

SUBJECT: Legislative representation of community justice councils

COMMITTEE: Corrections — favorable, without amendment

VOTE: 6 ayes — Hightower, Gray, Culberson, Longoria, Pitts, Telford
0 nays
3 absent — Allen, Farrar, Serna

SENATE VOTE: On final passage, March 20 — 29-0

WITNESSES: None

BACKGROUND: Community justice councils are part of a county's community supervision (probation) and corrections department. The council provides continuing policy guidance and direction for the development of community justice plans and community corrections facilities and programs.

The community justice council is comprised of ten members, two of which are state legislators elected from the county or counties to be served, selected by the legislators elected from that county or counties.

DIGEST: SB 146 provides that, in a county with a population of 1 million or more (Harris, Dallas, Bexar, Tarrant), no more than one state senator and one state representative may serve on the community justice council.

The bill would take immediate effect if approved by two-thirds of the membership of each house.

SUPPORTERS SAY: SB 146 would help ensure that community justice councils in large urban counties have representation by members of both houses of the Legislature. One of the most important functions provided by community justice councils is to develop a community supervision and correction plan for the area that they serve. This plan is forwarded to the Texas Board of Criminal Justice and is used to determine state funding or guarantees for area correctional facilities. By requiring representation on council by members of both the House and the Senate, when the requests of the

council are forwarded to the Legislature representatives from the council will be available in each house to lend their support.

The bill would only require members of each house in the four most populous counties: Harris, Dallas, Bexar and Tarrant. The bill is limited in this way because those counties have multiple senators eligible to serve on the councils.

**OPPONENTS
SAY:**

If it makes sense for both House members and senators to be included on community justice councils, then the requirement should apply to all councils, not just those in the largest counties.