

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center
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S.B. 1957
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Local Government
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As Filed

AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

The purpose of S.B. 1957 is to establish minimum eligibility requirements for individuals serving on civilian oversight boards that monitor or investigate fire and police departments in Texas municipalities. Specifically, the bill seeks to prohibit individuals with certain criminal backgrounds from serving in this public accountability role, aiming to ensure the integrity, objectivity, and credibility of these oversight entities.

Civilian oversight boards play a critical role in maintaining public trust by reviewing police conduct and department policies. However, concerns have arisen regarding the qualifications and backgrounds of individuals serving on these boards, particularly when board members may have personal histories that could compromise their impartiality or undermine public confidence. This bill addresses the issue of whether individuals with serious criminal records should be entrusted with oversight responsibilities that require objectivity and sound judgment.

Under current Texas law, there are no statewide eligibility standards concerning the criminal history of individuals who serve on civilian oversight boards. Eligibility is determined by the local governing body or municipality that establishes the board, leading to wide variations in policy and possible gaps in the vetting process. This lack of uniformity can result in individuals with serious criminal histories—such as felony convictions or crimes involving moral turpitude—being appointed to positions that involve evaluating law enforcement conduct.

S.B. 1957 creates a new Section 143.091 in the Local Government Code and explicitly disqualifies individuals from serving on civilian oversight boards if they have been:

1. Convicted of or placed on deferred adjudication for a felony offense; or
2. Convicted of a crime of moral turpitude.

By codifying these disqualifications into state law, the bill sets a consistent baseline for eligibility across all municipalities that operate under Chapter 143 civil service rules. The definition of "civilian oversight board" is also clarified in Section 143.003 to ensure uniform application of the law.

This legislation aims to enhance the credibility and integrity of civilian oversight boards by ensuring members meet a basic standard of legal and ethical eligibility. It establishes clear, statewide criteria that promote fairness and public confidence in oversight bodies while still allowing municipalities the flexibility to define additional qualifications as needed.

As proposed, S.B. 1957 amends current law relating to the eligibility of a person to serve on a civilian oversight board.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

This bill does not expressly grant any additional rulemaking authority to a state officer, institution, or agency.

SECTION BY SECTION ANALYSIS

SECTION 1. Amends Section 143.003, Local Government Code, by amending Subdivision (1) and adding Subdivision (1-a) to define "civilian oversight board."

SECTION 2. Amends Subchapter F, Chapter 143, Local Government Code, by adding Section 143.091, as follows:

Sec. 143.091. ELIGIBILITY FOR CIVILIAN OVERSIGHT BOARD. Provides that a person is not eligible to serve on a civilian oversight board if the person has been convicted of or placed on deferred adjudication community supervision for a felony offense or convicted of a crime of moral turpitude.

SECTION 3. Effective date: upon passage or September 1, 2025.