

HOUSE JOURNAL

EIGHTY-SEVENTH LEGISLATURE, REGULAR SESSION

SUPPLEMENT

FIFTY-FOURTH DAY — MONDAY, MAY 24, 2021

CSSB 23 DEBATE - SECOND READING (Oliverson and Harless - House Sponsors)

CSSB 23, A bill to be entitled An Act relating to an election to approve a reduction or reallocation of funding or resources for certain county law enforcement agencies.

[Amendment No. 2 by Israel was laid before the house.]

REPRESENTATIVE ISRAEL: Members, what my amendment does is say that if this is good enough for Bexar County, this is good enough for Kleberg County. It's good enough for every county. That's the essence of what I'm trying to do here. The fact that we are targeting five counties—I respectfully disagree with Chair Oliverson. If we're going to put these mandates on five counties, let's put these expectations on every county, whether there's a million people or 500,000 people or 300,000 people or more cows than people.

REPRESENTATIVE OLIVERSON: Respectfully, I'm going to oppose this amendment. As I said in my layout, this bill is targeted in the areas of our state where this phenomenon seems to be an issue.

REPRESENTATIVE RAMOS: Representative, you mentioned that it seems to be the problem in counties with more than a million people. What is the data you all have or what research did you all do in creating that benchmark of a million and above? Are you saying, by introducing this bill, that no other county other than those a million and above reduced their law enforcement agency budget? Like no other county other than the five that you mentioned?

OLIVERSON: Representative, I think that the issue exists in our large, urban counties. I'm not aware of anything outside of that—

RAMOS: Urban counties? Is that what you said?

OLIVERSON: Yes, our larger counties where we have a higher population.

RAMOS: And we also have a more diverse population as well, right?

OLIVERSON: That's really not the purpose of this bill.

RAMOS: Yet it does target our more diverse, urban, right—"urban"—counties. But what facts or what data do you have to present to this body that this, in fact, has not happened in any other county other than our more "urban," diverse counties? What data do you have that there are no other smaller, maybe less diverse counties that reduced their law enforcement agency budget for their counties?

OLIVERSON: Representative, I'm trying to deal with a problem that I'm aware of. If there are issues that I'm not aware of, if it's outside of that, I'm sorry.

RAMOS: You said it seems to be the problem.

OLIVERSON: It is the problem.

RAMOS: So when you're exploring a problem, you want to figure out where it applies.

OLIVERSON: So what you want me to do is basically look into the crystal ball and tell you which of the other counties, essentially, has there been a problem in. What I'm saying to you is that I don't know that, and I doubt that there's any person in this body that knows that. I'm focused on the problem at hand.

RAMOS: So you're telling the body, essentially, that although we have 254 counties, you only researched four or five counties, but you really don't know. So in other words, Representative Israel's amendment should be approved by the author because, essentially, this could be something that affects our smaller counties as well and you just don't know. But we want to make sure that we know that we're doing the right thing. So we want to make sure that this applies throughout the whole State of Texas because you didn't do the homework to figure out if our smaller counties are doing the same thing. So we really should support Representative Israel's amendment, correct?

OLIVERSON: I will not be supporting her amendment, but you're free to vote however you choose.

RAMOS: Well, I encourage everybody, if we want to make sure we address the problem when we don't know that this affects our smaller counties or not, we would definitely support this amendment.

REPRESENTATIVE CROCKETT: You said "the problem." Can you tell me when this "problem" began occurring?

OLIVERSON: You know, honestly, Representative Crockett, I don't know exactly when it began occurring.

CROCKETT: Okay. And when was that?

OLIVERSON: I just know that it's happening now.

CROCKETT: Okay, so you don't know when it started. Can you tell me when this problem came to your attention to the extent that you went so far as to engage in making sure that we change the law?

OLIVERSON: Well, I became aware of this problem before session began, but I think ultimately my role in this began while we were here this session when I was asked to sponsor this bill in the house.

CROCKETT: Okay. So let me ask you, because no one has defined what the "problem" is. Instead, we're talking about the word "defund." And do you—

OLIVERSON: Yeah, I think that's a good word.

CROCKETT: Okay. Do you understand the concept? Do you understand what it means?

OLIVERSON: I understand what it means to my community. I understand that it means taking law enforcement out of my community and making my community less safe.

CROCKETT: Okay. So let me ask you this. You said that you've not done all the research. If the delegations, say, within these five large counties tell you, because they live and they experience what goes on in our counties, that we want to opt out because we don't have this "problem" that you perceived from your area, would you be willing to accept an amendment from those that live in these counties that you've not researched?

OLIVERSON: No.

CROCKETT: And why is that—if you feel as if there's a problem but it's a problem that you've not researched and those that live in those counties, those representatives, say that we don't have a problem?

OLIVERSON: Well, Representative, I think it's pretty clear around our country that in our larger metropolitan areas, we do have a problem, and that's what I'm trying to address. You can disagree with me if you choose, and you can vote however you please, but I see it the way I see it.

CROCKETT: Okay. So I'm going to tell you—I'm going to be honest just to give you a little bit of an education. The problem in my community isn't the "defund" issue. The problem is policing in my community, number one. Number two, so that we understand the concept that we're trying to fix, defund is actually about making sure that law enforcement has the assets that they need so that they're not going out playing dog catcher instead. So that if someone is shot, they can respond to that. We have terrible response rates in so many of our large cities because they're now playing mental health professionals. And half the time—you're a doctor. You know that there are people—

OLIVERSON: Do you, Representative—

CROCKETT: —that should be specifically trained in this area.

OLIVERSON: Do you understand that this bill allows your community to make that decision? But it's a decision made by your community. It's not a decision made by a couple of folks sitting on a commissioners court. If your community wants to defund your police, your local law enforcement in the county, then they can vote to do so. That's what this bill does. That's what it allows. I thought we were all for letting the people decide.

CROCKETT: I thought we were, too. But when it comes down to it—

OLIVERSON: So that's what this bill does.

CROCKETT: But let me tell you something.

OLIVERSON: So are you telling me that you would not want the people in your community to be able to vote on that?

CROCKETT: Our people decide when they go and decide to elect us, and if they don't like the decisions that we make, then they vote us out. When we came to do our budget here in the State of Texas at the legislature, we didn't have to go out and get everybody in the State of Texas to vote on certain things. Because let me tell you something. There are people in my community that are not pleased with what we have done with our budget thus far, this session. So you want to handicap people—

OLIVERSON: Your premise is incorrect in that there are many times where we have to go back to the voters. Every week we're voting on something with a JR after it that requires the people—

CROCKETT: But we're talking about the budget.

