By:  Harris, et al. (Senate Sponsor - Middleton) H.B. No. 1397

(In the Senate - Received from the House April 30, 2025; May 1, 2025, read first time and referred to Committee on Economic Development; May 14, 2025, reported adversely, with favorable Committee Substitute by the following vote: Yeas 4, Nays 1; May 14, 2025, sent to printer.)

COMMITTEE VOTE

                    Yea Nay Absent  PNV

King                 X

Sparks               X

Alvarado             X

Johnson                  X

Schwertner           X

COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE FOR H.B. No. 1397 By:  Sparks

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT

relating to the care, custody, and display of the letter known as the victory or death letter, the Texas Constitution, and the Texas Declaration of Independence.

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

SECTION 1.  Subchapter L, Chapter 441, Government Code, is amended by adding Section 441.207 to read as follows:

Sec. 441.207.  CARE, CUSTODY, AND DISPLAY OF VICTORY OR DEATH LETTER, TEXAS CONSTITUTION, AND TEXAS DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE. (a) In this section, "victory or death letter" means the letter written by Lieutenant Colonel William B. Travis dated February 24, 1836, and signed "Victory or Death."

(b)  The commission is responsible for the care and custody of the victory or death letter, the Texas Constitution, and the Texas Declaration of Independence. The commission is responsible for the safety and preservation of the victory or death letter at all times, including when the letter is in the direct custody of the commission, in storage, or on display in the Alamo complex, Capitol Complex, or another site the commission determines appropriate under Subsection (f).

(c)  The commission shall:

(1)  designate an appropriate place in the Alamo complex for the secure display of the victory or death letter; and

(2)  on the Texas Historical Commission's determination that the transfer to and display of the letter at the Alamo complex is safe and appropriate, transfer the letter to that location for display.

(d)  Until the commission designates an appropriate place in the Alamo complex to display the victory or death letter and in collaboration with the Texas Historical Commission determines an appropriate time to securely transfer the letter to that place, the commission shall display the victory or death letter in the public location at the Capitol Complex at which the Texas Constitution and the Texas Declaration of Independence are displayed as required by Subsection (e).

(e)  The commission shall collaborate with the Texas Historical Commission and State Preservation Board to determine an appropriate public location at the Capitol Complex for the secure display of the Texas Constitution and the Texas Declaration of Independence.

(e-1)  The commission, in consultation and collaboration with the Texas Historical Commission and the State Preservation Board and not later than December 1, 2027, shall:

(1)  develop a plan to display:

(A)  the Texas Declaration of Independence and the Texas Constitution in the Capitol Complex; and

(B)  the victory or death letter in the Alamo complex and other sites the commission determines appropriate under Subsection (f);

(2)  publish the plan on the commission's Internet website; and

(3)  provide a copy of the plan to the standing committees of the legislature with jurisdiction over the state's historical resources.

(e-2)  Subsection (e-1) and this subsection expire September 1, 2031.

(f)  The commission, in consultation and collaboration with the Texas Historical Commission and the State Preservation Board, may authorize for a limited period the display of the Texas Constitution, the Texas Declaration of Independence, or the victory or death letter at a museum, historical event, or historical site.

(g)  Costs attributable to the display of the victory or death letter, the Texas Constitution, and the Texas Declaration of Independence shall be paid by the commission, using money available to the commission for that purpose.

SECTION 2.  This Act takes effect September 1, 2025.

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