

BILL ANALYSIS

S.B. 1946
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Homeland Security, Public Safety & Veterans' Affairs
Committee Report (Unamended)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

The bill sponsor has informed the committee that over 600 Texans--mostly women--were murdered due to family violence between 2021 and 2023. The bill sponsor has also informed the committee that these tragedies, while devastating, are preventable, and that despite ongoing efforts by the Legislature and local communities, intimate partner homicides remain alarmingly high, with these incidents also endangering children, family members, bystanders, and law enforcement. According to the Texas Council on Family Violence, in 2023 alone, perpetrators killed 16 additional victims beyond their partners. The bill sponsor has further informed the committee that understanding these and other risks and protective factors is critical and that a coordinated approach across systems can help produce effective policy and legislative recommendations to reduce this violence. S.B. 1946 seeks to address this issue by creating a temporary two-year Family Violence Homicide Reduction Task Force led by the office of the governor and the Texas Council on Family Violence, charging the task force with producing policy recommendations for the 90th Legislative Session focused on reducing and preventing family violence homicides, and requiring the task force to offer data on prevention, investigation, and prosecution of family violence homicides.

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. 1946 amends the Government Code to require the governor to establish the Family Violence Criminal Homicide Prevention Task Force within the criminal justice division in the governor's office. The bill requires the task force to include a steering committee composed of the governor or the governor's designee and the chief executive officer of a statewide family violence advocacy organization or the chief executive officer's designee. The bill provides for the composition of the task force appointed by the steering committee as follows:

- four representatives who are employees or contractors of a family violence center, defined by reference as including a family violence shelter center and a family violence nonresidential center, from different regions across the state, representing both rural and urban areas;
- two representatives of a statewide family violence advocacy organization;
- one representative from an organization that operates statewide and provides legal services to victims of family violence;

- one representative from each state agency that has duties relating to the prevention, investigation, or prosecution of family violence or that provides services to survivors of family violence, including the following:
 - the attorney general's office;
 - the Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC);
 - the Office of Court Administration;
 - the Department of State Health Services; and
 - the Department of Family and Protective Services;
- one representative from the family violence program operated by HHSC;
- one representative from the Center for Violence Prevention at The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston;
- the president of the Texas District and County Attorneys Association or the president's designee;
- the executive director of the Texas Municipal Police Association or the executive director's designee;
- the executive director of the Texas Commission on Law Enforcement or the executive director's designee;
- one representative of the Texas Violent Death Reporting System;
- one representative from a domestic violence high risk team;
- two survivors of family violence; and
- additional members as considered appropriate by the steering committee.

The bill establishes that an appointed member serves at the pleasure of the steering committee. The bill requires the governor to designate one member of the task force to serve as the presiding officer and requires the task force to meet at the call of the presiding officer. The bill requires the task force to use any available federal or state funding for the bill's purposes and authorizes the steering committee to establish one or more working groups, composed of members of the task force, to focus on specific issues regarding the prevention, investigation, and prosecution of family violence criminal homicide.

S.B. 1946 requires the task force to do the following:

- analyze the top risk factors that may lead to family violence criminal homicide;
- advise and provide resources to state agencies and nonprofit organizations to develop and improve training for professionals who interact with survivors of family violence;
- collect, analyze, and make publicly available information, organized by region, regarding the following:
 - the prevention, investigation, and prosecution of family violence criminal homicide and other family violence offenses; and
 - services provided to family violence survivors, including a list of family violence advocacy organizations; and
- develop policy recommendations to assist the state in the following:
 - effectively coordinating services to family violence survivors and funding to organizations that provide services to survivors; and
 - more effectively preventing, investigating, and prosecuting incidents of family violence criminal homicide.

The bill makes statutory provisions relating to state agency advisory committees inapplicable to the task force.

S.B. 1946 entitles a task force member who is not employed by a state agency or an individual invited by the presiding officer to participate in a scheduled task force meeting to the following:

- a per diem in the amount provided by the General Appropriations Act for each day the member performs duties as a task force member or the individual attends a task force meeting; and
- reimbursement for actual and necessary expenses incurred in performing duties as a member or participant of the task force, as applicable.

S.B. 1946 requires the task force, not later than December 1, 2026, to submit to the governor, the lieutenant governor, and the speaker of the house of representatives a written report containing the task force's findings and recommendations for legislative or other action. The bill's provisions expire and the task force is abolished January 1, 2028.

S.B. 1946 defines the following terms:

- "criminal homicide" as an offense under Penal Code provisions involving murder, capital murder, manslaughter, or criminally negligent homicide; and
- "family violence" by reference to Family Code provisions as:
 - an act by a member of a family or household against another member of the family or household that is intended to result in physical harm, bodily injury, assault, or sexual assault or that is a threat that reasonably places the member in fear of imminent physical harm, bodily injury, assault, or sexual assault, but does not include defensive measures to protect oneself;
 - abuse by a member of a family or household toward a child of the family or household; or
 - dating violence.

EFFECTIVE DATE

September 1, 2025.