OLIVERSON: —of the state to approve.

CROCKETT: We're talking about the budget that we voted on.

OLIVERSON: And we make and we require—

CROCKETT: We did not have to go to the—

OLIVERSON:—approval of bonds to be issued. We require the citizens to weigh in on a variety of issues. Why would we not want them to weigh in on something as critical as public safety?

CROCKETT: I'm not saying that. What I am saying—

OLIVERSON: You are saying that.

CROCKETT: No. What I am saying is that there are certain functions that we have to be able to perform. You would agree with me that one of the functions as a state representative is to make sure that we pass the state budget, correct?

OLIVERSON: And what I'm saying to you is that I believe that public safety is of such paramount importance that if you decide to defund public safety in your community, that you should put that to a vote of the people. And if the people will it to be so, then let it be so.

CROCKETT: So once again, you see it as defunding and making a community less safe.

OLIVERSON: I think it's pretty clear that's what it is.

CROCKETT: That's not what it is. Obviously, it's not clear because if it was clear, then we wouldn't have this bill. The issue isn't that. I can't tell you what goes on in your community, but you want to tell me what goes on in mine. Let me be clear. In my community, we decide that we want to reimagine policing. What we decide is—

OLIVERSON: Then vote to do so.

CROCKETT: No, listen.

OLIVERSON: Then do it.

CROCKETT: We don't need it. We don't need a vote on that. We vote when we elect people who say that this is what we are going to do with our budgets. Just like you were elected from your community and if your community doesn't like what you do down here, they can vote you out. It's the same thing.

OLIVERSON: Again, I think—

CROCKETT: What we're trying to do is we are trying to monopolize and we are trying to minimize local control because small cities and small towns want to tell the big cities and the big towns what we're going to do. That is a problem. I thought that republicans believed in local control.

OLIVERSON: Respectfully, Representative—

CROCKETT: But they only believe—

OLIVERSON: —do you have a question?

CROCKETT: —in local control—

OLIVERSON: Did you want to ask me a question?

CROCKETT: — when it is expedient for them. I'm done.

OLIVERSON: Members, I urge you to oppose this amendment.

ISRAEL: Thank you, Dr. Oliverson, for allowing me to make this point. If you live in Del Rio in Val Verde County, if you live in Tyler in Smith County, if you live in Kingsville in Kleberg County, if you live in Round Rock in Williamson County, if you truly believe that there is a viable role for the State of Texas to be doing this kind of intrusive management of how our local authorities are doing their job, then you should support this amendment.

REPRESENTATIVE WU: Representative Israel, would it be fair to say that you're filing this amendment right now because the bill sponsor's statement of the intent of this legislation does not actually match up with the bill itself?

ISRAEL: Correct.

WU: And that if the intent is to protect communities, that if the intent is to make sure that communities have a say about their law enforcement budget, that this should apply to all communities?

ISRAEL: All communities at all times, in all situations, in all economic difficulties, in good times and in bad times.

WU: And because, as we discussed in **HB 1900**, there is no difference in civilians and citizens across the state, that they all have an equal right to be protected. Is that correct?

ISRAEL: That's correct. And I think we all recognize, Representative, that at the local level—our local officials at the city and the county—a big chunk of those budgets go to public safety. So this is not something that any of us is dismissing or overlooking, and I'm simply trying to make a statement that what's good for one county should be good for all counties regardless of their situation.

WU: And if you remember from our conversations on **HB 1900**, that, in fact, it's the smaller jurisdictions that actually have a higher per capita violent crime rate. Do you remember that?

ISRAEL: Yes.

WU: And the point of this amendment is to make this legislation rationally match up with the stated intent of the bill author and the bill sponsor. Is that correct?

ISRAEL: Yes. Thank you, Representative. The point that we're also trying to make is that some of these very large counties are also very safe and if you truly believe this is about safety, you should be concerned about safety regardless of which county it is in the State of Texas.

WU: And so without this amendment, this bill would just be paying lip service to its stated intent, that its actions are rather arbitrary and capricious in the way it's trying to carry out this legislation. Would that be fair?

ISRAEL: Yes.

WU: And you're trying to give it some rational basis of how this is being carried out.

ISRAEL: In my view, it's pandering to a topic that became an issue in the last political cycle, not truly providing relief. It's giving our locals yet one more mandate that they have to adhere to as they work through the ins and outs of a budget.

WU: And just like **HB 1900**, it seems like that the bracket of where this is limited to seems just being pulled out of thin air, just out of their whim.

ISRAEL: Correct.

[Amendment No. 2 failed of adoption by Record No. 1403.]

[Amendment No. 3 by J.D. Johnson was laid before the house.]

REPRESENTATIVE J.D. JOHNSON: Members, this is the same thing we've heard when it came to the cities and now this is the counties. This is a little different, though. Let me just explain to you how constables and sheriffs work. In Harris County, there are eight constable offices that receive \$124 million a year from the county's general fund. That's approximately 70 percent of their budget. And \$43 million comes from contracts. That's approximately 30 percent of their budget. Now, what this means is that those are contracts that the constables have to go out to get. Now, in the event that the constables lose their contract, it does not mean that the county reduced their budget. That meant that they lost a contract because a community has chosen to maybe tighten their belts or did not have enough money in their budget to hire the constables to do the patrol. That also includes evictions. During this pandemic, there were no evictions. So therefore, the constables and sheriff lost a lot of money. The county did not reduce. The county commissioners did not reduce the budgets. It's because they did not have the contracts.

My amendment, as we talked last time, takes into account the fact of non-police officers. These are civilian positions that have nothing to do with public safety. Once again, we're talking custodians. We're talking yard maintenance people. We're talking building maintenance people. These are not—these are not—police officers. So as we say, as my colleague has constantly said, this is not defunding the police. What they're doing is having to reduce a budget. So that meant that the county may have had to pull that line item out of the constable's budget to move it someplace else. That is a reduction in the budget for that particular constable but not in the amount of officers, patrol routes, or anything like that. This is simply saying that if in fact the constables lose some of their contracts, which meant some of their budget goes down, that they can't be held accountable for that. The counties can't be held accountable for that. Again, I simply want to appeal to your common sense. It's right here in black and white. I'm not making this up. You can research it yourself. Seventy percent comes from the general fund of the county. Thirty percent comes from contracts. If in fact those contracts go down, it does not mean the county commissioners reduce their budget. It just simply says that they lost some of their contracts.

