

BILL ANALYSIS

S.B. 1426
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Culture, Recreation & Tourism
Committee Report (Unamended)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

The bill sponsor has informed the committee that the first capitol state historic site located in West Columbia, Texas, where the first Congress of the Republic of Texas met in 1836 to lay the foundation for the new government, is a key piece of the state's history. Today, a replica of the original House of Representatives building stands as a reminder of that pivotal time. The bill sponsor has further informed the committee that, while the site has been maintained by local organizations, resources and expertise are necessary to ensure its preservation for future generations. S.B. 1426 seeks to address this issue by transferring responsibility for the first capitol state historic site to the Texas Historical Commission in order to enhance the site's preservation, improve visitor experiences, and ensure the site's historical integrity.

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. 1426 amends the Government Code to establish that the first capitol state historic site located in West Columbia, Texas, and the replica of the first Republic of Texas house of representatives building housed on the first capitol site, are under the jurisdiction of the Texas Historical Commission, make the commission responsible for the preservation, maintenance, and operation of the site and replica, and require the commission to do the following:

- develop, expand, and manage the first capitol site and replica by doing the following:
 - expanding, renovating, and managing the site and replica to enhance visitor experience and historical accuracy;
 - overseeing maintenance and operations of the site and replica to ensure long-term preservation and public accessibility; and
 - providing financial support for ongoing operations and new projects, such as administration, personnel, and site improvements;
- enhance the facilities and infrastructure for the site by doing the following:
 - relocating the replica to a historically accurate location on the site;
 - constructing a historically accurate replication of the first Republic of Texas senate building on the site;
 - constructing and maintaining a visitor center on the site to provide educational resources, exhibitions, and interactive experiences for visitors; and
 - implementing other improvements to the site's facilities and infrastructure in accordance with the site's purpose and mission;

- assume responsibility for the historic preservation and interpretation of the first capitol site and replica by doing the following:
 - preserving and maintaining historical documents, artifacts, relics, and other items of historical significance related to the site and to Texas;
 - developing exhibitions and interpretive programs to reflect the site's mission and educate the public; and
 - conducting ongoing research to enhance the accuracy and depth of the site's programs;
- oversee the operations of and personnel for the first capitol site and replica by doing the following:
 - employing a site director and other personnel the commission considers necessary to fulfill the commission's duties and responsibilities for the site;
 - establishing efficient operational and visitor engagement policies and procedures; and
 - ensuring personnel development aligns with current best practices for historic site management;
- acquire resources and seek donations for the first capitol site and replica by doing the following:
 - accepting and managing donations of money, land, historical relics, or other donations supporting the site's mission;
 - seeking grant opportunities and public-private partnerships to increase funding for site preservation and improvement efforts; and
 - acquiring property and artifacts aligned with the historical significance of the site that contribute to the site's mission and narrative;
- strategically develop the first capitol site and replica by doing the following:
 - identifying and acquiring real property adjacent or relevant to the site to support the mission of and expand the site;
 - ensuring all acquisition of real property aligns with the historical context of the site and contributes to an authentic and immersive visitor experience; and
 - engaging in strategic planning to enhance the site's presence in the nearby community and promote heritage tourism;
- facilitate community engagement and partnership for the first capitol site and replica by doing the following:
 - collaborating with local organizations, schools, and other relevant stakeholders to foster community involvement and support of the site;
 - establishing partnerships with historical societies, public institutions of higher education, and cultural organizations to strengthen the site's educational impact; and
 - hosting events, lectures, and programs that encourage public participation and awareness of Texas' history; and
- ensure responsible stewardship of resources and the first capitol site and replica by doing the following:
 - maintaining ethical and professional standards for site operations; and
 - conducting periodic assessments to measure progress and identify areas to improve stewardship of the site.

The bill authorizes the commission to accept a grant or donation for any program or purpose of the first capitol site and replica.

EFFECTIVE DATE

September 1, 2025.