

SUBJECT: Strategic planning by counties

COMMITTEE: County Affairs — committee substitute recommended

VOTE: 7 ayes — R. Lewis, Gutierrez, Kamel, G. Lewis, Longoria, Muñoz,
Wohlgemuth

0 nays

2 absent — Chisum, Hamric

WITNESSES: (*On original version*)

For — None

Against — Dana DeBeauvoir, County and District Clerks Association

On — Don Lee, Conference of Urban Counties

DIGEST: CSHB 1087 would allow county commissioners courts to adopt a strategic plan for the county and its departments and agencies. A commissioners court that chose to adopt a plan would have to update it by September 1 of every fourth year. Revised plans would cover five fiscal years.

An elected or appointed official or a county department or agency would be required to initially prepare their own respective strategic plan. A county would be required to attempt to use a strategic plan format and the methods for preparing a strategic plan that are used by state agencies.

County plans would have to include:

- a statement of the mission and goals of the county and a description of the indicators used to measure the output and outcome of the county's actions;

- identification of the groups of people served by the county, including those having service priorities, or other service measures established by law, and estimates of changes in those groups;
- an analysis of the use of the county's resources in order to meet the county's needs and an estimate of additional resources that may be necessary to meet the future needs;
- an analysis of expected changes in the services provided by the county because of changes in state or federal law;
- a description of the means and strategies for meeting the county's needs, and achieving the goals established;
- a description of the capital improvement needs of the county during the term of the plan and a statement, if appropriate, of the priority of those needed. CSHB 1087 would define "capital improvement" as any building or infrastructure project that will be owned by the county and built with any county funds, including direct appropriations from the county budget, proceeds of county-issued bonds or other revenue sources.

The county commissioners court would be required to send two copies of the county's plan to various state offices. The state comptroller would have to provide a long-term forecast of the state's economy and population to each county by March 1 of each even-numbered year.

The county would be required to establish and adopt achievement goals for public safety, including police and fire protection; corrections; development or conservation of natural resources; public health; human services; transportation; cultural and other recreational resources; general county government; county employee benefits; utilities; and county planning and development. Each elected or appointed county official and each county department or agency would receive a statement of the goals for each key function in which the official, department or agency provided service.

The Governor's Office of Budget and Planning and the Legislative Budget Board would be required to use the county plans in statewide planning.

The bill would take effect September 1, 1995.

**SUPPORTERS
SAY:**

Texas state government has been operating under strategic planning since 1991, and strategic planning is used by 18 other states and the federal government to promote more cost-effective budgeting. CSHB 1087 would encourage county governments to develop their own strategic plans, as some already do. This legislation would establish a blueprint for counties that choose to do strategic planning as part of their budgetary process.

Strategic planning allows government to coordinate its spending more efficiently by setting clearly defined goals to better direct services where they are most needed. It establishes a framework for setting long-range goals and priorities and accountability for meeting them. CSHB 1087 would allow counties to take advantage of the expertise in strategic planning developed at the state level, while the state would benefit by using county strategic plans in developing its strategic plan, to reduce duplication of spending for needs being met at the local level.

CSHB 1087 is strictly permissive; no county would be required to adopt strategic planning. The legislation would, however, assist those counties wishing to adopt strategic planning by requiring the comptroller to provide them with relevant information.

Individual county offices would not lose their planning autonomy under a county strategic planning approach. County commissioners courts already approve the budgets for elected county officials, and the bill provides that elected and appointed county officials would develop their own strategic plans in cooperation with the commissioners court.

**OPPONENTS
SAY:**

CSHB 1087 would open the door for a future legislature to make its provisions mandatory, forcing county governments to implement a form of centralized planning that may not be appropriate in smaller counties with limited financial resources.

Strategic planning may work on the state level, but such a model is not necessarily applicable to county governments. Independently elected officials, such as county clerks, tax collectors/assessors and sheriffs, often have their own vision as to how their respective offices should be run.

These elected officials are accountable to the voters for how they operate their offices. While county officials could draft their own strategic plans and work in conjunction with county commissioners, the final decision about the plan would still rest with the commissioners court.

NOTES:

The original bill would have required that all county commissioners courts develop strategic plans. The committee substitute would make it optional for county commissioner courts to make strategic plans, which would include some mandatory provisions.