RAMOS: Representative, so in the county law enforcement, which is what this bill addresses, we are not talking, for example, about our regular—like for example, I'm from Dallas—our Dallas Police Department. We're talking about sheriffs and constables, correct?

J.D. JOHNSON: Yes.

RAMOS: And the sheriffs and constables, what is the extent of their main priorities or responsibilities? I understand that at the county level it's a little different than what we see in our neighborhood policing, correct?

J.D. JOHNSON: Well, it's—I'm not going to take that away and make any differences about it. It's law enforcement. At the end of the day, it's law enforcement. So if you're outside the city limits, that's where the sheriffs come in. That's their jurisdiction. That's where the constables come in. They can actually be hired by our neighborhoods—affluent neighborhoods that have the money for patrol. And if there is some additional time, they can go into some of the less affluent neighborhoods. But generally, they are hired—hired guns. I'm not trying to be flippant about it.

RAMOS: No, absolutely.

J.D. JOHNSON: But at the end of the day—but the constables also serve, you know, they serve papers. They do a lot of different—

RAMOS: And that's where I'm getting at. They enforce criminal laws in Texas, but they also, in addition to, issue traffic citations. They issue warrants, civil papers, subpoenas, serve as bailiffs of our courts as well. But they also operate in the county jails, correct?

J.D. JOHNSON: Yes.

RAMOS: And that's really not typically what you have of our local city municipalities. It's the county law enforcement officers that are part of our county jail. They protect us in our county jails. What happens if we reduce the number of people in our county jails, where we don't need law enforcement? Or like you said, we had a lot of evictions, and now we're lowering it down. Is a lot of that part of the contractual work that they do or is it a mixture? Because you said some of it comes from the county.

J.D. JOHNSON: Well, it's a mixture, and I believe the bill addresses detention officers but it does not address the patrol officers on the streets. And again, 70 percent of their budget comes from the county general fund. Thirty percent comes from money that they go out and hustle to get. Now—

RAMOS: Who do they get that from? That other 30 percent? Those contracts aren't guaranteed.

J.D. JOHNSON: They're not guaranteed. They get them from the communities. As a new community comes up, they'll go out, they'll make a plea, and those communities will hire those constables.

RAMOS: And if my community decided I wanted constables just for two years till we fix this situation but we only had a two-year plan to hire these constables, this bill would punish my county for making those adjustments, and we never even planned to keep them there indefinitely.

J.D. JOHNSON: One neighborhood—one neighborhood—decides to not re-up on the contract for a constable? One neighborhood can then trigger the entire county to then have to go to the voters and put a referendum out, which is going to cost millions of dollars, simply because one neighborhood decided that it did not want to rehire a constable to patrol their community. And that's not what this bill should be about. This bill should be about public safety, making sure that we don't lose the number of officers, patrol routes, or patrol units. And if we do what the author is trying to do, we're going to punish communities for simply doing what's in the best interest of their own particular budget.

OLIVERSON: I truly appreciate my colleague and friend Representative Johnson. But as I was conversing with him about this this morning and yesterday, in the bill the comptroller already has the authority to exclude extraordinary expenses, so that thought process is already contemplated in the bill for some of these unusual circumstances that might occur. And so respectfully, I'm going to oppose the amendment and ask you to vote no.

J.D. JOHNSON: The comptroller has the authority to look and decide whether or not there was one particular unusual movement in the budget. But they also have the right to say, well, no. That same comptroller has the right to say, no, we're going to still punish you even though—even though—you lost several contracts. Your budget was reduced by \$6 million because you lost contracts. The entire county—the entire county—there are eight constables in Harris County—eight. Eight. If one particular constable reduced or loses a contract, that means four

million residents of Harris County have to now go to the ballot and vote because one particular constable reduced their budget. That's going to cost taxpayers of Harris County millions because one neighborhood refused to hire a constable.

This is simple common sense. Ladies and gentlemen, please. Listen to what I am saying. One neighborhood that refuses to rehire a constable should not punish—or the county should not be held accountable because of one particular neighborhood. I'm simply asking, let's not punish them. If they need to make adjustments because they don't have the money coming in from the contracts, then they can move personnel that are noncommissioned non-police officers who are civilians. That's the only thing my amendment says. They can move them to another agency of the county, but don't punish four million people because a neighborhood of 10,000 has chosen to not rehire a constable.

[Amendment No. 3 failed of adoption by Record No. 1404.]

[Amendment No. 4 by J.D. Johnson was laid before the house.]

J.D. JOHNSON: We're going to have to run down the list of things that are wrong with this particular bill because what we're looking at is, how do we address the elephant in the room? How do we address some of the problems that exist? Some of the problems that exist, since my colleague wants to continue to talk about defunding the police, is some of the police brutality that has taken place in our city and in our counties and in our state and in this country. States, cities, and counties all across this country have had to spend hundreds of millions of dollars for police brutality cases. Last year alone, the United States spent over \$400 million in paying out to families who were victims of police brutality—\$400 million—because jurors, juries who are made up of citizens just like you, got into a courtroom, got together, and made the decision that yes, in fact, this officer violated the civil rights of another human being, and they awarded families.

For those of you who may not know, there's a case going on right now by a gentleman by the name of Ronald Greene. The police department told the family that Ronald Greene was killed in a car accident and he died at the hospital. This happened two years ago. Last week, someone leaked body cam footage of Ronald Greene being beaten and dragged and kicked and tased by those police officers who said that he died in a car accident at the hospital. Had it not been for the body cam footage that was leaked, the family would've simply thought that their son, brother, cousin, husband died in a car accident. But to find out—because someone got a conscience and took the body cam footage and leaked it to show that these officers murdered this man and pretended like it was just a car accident. Now, we all know. And of course, that family has filed a lawsuit, and absolutely that family is going to be rewarded or awarded—I can't say rewarded but awarded—punitive damages because the police officers lied.

Now, in the event that these officers who are bad actors have come to make cities and counties and states pay money, the question has to be where does that money come from? Where does that money come from? It comes from taxpayers just like you. But we have to hold police departments accountable the same way we hold individuals accountable. You do a crime, you do the time. Police

brutality cases are not uncommon in this big state, in these municipalities of "urban" communities. As my colleagues have so eloquently pointed out, that's where the problem lies, only in urban communities, when, in fact, it's the entire state. Not just in Tarrant, Dallas, Bexar, and Travis—it's all over the state.

