

**House Bill 4293**  
Senate Amendments  
Section-by-Section Analysis

HOUSE VERSION

SECTION 1. Chapter 75, Government Code, is amended by adding Subchapter J to read as follows:

SUBCHAPTER J. COURT REMINDER PROGRAM

Sec. 75.601. ESTABLISHMENT OF STATE PROGRAM FOR PARTICIPATING COUNTIES. (a) The Office of Court Administration of the Texas Judicial System shall develop and make available to each county a court reminder program that allows the county to send a text message to notify criminal defendants of scheduled court appearances. The purposes of the program must include:

- (1) reducing costs associated with defendants who fail to appear for a scheduled court appearance;
- (2) improving the efficiency of courts in this state;
- (3) reminding criminal defendants to appear at each scheduled court appearance; and
- (4) reducing the number of criminal defendants who are confined in a county jail due solely to the defendant's failure to appear for a scheduled court appearance.

(b) The program must:

- (1) be available to each county at no cost;
- (2) comply with applicable state and federal laws requiring the consent of an individual before sending a reminder by text message;
- (3) provide text message reminders for each court appearance of a defendant who has access to a device with the technological capability of receiving text messages and provides the court administrator with an operational phone number for the device;
- (4) document each occurrence of a criminal defendant receiving a text message reminder;
- (5) identify criminal defendants with scheduled court appearances who lack access to devices with the technological

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- (1) be available to each county at no cost;
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capability of receiving text messages;  
(6) document the number of criminal defendants who fail to appear at scheduled court appearances after being sent one or more text message reminders;  
(7) include the technological capability, at the discretion of the local administrative judge, to provide additional information to criminal defendants concerning scheduled court appearances, such as the location of the court appearance, available transportation options, and procedures for defendants who are unable to attend court appearances;  
(8) support partnerships with local law enforcement agencies, local governments, and local public defenders in accordance with the purposes described by Subsection (a); and  
(9) provide one or more publicly available Internet websites through which criminal defendants may request text reminders.

Sec. 75.602. ESTABLISHMENT OF COUNTY PROGRAMS. (a) The judges of the county courts, statutory county courts, and district courts with jurisdiction over criminal cases in each county shall establish a court reminder program that allows the county to send a text message to notify criminal defendants of scheduled court appearances.

(b) In developing the court reminder program, the judges may join the state program developed under Section 75.601 or develop a county program that allows the county to send text message notifications to criminal defendants and that complies with the requirements of Section 75.601(b).

Sec. 75.603. MUNICIPAL PROGRAM. (a) The Office of Court Administration of the Texas Judicial System, or the judges of the county courts, statutory county courts, and

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capability of receiving text messages;  
(6) document the number of criminal defendants who fail to appear at scheduled court appearances after being sent one or more text message reminders;  
(7) include the technological capability, at the discretion of the local administrative judge, to provide additional information to criminal defendants concerning scheduled court appearances, such as the location of the court appearance, available transportation options, and procedures for defendants who are unable to attend court appearances;  
(8) support partnerships with local law enforcement agencies, local governments, and local public defenders in accordance with the purposes described by Subsection (a); and  
(9) provide one or more publicly available Internet websites through which criminal defendants may request text reminders.

Sec. 75.602. ESTABLISHMENT OF COUNTY PROGRAMS. (a) The justices of the justice courts and judges of the county courts, statutory county courts, and district courts with jurisdiction over criminal cases in each county may establish a court reminder program that allows the county to send a text message to notify criminal defendants of scheduled court appearances. [FA1(1)-(2)]

(b) In developing the court reminder program, the justices and judges may join the state program developed under Section 75.601 or develop a county program that allows the county to send text message notifications to criminal defendants and that complies with the requirements of Section 75.601(b). [FA1(3)]

Sec. 75.603. MUNICIPAL PROGRAM. (a) The Office of Court Administration of the Texas Judicial System, or the justices of the justice courts and judges of the county courts,

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district courts with jurisdiction over criminal cases in each county, may partner with municipalities and local law enforcement agencies to allow:

(1) individuals to whom a peace officer issues a citation and releases to receive text message reminders of scheduled court appearances; and

(2) criminal defendants in municipal court to receive text message reminders of scheduled court appearances.

(b) Any municipality that partners with the Office of Court Administration of the Texas Judicial System shall pay all costs of sending reminders to municipal criminal defendants, including the costs of linking the municipal court database with the state court administrator database.

SECTION 2. Not later than September 1, 2022, the Office of Court Administration of the Texas Judicial System and the judges of the county courts, statutory county courts, and district courts with jurisdiction over criminal cases in each county shall develop and make available the court reminder program as required by Subchapter J, Chapter 75, Government Code, as added by this Act.

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statutory county courts, and district courts with jurisdiction over criminal cases in each county, may partner with municipalities and local law enforcement agencies to allow:  
[FA1(4)]

(1) individuals to whom a peace officer issues a citation and releases to receive text message reminders of scheduled court appearances; and

(2) criminal defendants in municipal court to receive text message reminders of scheduled court appearances.

(b) Any municipality that partners with the Office of Court Administration of the Texas Judicial System shall pay all costs of sending reminders to municipal criminal defendants, including the costs of linking the municipal court database with the state court administrator database.

SECTION \_\_. (a) Not later than September 1, 2022, the Office of Court Administration of the Texas Judicial System shall develop and make available the court reminder program as required by Section 75.601, Government Code, as added by this Act.

(b) The Office of Court Administration of the Texas Judicial System is required to implement a provision of this Act only if the legislature appropriates money specifically for that purpose. If the legislature does not appropriate money specifically for that purpose, the office may, but is not required to, implement a provision of this Act using other appropriations available for that purpose. [FA1(5)]

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SECTION 3. This Act takes effect September 1, 2021.

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SECTION 3. Same as House version.

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