

## **BILL ANALYSIS**

C.S.H.B. 717  
By: Frank  
County Affairs  
Committee Report (Substituted)

### **BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE**

Local leaders of Cottle County have expressed concerns over a portion of the fire code after the historic courthouse in Paducah was anonymously flagged for investigation by the state fire marshal's office and found to be in violation of certain fire escape requirements. When originally constructed in 1930, the courthouse plans intentionally used materials such as marble and concrete to limit fire hazard risk. Additionally, the current required use of the building leaves the upper floors vacant, further minimizing the risk to any occupants within. Small counties, such as Cottle County, should have the ability to maintain the safety and integrity of their courthouses in a way that accommodates each individual use case and insurance requirements. Small counties simply do not have the tax base or funds available to retrofit fire escapes into historically significant designs to fit an ever-evolving fire code. C.S.H.B. 717 seeks to address this issue by exempting certain county courthouses from statutory provisions that require and regulate fire escapes.

### **CRIMINAL JUSTICE IMPACT**

It is the committee's opinion that this bill does not expressly create a criminal offense, increase the punishment for an existing criminal offense or category of offenses, or change the eligibility of a person for community supervision, parole, or mandatory supervision.

### **RULEMAKING AUTHORITY**

It is the committee's opinion that this bill does not expressly grant any additional rulemaking authority to a state officer, department, agency, or institution.

### **ANALYSIS**

C.S.H.B. 717 amends the Health and Safety Code to exempt a county courthouse that was constructed before September 1, 1989, and is located in a county with a population of less than 50,000 from statutory provisions that require and regulate fire escapes.

### **EFFECTIVE DATE**

On passage, or, if the bill does not receive the necessary vote, September 1, 2023.

### **COMPARISON OF INTRODUCED AND SUBSTITUTE**

While C.S.H.B. 717 may differ from the introduced in minor or nonsubstantive ways, the following summarizes the substantial differences between the introduced and committee substitute versions of the bill.

Whereas the introduced exempted a county courthouse located in a county with a population of less than 100,000, the substitute exempts a county courthouse that was constructed before September 1, 1989, and is located in a county with a population of less than 50,000.

The substitute changes the bill's effective date to provide for its possible immediate effect, contingent on receiving the requisite constitutional vote, whereas the introduced provided only for the bill to take effect September 1, 2023, with no possibility for immediate effect.