My amendment simply says that if there's a case of police brutality, that that comes from the budget. And if there's a budget reduction, that the police department will have to handle it. Now, here's why I'm saying do that. Because I always hear everyone say there are good cops and bad cops. Well, it's time that we started making the good cops hold the bad cops accountable because you can say, no, we're not going to let you do that. Just like we're all responsible, we're all our brother's keeper. So again, I'm asking you to be honest and open-minded when it comes to looking at what the issue is. Police brutality cases are not uncommon in this state and they're not going to go away because my brothers and sisters on the other side of the aisle have just now decided to say, no, we're just going to deal with defunding. And that's not what our issue is about. Our issue is about holding police officers accountable for their actions because this state alone has spent over \$20 million in handing out money to families who were brutalized by police officers.

OLIVERSON: So members, again, respectfully, I'd like to oppose this amendment and ask you to vote against it. Again, I'm not really aware of situations where a civil judgment would end up coming out of the police budget but even if it did or if that was the policy, under this bill, the comptroller already has the authority to examine and set aside these what are called one-time unusual occurrences. So I think that's covered. I would also argue that I think the unintended consequence of further defunding a police department where there are allegations of police misconduct, it may be that that's a department that's in need of better training. It may be exactly the wrong time to defund that department, and so respectfully, I'm going to oppose this amendment.

DAVIS: Dr. Oliverson, I'm trying to understand what your bill is fixing. What happened, what's the incident, what are we addressing that says that the state legislature needs to be deciding what we do with county government and sheriff and constable offices? What occurred that would give you the thought that the state needs to be in control of their budget?

OLIVERSON: So I would say that I think not just here locally but around the country we have seen an epidemic of situations where local elected officials have decided the best way for their communities to move forward is to defund law enforcement, which I believe that makes my community and your community unsafe. And so that's the issue that we're trying to address here is to preserve law enforcement.

DAVIS: I want to understand if something happened here in Texas or in the urban centers that's unique to any other place that would make you think that we in the legislature need to control the budgets of county governments in the top cities of the state but yet we don't feel the need to protect those communities in the other parts of the state. What makes it unique for it to be just in our communities?

OLIVERSON: Sure. So again, I think the bill is designed to address the areas where the problem seems to be occurring. I'm not aware of any situations—

DAVIS: What problem? Wait, stop right there. What problem are you talking about? I'm trying to get to that problem.

OLIVERSON: I'm talking about situations where counties would be defunding local law enforcement.

DAVIS: Okay. So have there been any indications—

OLIVERSON: Yes.

DAVIS: —or has there been a county that has defunded or reduced the budget to prevent the security of a community? Can you identify any county that may have done—

OLIVERSON: Well, I'm not sure what their rationale was, but I can certainly say that in my home county that is currently happening, yes.

DAVIS: Okay, you don't know what the rationale is, but you're assuming it's so that it would create a vulnerability for the community it represents?

OLIVERSON: Well, it does. It does create a vulnerability for the community, Ms. Davis. Respectfully, when you have a situation where you have less resources available to law enforcement, I think that's pretty easy to see how that would mean less officers on patrol and less safe communities. I don't want to wait when I call 9-1-1 for somebody to come tomorrow. I want them to come right away.

DAVIS: And I respect that. I understand and respect that you don't want to call 9-1-1 and there's no answer. But I want to make sure that we're not saying there's an issue where there is no issue. And it appears to me—

OLIVERSON: No, I think we're aware that that's an issue.

DAVIS: Just hold on a minute. So my question is, based on what you're saying, your bill is to preempt any future concerns that might happen as it relates to a reduction. Is that what you're trying to fix in case it happens?

OLIVERSON: I think—well, it is happening, right? So it's not a—

DAVIS: Where did it happen again?

OLIVERSON: As I just said, it's happening in Harris County right now. So it is happening.

DAVIS: So what did Harris County do that supports the need to have this bill? That's what I'm asking.

OLIVERSON: So as I said in my layout, we have experienced defunding in several of our local law enforcement departments literally within the last couple of months.

DAVIS: And—but it's not to destabilize the security of the community.

OLIVERSON: Well, I don't know what the rationale is.

DAVIS: But you're not sure what it's for, right?

OLIVERSON: But I'm not really interested in what the rationale is. What I'm interested in is the unintended consequences of the actions.

DAVIS: And so back to an earlier—

OLIVERSON: Or maybe the intended consequences. I don't know.

DAVIS: Okay, back to an earlier question, then. Have we evaluated every county in the state to determine whether or not any of these kinds of concerns exist in other communities? Has there been any discussions about this happening in other communities?

OLIVERSON: So I have not heard of that. In other words, no one has come to me and told me that. I'm focusing on the problems that I'm aware of.

DAVIS: And I appreciate that. I just want to make sure we don't lose the opportunity to suggest that we care about the entire state.

OLIVERSON: Well, and I appreciate you. And I know that we had an amendment that did that very thing. And the body heard debate for and against and contemplated it and voted it down. So the body has already decided that they didn't want to expand it beyond the counties that are in the bill. So we've kind of already had that conversation.

DAVIS: And I understand that you voted it down. I'm just trying to understand what the differences are because I find it difficult to treat urban centers different from other parts of the state, because we care about the safety across the state. And the notion that something's good for one and not the other continues to be a problem with how we're approaching our policing. If this is about policing, then we're continuing to treat certain communities differently than the others. And it would appear to me that we would want our policing to be uniform. And so that's why I'm having a problem understanding what it is you're fixing because if it exists in one place, it probably exists everywhere. So my last question, and I know that there are other questions, but—so we're going to force these communities to have elections, right?

OLIVERSON: Yes, ma'am.

DAVIS: So what if the election is lost? Do you make them have a second election?

OLIVERSON: No, then the decision is made. And they can either not move forward with their proposed budget cuts and defunding of law enforcement or they can do that and there are consequences that are implemented by the comptroller's office.

DAVIS: So are there consequences if they—if the election doesn't pass, and so they will not have to adhere to this measure you're putting forth—

OLIVERSON: So respectfully—

DAVIS: —what then happens to the community?

OLIVERSON: So respectfully, I would submit to you that if they go through the process of having an election and ask for permission to reduce law enforcement defunding—or I mean, sorry, reduce law enforcement funding—and the response from the community is no, we don't want you to do that, then I think they've gotten a clear message from the community of what they should and shouldn't do.

DAVIS: No, but what if the community says, we like it the way it is. We don't agree with this election. And therefore, the proponents trying to force an election would lose. What happens then?

OLIVERSON: So the election—

DAVIS: Does the community still have control—I'm sorry?

