By:  Muñoz, Jr. H.B. No. 994

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT

relating to sheriff's department civil service systems in certain counties.

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

SECTION 1.  Subchapter B, Chapter 158, Local Government Code, is amended by adding 158.0352 to read as follows:

Sec. 158.0352.  DISCIPLINARY SUSPENSIONS. (a) The sheriff may discipline an employee by suspension or termination for the violation of a civil service rule. The suspension may be for a reasonable period not to exceed 15 calendar days.

(b)  If the sheriff disciplines an employee, the sheriff shall, within 120 hours after the hour of discipline, file a written statement with the commission giving the reasons for the discipline. The sheriff shall immediately deliver a copy of the statement in person to the disciplined employee.

(c)  The copy of the written statement must inform the disciplined employee that if the employee wants to appeal to the commission, the employee must file a written appeal with the commission within 10 days after the date the employee receives the copy of the statement.

(d)  The written statement filed by the sheriff with the commission must point out each civil service rule alleged to have been violated by the disciplined employee and must describe the alleged acts of the employee that the sheriff contends are in violation of the civil service rules. It is not sufficient for the sheriff merely to refer to the provisions of the rules alleged to have been violated.

(e)  If the sheriff does not specifically point out in the written statement the act or acts of the employee that allegedly violated the civil service rules, the commission shall promptly reinstate the employee.

(f)  If offered by the sheriff, the employee may agree in writing to voluntarily accept, with no right of appeal, a suspension of 16 to 90 calendar days for the violation of a civil service rule. The employee must accept the offer within five working days after the date the offer is made. If the employee refuses the offer and wants to appeal to the commission, the employee must file a written appeal with the commission in accordance with Section 158.037.

(g)  In the original written statement and charges and in any hearing conducted under this subchapter, the sheriff may not complain of an act that occurred earlier than the 180th day preceding the date the sheriff suspends the employee. If the act is allegedly related to criminal activity, including the violation of a federal, state, or local law for which the employee is subject to a criminal penalty:

(1)  the sheriff may not complain of an act that is discovered earlier than the 180th day preceding the date the sheriff disciplines the employee; and

(2)  the sheriff must allege that the act complained of is related to criminal activity.

Sec. 158.0353.  DEMOTIONS. (a) The sheriff may recommend to the commission in writing that the commission demote a nonexempt employee involuntarily.

(b)  The sheriff must include in the recommendation for demotion the reasons for the recommended demotion and a request that the commission order the demotion. The sheriff must immediately furnish a copy of the recommendation in person to the affected employee.

(c)  The commission may refuse to grant the request for demotion. If the commission believes that probable cause exists for ordering the demotion, the commission shall give the employee written notice to appear before the commission for a public hearing at a time and place specified in the notice. The commission shall give the notice before the 10th day before the date the hearing will be held.

(d)  The employee is entitled to a full and complete public hearing, and the commission may not demote an employee without that public hearing.

(e)  A voluntary demotion in which the employee has accepted the terms of the demotion in writing is not subject to this section.

SECTION 2.  This Act takes effect immediately if it receives a vote of two-thirds of all the members elected to each house, as provided by Section 39, Article III, Texas Constitution. If this Act does not receive the vote necessary for immediate effect, this Act takes effect September 1, 2023.