Infectious Diseases (TRANSCEND).

12 (2) "Disease" means a disorder of structure or
13 function in a human that produces specific signs or symptoms or
14 affects a specific location in the human body and that has the
15 potential of being prevented by a vaccine or otherwise treated or
16 cured.

17 (b) The legislature by general law shall establish the Texas
18 Research Consortium to Cure Infectious Diseases (TRANSCEND) to:

19 (1) award grants to public or private persons or
20 entities for the purpose of:

21 (A) conducting collaborative research on
22 infectious diseases and associated conditions and innovative
23 methods to prepare for infectious disease outbreaks;

24 (B) developing treatments and cures, including

1 vaccines, for diseases and associated conditions;

2 (C) developing education initiatives and
3 conducting outreach to engage and inform the public on infectious
4 diseases and associated conditions; and

5 (D) developing initiatives to prepare for and
6 rapidly respond to infectious disease outbreaks and public health
7 crises;

8 (2) establish a centralized research location through
9 which the consortium will operate and facilitate collaborative
10 research on infectious diseases and related disorders and the
11 development of treatments and cures for infectious diseases; and

12 (3) establish appropriate standards and oversight
13 bodies for the consortium to ensure money authorized by this
14 section is properly used for infectious disease research and
15 preparation and for development of infectious disease treatments
16 and cures.

17 (c) The legislature by general law shall establish for the
18 consortium a governing body and any other decision-making body the
19 legislature determines appropriate to govern the consortium. The
20 members of the governing body and other decision-making body of the
21 consortium serve terms of not more than four years.

22 (d) The legislature by general law may authorize the Texas
23 Public Finance Authority to provide for, issue, and sell general
24 obligation bonds of the State of Texas on behalf of the consortium
25 in an amount not to exceed \$3 billion and to enter into related
26 credit agreements. The Texas Public Finance Authority may not
27 issue more than \$300 million in bonds authorized by this subsection

1 in any state fiscal year. The bonds shall be executed in the form,
2 on the terms, and in the denominations, bear interest, and be issued
3 in installments as prescribed by the Texas Public Finance
4 Authority.

5 (e) Proceeds from the sale of the bonds shall be deposited
6 in separate funds or accounts, as provided by general law, within
7 the state treasury to be used by the consortium to implement this
8 section.

9 (f) Notwithstanding any other provision of this
10 constitution, the consortium, which is established in state
11 government, may use the proceeds from bonds issued under Subsection
12 (d) of this section and any federal or private grants and gifts to:

13 (1) provide grants for the purposes described by
14 Subsection (b)(1) of this section;

15 (2) purchase, subject to approval by the governing
16 body and any other decision-making body of the consortium, research
17 and laboratory facilities by or on behalf of a grant recipient; and

18 (3) operate the consortium.

19 (g) The proceeds from bonds issued under Subsection (d) of
20 this section may be used to pay the costs of issuing the bonds and
21 any administrative expense related to the bonds.

22 (h) While any bond or interest on a bond authorized by this
23 section is outstanding and unpaid, from the first money deposited
24 to the state treasury in each state fiscal year not otherwise
25 appropriated by this constitution, an amount sufficient to pay the
26 principal of and interest on bonds that mature or become due during
27 the year and to make payments that become due under a related credit

1 agreement during the year is appropriated for purposes of this
2 section, less the amount in the sinking fund at the close of the
3 previous state fiscal year.

4 (i) A bond issued under this section, after approval by the
5 attorney general, registration by the comptroller of public
6 accounts, and delivery to the purchasers, is incontestable and is a
7 general obligation of this state under this constitution.

8 (j) Before the consortium may make a grant of any proceeds
9 of bonds issued under this section, the recipient of the grant must
10 have an amount of money equal to one-half the amount of the grant
11 dedicated to the research that is the subject of the grant request.

12 (k) The Texas Public Finance Authority shall consider using
13 a business whose principal place of business is located in this
14 state to issue the bonds authorized by this section, including
15 using a historically underutilized business as defined by general
16 law.

17 SECTION 2. This proposed constitutional amendment shall be
18 submitted to the voters at an election to be held November 2, 2021.
19 The ballot shall be printed to permit voting for or against the
20 proposition: "The constitutional amendment providing for the
21 establishment of the Texas Research Consortium to Cure Infectious
22 Diseases (TRANSCEND) and authorizing the issuance of up to \$3
23 billion in general obligation bonds to fund collaborative research
24 on and development of infectious disease treatments and cures for
25 humans."