OLIVERSON: I'm sorry. So the election would be—the opponents wouldn't force an election. I guess I'm not fully understanding what you're saying, but let me just try to explain what I think you're saying and how I think it would work, and then correct me if I'm wrong. So the way this process would unfold is a county would decide that they wish to reduce law enforcement funding beyond a proportional decrease, in whatever their revenues are, across the board for that budget cycle. They say, we are specifically targeting law enforcement; we want to decrease funding. They are allowed, then, to go to the people. They can explain their rationale. It actually lists on the ballot propositions some things that have to be explained: who's being cut, what the amount of the cut is, where is the money going, are there any tax implications involved, and how long do you anticipate this cut being enforced. Those things have to be put on the ballot initiative. When they make that decision that that's what they're going to do, they can call for the election within 30 days. They have the election. One of two things will happen. Either it will pass, in which case they can proceed as planned, or it doesn't pass. And if it doesn't pass, they can either say, well, we tried. I guess we're not going to decrease the funding. Or they can say, no, we're going to go ahead and do it anyway. And in that point, that's when the penalty consequences kick in from the comptroller's office. So if it's with the will of the people, there is no issue. It's only when it is without the will and consent of the people that the problem arises.

J.D. JOHNSON: All over this country and all over this state, there has been case after case after case of police brutality by what we all call those bad apples, those bad actors. Tamir Rice was an 11-year-old boy that was shot—11 years old, playing cops and robbers by himself in the park—was shot and killed. His family was awarded \$6 million. You've got case after case. Philando Castile, a card-carrying, legal gun owner simply sitting in his car told the police officer, "I have a weapon. It's in the glove box. Here is my license. Here is everything." And it was all caught on dash cam. He was murdered by the cops, and his family was awarded \$8 million. There is case after case after case that I know many of you don't know about because it doesn't come across your network. But at the end of the day, these things are happening. And we're going to have to start holding them accountable. No one wants to reduce anyone's budget. No one wants to take police off the street. No one wants to use that rhetoric and

terminology that we want to take police—no, we don't. We all know good cops, and we all appreciate the job that they do. But at some point or another, we have to hold them accountable. And I'm asking each and every one of you to do that today before there's another victim, before there's another Ronald Greene, before there's another Tamir Rice. Please, this is our opportunity to do what is right.

REPRESENTATIVE REYNOLDS: Representative Johnson, I appreciate the amendment that you filed. I wanted to ask you a few questions so that I can make sure that there's crystal clarity with what you're trying to do. Now, what your amendment simply does is to hold those police officers that are committing misconduct, violating someone's civil rights—it simply holds them accountable, correct?

J.D. JOHNSON: That's all it does.

REYNOLDS: And so we aren't even going where we probably should go and that is to implement qualified immunity. You would agree that it is far time to stop shielding bad police officers and it is time to move toward qualified immunity. Wouldn't you agree with that—ending qualified immunity?

J.D. JOHNSON: Well, I think that's certainly where it can go so that the cities and counties don't have to be held accountable every time. It has to go to some of these police officers that are doing these—who have been the murderers and the bullies and creating this brutality.

REYNOLDS: And just like all of the examples that you cite, these were real examples where they were law enforcement officers that violated the civil rights of citizens in communities, correct?

J.D. JOHNSON: Yes.

REYNOLDS: And we all should agree that no one should be above the law, correct?

J.D. JOHNSON: No one.

REYNOLDS: Not even the president, not lawmakers, not doctors, not anybody. And that includes police officers, correct?

J.D. JOHNSON: Matter of fact, we should be held to a higher standard.

REYNOLDS: A higher standard because if you took an oath to serve and protect, you should be held to a higher standard, correct?

J.D. JOHNSON: Absolutely.

REYNOLDS: And so when it comes to defunding the police, which you tried to explain, that is a false narrative that really started when many of the activists from the Black Lives Matter movement were disappointed with the treatment of some unarmed black men that were killed by police, correct?

J.D. JOHNSON: Absolutely.

REYNOLDS: And they wanted to reimagine how funding was allocated in police departments, correct?

J.D. JOHNSON: Absolutely.

REYNOLDS: It was not an attempt to eliminate funding for police, was it?

J.D. JOHNSON: It was a reallocation of funds that simply says we don't need you to be mental health police. We don't need you to do these things. We need to put money into these other budgets to make sure that we're reducing. These are crime reduction moves that some of these cities have made. It's not defunding. It's been a narrative that was placed by certain individuals, certain hateful individuals, that wanted to continue to say this is "defunding" when it wasn't defunding. It was a reallocation.

REYNOLDS: Representative Johnson, let's just break it down and make it crystal clear. Defund the police is a false narrative that is really politically motivated, correct?

J.D. JOHNSON: Yep.

REYNOLDS: Is that correct?

J.D. JOHNSON: Yes, it is.

REYNOLDS: So finally, your amendment simply makes it where those officers—who we both overwhelmingly agree most officers are good, law-abiding citizens—but for those bad actors, those ones who are committing these heinous actions among people in the community, violating civil rights, that they will be held personally responsible for their actions. Correct?

J.D. JOHNSON: Yes, sir.

REYNOLDS: And if they are, that would be more of a deterrent for other officers if they know that if they commit these actions that they will be held personally responsible. And therefore, it will likely reduce their likelihood of committing those actions. Wouldn't you agree?

J.D. JOHNSON: That's right.

REYNOLDS: I think you have a great amendment.

[Amendment No. 4 failed of adoption by Record No. 1405.]

[Amendment No. 5 by J.D. Johnson was laid before the house.]

J.D. JOHNSON: As I have already pointed out—this is going to sound like a broken record at this point—Harris County has eight constables within Harris County. Eight—eight constables. My amendment simply says that if one of those departments—because they're all subdepartments of Harris County—if one of those precincts loses a contract and the budget goes down, four million Harris County residents potentially will have to go to a referendum which is going to cost millions of dollars because, again, of one particular precinct on the other side of town. My amendment simply says that the state will reimburse the county. The state will reimburse the county because the county should not have to be held accountable because one precinct and one neighborhood triggered this. So again,

the amendment simply says that the state shall reimburse the county for the cost of the election. These elections for these large metropolitan communities cost millions of dollars.

RAMOS: Representative Jarvis, Representative Johnson—

J.D. JOHNSON: I'm just glad you got my name right, though. You usually mess that up, but that's a good job.

RAMOS: I know, I know. I'll just say representative. We'll keep it simple. So you just said that the election costs about a million dollars or would be that much in the counties if you were to do an election like this?

J.D. JOHNSON: Yes.

