

By: Spiller

H.B. No. 296

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT

relating to the use by a political subdivision of public funds for lobbying activities.

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

SECTION 1. Chapter 556, Government Code, is amended by adding Section 556.0056 to read as follows:

Sec. 556.0056. RESTRICTION ON USE OF PUBLIC FUNDS BY POLITICAL SUBDIVISIONS FOR LOBBYING ACTIVITIES. (a) A political subdivision may not spend public funds:

(1) to hire or contract with an individual required to register as a lobbyist under Chapter 305 for the purpose of lobbying a member of the legislature; or

(2) to pay a nonprofit association or organization that:

(A) primarily represents political subdivisions;
and

(B) hires or contracts with an individual required to register as a lobbyist under Chapter 305.

(b) Subsection (a) does not apply to an association or organization that solely represents elected sheriffs or individual law enforcement officers.

(c) Subsection (a) does not prohibit:

(1) an officer or employee of a political subdivision from providing information for a member of the legislature or

1 appearing before a legislative committee;

2 (2) an elected officer of a political subdivision from
3 advocating for or against or otherwise influencing or attempting to
4 influence the outcome of legislation pending before the legislature
5 while acting as an officer of the political subdivision;

6 (3) an employee of a political subdivision from
7 advocating for or against or otherwise influencing or attempting to
8 influence the outcome of legislation pending before the legislature
9 if those actions would not require a person to register as a
10 lobbyist under Chapter 305;

11 (4) a political subdivision from reimbursing an
12 officer or full-time employee of the political subdivision for
13 direct travel expenses incurred by the officer or employee for
14 engaging in an activity described by Subdivision (1), (2), or (3);
15 or

16 (5) a full-time employee of a nonprofit association or
17 organization that primarily represents political subdivisions of
18 this state from:

19 (A) providing legislative services related to
20 bill tracking, bill analysis, and legislative alerts;

21 (B) communicating directly with a member of the
22 legislature to provide information if the communication would not
23 require a person to register as a lobbyist under Chapter 305; or

24 (C) testifying for or against legislation before
25 the legislature.

26 (d) If a political subdivision engages in an activity
27 prohibited by Subsection (a), a taxpayer or resident of the

1 political subdivision is entitled to appropriate injunctive relief
2 to prevent further activity prohibited by that subsection and
3 further payment of public funds related to that activity.

4 (e) A taxpayer or resident who prevails in an action under
5 Subsection (d) is entitled to recover from the political
6 subdivision the taxpayer's or resident's reasonable attorney's fees
7 and costs incurred in bringing the action.

8 SECTION 2. Section 89.002, Local Government Code, is
9 amended to read as follows:

10 Sec. 89.002. STATE ASSOCIATION OF COUNTIES. (a) Except as
11 provided by Section 556.0056, Government Code, the [The]
12 commissioners court may spend, in the name of the county, money from
13 the county's general fund for membership fees and dues of a
14 nonprofit state association of counties if:

15 (1) a majority of the court votes to approve
16 membership in the association;

17 (2) the association exists for the betterment of
18 county government and the benefit of all county officials;

19 (3) the association is not affiliated with a labor
20 organization; and

21 (4) ~~[neither the association nor an employee of the~~
22 ~~association directly or indirectly influences or attempts to~~
23 ~~influence the outcome of any legislation pending before the~~
24 ~~legislature, except that this subdivision does not prevent a person~~
25 ~~from providing information for a member of the legislature or~~
26 ~~appearing before a legislative committee at the request of the~~
27 ~~committee or the member of the legislature, and~~

1 ~~[(5)]~~ neither the association nor an employee of the
2 association directly or indirectly contributes any money,
3 services, or other valuable thing to a political campaign or
4 endorses a candidate or group of candidates for public office.

5 (b) If any association or organization supported wholly or
6 partly by payments of tax receipts from political subdivisions
7 engages in an activity described by Subsection (a)(4) ~~[or (5)]~~, a
8 taxpayer of a political subdivision that pays fees or dues to the
9 association or organization is entitled to appropriate injunctive
10 relief to prevent any further activity described by Subsection
11 (a)(4) ~~[or (5)]~~ or any further payments of fees or dues.

12 SECTION 3. Section 556.0056, Government Code, as added by
13 this Act, applies only to an expenditure or payment of public funds
14 by a political subdivision that is made on or after the effective
15 date of this Act, including an expenditure or payment of public
16 funds by a political subdivision that is made under a contract
17 entered into before, on, or after the effective date of this Act. A
18 contract term providing for an expenditure or payment prohibited by
19 Section 556.0056, Government Code, as added by this Act, is void on
20 the effective date of this Act.

21 SECTION 4. Section [89.002](#), Local Government Code, as
22 amended by this Act, applies only to the spending of money by a
23 county from the county's general fund that occurs on or after the
24 effective date of this Act. The spending of money by a county from
25 the county's general fund that occurs before the effective date of
26 this Act is governed by the law as it existed immediately before the
27 effective date of this Act, and that law is continued in effect for

1 that purpose.

2 SECTION 5. This Act takes effect on the 91st day after the
3 last day of the legislative session.