

BILL ANALYSIS

S.B. 553
By: West
State Affairs
Committee Report (Unamended)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

Prior to 2022, at least 30 years had passed since the State of Texas dedicated a new state office building. In that time, the legislature created the Texas Facilities Commission (TFC), and vested in that agency the responsibility for construction of most state buildings, excluding certain buildings such as state hospitals and buildings at institutions of higher education. When the state began working on a dedication ceremony for the Barbara Jordan State Office Building, employees working on the plans noted that, under current law, it was not clear whether expenditures related to things like food and beverages, chair rental, program printing, and invitation postage for the grand opening of the building would be considered as accomplishing a public purpose under Article III, Texas Constitution. Additionally, the attorney general's office has issued opinions indicating such would likely not be considered for a public purpose. As a result, neither the Barbara Jordan nor the George H. W. Bush State Office Buildings have yet opened. A pending opening for the George H. W. Bush State Office Building was canceled while an opening for the Barbara Jordan State Office Building is in the process of being set, and is being paid for with private funds donated by a member of Jordan's sorority. Without specific legislation authorizing TFC to purchase items necessary for a building dedication ceremony, no state funds can be spent on an office building dedication. S.B. 553 seeks to address this issue by authorizing TFC to hold a ceremony to dedicate a new state building using certain donated, appropriated, or dedicated money.

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

S.B. 553 amends the Government Code to authorize the Texas Facilities Commission (TFC) to hold a ceremony to dedicate a new state building and to accept gifts, grants, or donations from any source for the purposes of holding such a ceremony. The bill authorizes TFC to use available appropriated or donated money to pay for the ceremony but caps at \$10,000 the amount of appropriated money TFC may use to purchase food, nonalcoholic beverages, flowers, decorations, and other items appropriate for the ceremony that TFC would otherwise be prohibited from purchasing. These provisions expressly do not authorize TFC to purchase alcoholic beverages.

EFFECTIVE DATE

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