RAMOS: Now, I imagine the counties could be—taxpayers would probably want to spend their million dollars some other way, correct?

J.D. JOHNSON: They could be making sure that they keep police officers on the streets. They can make sure that they shore up these budgets simply because one particular precinct lost a contract.

RAMOS: Yes, so I can imagine a million dollars—in, for example, Harris County, police officers need additional training equipment. I know in Dallas their training facilities in many areas, they could benefit from better technology so that we don't have police brutality cases. But essentially, we're using money, taxpayer money, to say, hey, you made a decision on your county commissioner. We don't like that you made that decision. Make another decision. We're taking money away that we could probably use for better training equipment for our officers, correct?

J.D. JOHNSON: That's right.

RAMOS: And we're saying, we don't like the decisions you've made so we're going to make you continue to come back here, but forget about better ways to do progressive policing. Correct?

J.D. JOHNSON: That's right.

RAMOS: And your amendment will say, you know what? Keep taxpayer dollars in their counties. If this is what the state wants via this bill, then let the state pay for it. Correct?

J.D. JOHNSON: That's right.

RAMOS: I think it's a great amendment.

J.D. JOHNSON: Let me give you some context. For those that are right on the cusp because this bill says for counties of a million or above, there's some of you who are voting on this that are not a million. So this doesn't affect you yet. But let me give you some context. Because Fort Bend County, you're coming up on a million. So this is going to affect you, and it's going to cost you anywhere between \$475,000 to \$600,000. Cameron County, it's going to cost you \$653,000 if, in fact, one particular budget is reduced. It's going to affect you. And if the state wants to now work into local government, then let the state

handle that and make sure that we're sending a clear message. There are elections that happen every single day. If this bill happens, I don't understand why constituents who are upset with their county commissioners or county judges can't simply just vote them out in the next election. Why should this bill trigger a referendum simply for one budget item? Just doesn't make sense to me.

OLIVERSON: And again, with all due respect to my friend and colleague, I'm going to oppose this. The business of having the election and paying for the election is not unique to this bill, but it's definitely something that the county would have to contemplate as part of whether or not they wanted to move forward in making this kind of change. And so respectfully, I ask you to vote no.

J.D. JOHNSON: It's what we all know as an unfunded mandate. We're putting unfunded mandates on our counties unnecessarily. So be mindful of that when you go back because those same county people that you are going to impact are also your voters. And I don't think that they're going to like the fact that you just triggered a million dollar—oh, that's my bad. Most of you are not from Harris, Travis, and Bexar. That's probably why it's not going to affect you. But at some point it may, and if it does, be mindful that your constituents are going to be upset that you just triggered a million-dollar election unnecessarily when you simply could've just voted out the county commissioners who decided to "cut" or reallocate a budget. It's an unfunded mandate.

[Amendment No. 5 failed of adoption by Record No. 1406.]

[Amendment No. 6 by J.D. Johnson was laid before the house.]

J.D. JOHNSON: Members, this is my last amendment. We see how it goes. We see how it goes. It's all right. I heard you there, Cyrier. I hear you. It's okay. Let me point this amendment out to you real quick. In the bill, it says that you can take into consideration disasters. But the bill ironically and strategically says but not a pandemic or an epidemic. I'm certainly—I am so confused by this. We know that this pandemic that we are coming out of has been the destroyer of America's economy. Why did the author decide to specifically say that we will take into consideration—and look at your bill—it says, we will take into consideration disasters, hurricanes, floods, but we're not going to take into consideration a pandemic that has almost crippled our economies. And we're saying to these five counties if the pandemic happens again that you are not going to readjust or reallocate any money. And we're going to punish you for it.

I'm just confused as to why the author did not put pandemic in here when we know the pandemic has been the worst economic destroyer we've probably ever seen. My amendment simply says put the pandemic in. If a pandemic happens again, that this would be justifiable. I hope something becomes acceptable to the author because these are just simple, commonsense things. I'm not asking for a lot. I hope the author simply says, you know what, I get it. The pandemic was bad, and I don't know why we didn't put it in there, but I'm going to take the pandemic and we're going to make sure that if the pandemic happens again that we're going to make sure that counties are not going to be punished because a pandemic hit.

OLIVERSON: This amendment concerns an exception provision for changes in revenue as a result of certain natural disasters which are high intensity and also short in duration. The problem with this particular amendment is that it essentially would invalidate this bill entirely if it goes on because essentially it would say that because we're under a governor's executive order right now, that this doesn't get implemented and we wouldn't be accountable. So I'm going to respectfully oppose this amendment as well.

ISRAEL: Dr. Oliverson, I don't—it's hard for me to understand how just putting pandemic in does harm to the bill. But to back up a little bit, why wouldn't pandemic be covered? Do you know why pandemic was not in the bill in the first place?

OLIVERSON: Yes, so pandemic is sort of a different type of disaster. It's different in terms of its time course. It's also different in terms of its intensity and the involvement of law enforcement in the mitigation and recovery from the immediate aftermath of an event. So it's kind of in a category on its own. Unless, of course, you're sending police officers door to door to make sure people aren't leaving their houses.

ISRAEL: It seems as though during a pandemic is when you need everybody hands on deck—uniform, nonuniform—doing creative things with those who are in the line of the public service.

OLIVERSON: Well, I hear what you're saying, but if you remember, when we were sort of siloed in our houses during this pandemic, the number of traffic accidents and fatalities resulting from motor vehicle collisions and things went down dramatically. People just weren't out and about. So that would be—if you think about how a pandemic would be different in nature from, say, a tornado that tore through an urban, densely populated area and the immediate aftermath of that and what the law enforcement response might need to be, you can see how they would be very different.

ISRAEL: But Representative Johnson's amendment doesn't invalidate the rest of the bill just because it puts pandemic back in.

OLIVERSON: But it actually does because of the language.

ISRAEL: Could you explain that again? I don't know if I'm following your logic.

OLIVERSON: So it does because the language in the amendment, what it essentially does is in addition to pandemic, it actually would remove any situation where an area, an affected area of a county, might be under a disaster declaration under Chapter 418. So it would effectively gut the bill, and so that's why I'm respectfully opposing it.

J.D. JOHNSON: I'm not quite sure why the author said, Dr. Oliverson said, a pandemic because we would be under a governor's order. But Hurricane Harvey—we were under a governor's order. So how—I'm confused. We're under the governor's—whenever there's a natural disaster, it becomes an emergency. It becomes a state emergency. So he simply said that this would gut the bill because we would be under the governor's order and that's not what we're—?

We're under the governor's order. And in his bill, if you look at the bill, it says natural disasters and floods. Every time there is a natural disaster or flood, it becomes a state of emergency. The pandemic was a state of emergency. It's the same. So I don't understand how the author is simply saying that, oh, but that's different. It's not different. It's the same. Let's just stop playing games and let's stop digging in. This is Texans that we're affecting. I'm pointing it out to you. You heard the author say because of the governor's order, but we're always under governor's order under natural disasters.

[Amendment No. 6 failed of adoption by Record No. 1407.]

J.D. JOHNSON: Members, the partisanship in this room is sickening. I'm being honest with you. But that's okay, because I get it. I've heard you all say that you have to vote your district, and I get that, too. But unfortunately, there are many of you in this room that are not voting your district because you're from Harris County, Bexar County, Tarrant County, Travis County. This is affecting your constituents. I've put up four commonsense amendments that all of you could have voted for and still could have voted for the bill. It would not have changed the bill. It would not have destroyed or someone would have sent a mailer to your constituents because they said you defunded the police—because that's not what you did. What you did was simply say, I did commonsense legislation. I didn't want to punish an entire county because one precinct decided that it had to reduce its budget because it lost a contract. I didn't want to hurt four million people because 10,000 people didn't want to rehire the constables.

This is overreaching. As I have said it about **HB 1900**, I'll say it about this. This is tyranny. This is an overreach in government. We as a state have decided that we're only going to pick on five counties, but we keep saying this is about public safety. But do you know what this bill does not address? It doesn't address the 10 most dangerous counties in this state. The 10 most dangerous counties in this state are not affected by this bill. And if the sheriff of that town wants to reduce the budget, they can, and they won't have repercussions. Oh, we're not worried about them. Hidalgo, some—I don't want to call it out because then everybody will be mad at me, which they already are. But—I know, Ms. T. It's on my desk. I'll show you later.

But the fact is that if this is about public safety, then let's let it truly be about public safety. But what we have decided to do is we have decided to take a couple of buzzwords and catchphrases to make partisanship and to divide this state and this country. No one wants to defund police—no one. I want to call the police if I have to and know that they're going to be there—so no one. I have four cousins, first cousins, that are police officers. My fraternal brothers, many of them—police officers. Friends—police officers. My cousin married a police officer. I've mentored many police officers. So no, I don't want to defund them. So why are we constantly seeing this catchphrase and buzzwords about defunding? Then we say it's about public safety, but we only want to legislate for five counties. We're going to leave 249 counties alone. And then we have a whole body of 149 that are voting, 150 that are voting, to legislate for five counties.

This body is supposed to legislate fairly and equally. We want everyone to have the right to vote. We want everyone to have the right, their God-given right, to carry a gun. We want everyone to have parental rights over what their children do and think. We want everyone—but now we come down here and we only legislate for a few? And ironically, the few happen to be democratic? Those five counties are democratically run counties. We've gotten to the point where y'all are not even embarrassed about how obvious it is what we're doing here. This has gotten out of hand. And then we say we're legislating? This is not legislation. This is downright bullying and tyranny. There were 16 counts of alleged voter fraud, and we made some of the most oppressive laws that this country has ever seen when it comes to voting. There were 3,600 deaths in Texas last year alone, and we just voted to make guns more freely available for everyone.

And now here we are saying we don't want to defund the police when no one has asked to defund the police. No one has said so. And the only evidence that has been brought forth is because someone said, "I heard it." I heard it. I heard it on the network I listen to. I heard it from a commentary. I heard it. But you haven't seen it in a budget. Not one budget have you seen it where budgets were reduced in these counties—not one. Because Harris County increased its budget. The City of Houston increased their police budget. And in 2017, the State of Texas, a republican-led State of Texas, reduced its DPS budget by \$50 million—\$50 million. We reduced DPS's budget and yet I don't hear the outcry. I don't hear the defunding. I don't hear the catchphrase that we defunded DPS. But \$50 million—and it's written. Go look it up. None of you are going to say we defunded DPS. But you're going to use these catchphrases and buzzwords to continually divide this state that we all are supposed to be so proud of. And you're going to go back to your constituents and you're going to have to explain to your constituents the idiocy that we have begun to do in this body—raising taxes, making elections mandatory because the elected officials in that city or county decided to do what was in the best interest of that city or that county. And they are accountable to their—to their—constituents.

But you know what it is? Because it's democratic run cities. And those, you know you can't—the republicans know you can't win in those democratically run cities, so we're going to legislate it from here. We're going to legislate it from here down to the cities. But lo and behold, let the federal government come down here and tell us what to do. Oh no, we're not going to let the federal government tell us about our PUC. We're not going to let the federal government take away our independence. We're not going to let the federal government come and come after us. But we here as a state body are going down into the cities and counties that already have a constituency, that already have an elected official. They are responsible for them. Why are we going down there? If they reduce their budget, that's their business. How are you going to explain that to your constituents? I don't trust your mayor?

Thirty percent of my district is republican. I don't legislate for only democrats. I legislate for all constituents of District 139. I hope at some point or another you guys do the same. This will then be a better state and a better country. I love being in this body, but right now it's sickening how this is going. I

hope we can do better. I certainly hope we can do better, and I know we can. But we just have to start listening to one another and stop simply going party line. Commonsense approach to many things is what I've heard come out of many of your mouths. It's a commonsense bill. It's common sense. It's the right thing to do. And time and time again, I vote for republican bills all the time, even when it's not advantageous for me, because I know it's the right thing to do. We will become the greatest state in this country when we decide to start listening to one another and working collectively to do what's in the best interest of all of our constituents.

REPRESENTATIVE GERVIN-HAWKINS: You know, Dr. Oliverson, you've always for me appeared to be a real rational man and representative. I appreciate that. One of the things, as our Representative Johnson shared very passionately, is of great concern. So I hope as the author of this piece of legislation, you realize that the concern is real. When I look at Bexar County that I represent, we increased our budget by \$8 million. So we didn't defund or decrease or any of that. And also, what I wanted to share was that even the crook calls the police when they get in trouble. So I don't think anyone wants to defund the police. Let's be perfectly clear on that and get away from clichés. My question to you is this. As Representative Moody laid out, one of the things that happens is we put forward a piece of legislation, but then when the rulemaking happens and the intent comes, that's when the devil's in the details. And I'm concerned about that. So wouldn't you agree that there's some clarity that needs to be made?

And I'd like to ask some pointed questions. Not a whole lot of dialogue, but just to be clear so that my county understands what it's up against. Number one, once there's a decision to decrease the law enforcement budget and the documentation is submitted to the comptroller—who has the overall responsibility is what I'm hearing—what is the time set in which the comptroller needs to respond to that county to say that they're in compliance or not? Because as you well know, time is sensitive when you develop large budgets like our cities and our counties. What's the time frame that the comptroller must get back with that city or county?

OLIVERSON: So Representative, looking at the bill here—and I appreciate you coming to me, and we talked about this already. It does not specifically state a timeline with respect to how quickly the comptroller has to return that decision.

GERVIN-HAWKINS: Would you be open for a time frame in this regard? Because what if it takes three to five years and a municipality is in limbo of knowing if they're in compliance or they're out of compliance?

OLIVERSON: So respectfully, I would submit that because budgets are calculated annually, it would have to be performed more quickly than that. I think you raise an interesting concern. It's not something that we talked about during the committee layout process, and I have not had the benefit to reach out to the comptroller's office to figure out exactly how they would anticipate that timeline going. So I'm reticent to change the bill in some way to establish a timeline that becomes statutory and also unrealistic one way or another. But I would agree with you for the purposes of legislative intent that we wish for that decision to be

rendered timely, providing that they get the information that they request from the county in order to verify assertions that they're making timely, that the comptroller would return a decision timely.

GERVIN-HAWKINS: So would you say that timeliness is 90 days, 180 days?

OLIVERSON: Again, it's difficult for me to put an exact number of days without having had a chance to sit down with the comptroller's office and sort of go through this process. But that is what rulemaking does.

GERVIN-HAWKINS: But for legislative intent, you—

OLIVERSON: For legislative intent, I would say it would be timely. I would also use the word expeditiously, because obviously, these budgets can't be approved until after those decisions are made.

GERVIN-HAWKINS: Also, Representative Oliverson, to ensure, again, that the unintentional consequences don't hurt our municipalities, we want to make sure that they understand clearly the formula that's involved as it relates to if they indeed are guilty—and I'm going to say the word "guilty"—of reducing the law enforcement budget and then are penalized. And so would those formulas be immensely clear and laid out in the final piece of legislation?

OLIVERSON: So I think those are actually expressly stated throughout the bill, both in the exceptions and the exemptions sections, as well as in the very first part I showed you where it sort of activates the chapter where it lays out a series of conditions that would need to be met. Now, I don't like to use the term "guilty." You were talking about terms, so I'm going to kind of say the same thing to you. This bill is really about the will of the people. This is not a bill that essentially takes that power away from the voters. In fact, it empowers the voters to make sure their voices are heard on issues of public safety.

GERVIN-HAWKINS: And I'm with that, Representative Oliverson. I hear you. Let's hear the people speak. The other issue that I think is at hand is that it costs money for elections. So let's take a municipality that has had a special election, that's had a primary, a special, a general, a school board election—and I can go on and on and on—and we're looking at resources. Can there be a grant program where something's set aside that they can apply, since this is state law, that will help the local municipality bear some of the burden of that cost?

OLIVERSON: So respectfully, I would just tell you that I think that the legislation envisions and contemplates that that cost of running that election would be something that the county would have to take into account as part of their decision-making process of whether the proposed change was really worth it. Now, I will also point out that there is a section in the bill that specifically prohibits the county from spending taxpayer dollars as far as promotional campaigns or advertising or things like that. So the idea here was essentially to just have a straight up or down vote without a whole lot of expense on behalf of the taxpayer with respect to—

GERVIN-HAWKINS: Well, you know elections are expensive. You've got to engage the legal minds to develop the language and make sure that everything is done properly.

OLIVERSON: Well, the language is very clearly spelled out in the bill as to what the language has to say, and so there's not a whole lot of necessary thought process that needs to go on. I mean, it is very specific, and there's a list of criteria, as you and I were discussing, of things that have to be stated. And that's essentially it. And then the ballot initiative goes out before the people, and the people will come on Election Day and they'll have their voice heard.

GERVIN-HAWKINS: Thank you, Representative Oliverson. And I want to say the voice of the people is important to me. But I want to make sure, and this is a question that I think, if you give it some consideration, have you really fleshed out all the potential unintentional consequences that can occur within a municipality?

OLIVERSON: Well, Representative, that's one of those questions that's sort of difficult to answer. I would tell you that to the best of my knowledge and to the best of my ability, we have. And but you well know—this isn't your first session here and it's not my first session either—that there are certainly occasions where we come back and we revisit things. So I'm not going to sit here and tell you that I think that any legislation we've considered, no matter what it was all session long, is free—completely 100 percent guaranteed to be free—from unintentional consequences. But to the best of my ability and the best of my knowledge and to the group that has worked on this, we have intended and we have worked very diligently to free it of unintended consequences.

GERVIN-HAWKINS: So on the record, Representative Oliverson, this is my final question. So I have your commitment that when I come to you with a list of unintentional consequences, then you're going to be the first one to make the fixes for next legislative session, correct?

OLIVERSON: Representative, I'm always happy to work with you. And so if there's something that crops up that we were like, oh, well, we didn't think of that, and it's something we can agree on and it's reasonable, then let's do it together.

GERVIN-HAWKINS: I thought that was my last question, but this is my last question. Are you clear on the defunding the police slogan now, of what that really means?

OLIVERSON: I think so. Yes, ma'am.

GERVIN-HAWKINS: So could you articulate it so that I could tell my colleagues that Dr. Oliverson truly understands that terminology?

OLIVERSON: So I think that's essentially the purpose of this bill, Representative. What we're talking about here has to do with shifting funding away from law enforcement, and that's obviously a highly sensitive, politically charged issue. People have strong opinions about that, one side or the other, and I

think what we're focused on here is public safety. I think we can fairly linearly expound upon the idea that if one decreases funding to public safety that the result is going to be less public safety.

GERVIN-HAWKINS: And so decreasing public funding in a negative way versus an efficiency way, would you say those things are different?

OLIVERSON: So I would just say that I believe in my heart that this bill is a fair-minded, balanced, and actually community-driven approach to weighing in on these issues. I think it contemplates that there may be situations where a community is united in changing the way that they provide public safety. And if that's the case, then so be it. And so I think it's a very fair-minded approach to dealing with this very complex issue.

GERVIN-HAWKINS: Thank you, Dr. Oliverson, for answering my questions. I want to say again, Bexar County put \$8 million additional in our budget for law enforcement.

[**CSSB 23**, as amended, was passed to third reading by Record No. 1408.]