

**SUBJECT:** Air conditioning and refrigeration contractor license exams outside Austin

**COMMITTEE:** Licensing and Administrative Procedures — favorable, without amendment

**VOTE:** 9 ayes — Wilson, Kubiak, Goolsby, Haggerty, Hamric, D. Jones, Pickett, Torres, Yarbrough

0 nays

**WITNESSES:** For — Nancy Jones, Texas Air Conditioning Contractors Association

Against — None

On — David Gunn, Texas Department of Licensing and Regulation

**BACKGROUND :** The Air Conditioning and Refrigeration Contractor License Law requires that applicants for a license successfully complete an examination before being licensed in Texas. The testing is offered quarterly and only in Travis County.

**DIGEST:** HB 930 would require the Texas Department of Licensing and Regulation (TDLR) to offer exams for air conditioning and refrigeration contractor licenses at locations other than Travis County and on a monthly basis or more frequently, as determined by the department. The examination also could be offered by computer at TDLR-selected locations.

The bill would take effect September 1, 1997. TDLR would have to adopt rules to implement its requirements by January 1, 1998.

**SUPPORTERS SAY:** HB 930 would allow TDLR added flexibility to better serve applicants for air conditioning and refrigeration contractor licenses. Currently, all applicants for air conditioning and refrigeration licenses must travel to Austin to complete the testing process. For residents of Amarillo, Longview, Brownsville, El Paso, and many other Texas towns and cities, the trek to Austin to take a licensing test is a major and costly inconvenience. Additionally, since the test has been offered only on a quarterly basis, many Texans have not had timely opportunity to take the exam.

HB 930 would resolve these unnecessary and costly inconveniences by establishing more test locations and greater frequency of testing. No portion of the test would be compromised nor any exam requirements lessened or watered down because of this expansion of opportunities. HB 930 would cut down on expenses for travel, fuel and hotel costs, and reduce lost work time now suffered by those Texans and out-of-state residents who must pass this test in order to pursue their chosen line of work.

Many other more complex exams are offered at multiple sites across Texas, including the bar exam and SAT, as well as other statewide technical and professional exams. The level of security maintained for those examinations is consistently high. Nothing tested in the Air Conditioning and Refrigeration Contractor exam is site-specific to Travis County, and a few standard procedures can be adopted by the Department of Licensing and Regulation to ensure that exams are administered in a uniform and fair manner.

Testing via computer is another tool that would make it easier for Texans around the state to pursue their licenses, one that could also enable quick evaluation of test results and almost overnight return to the applicants and their employers. In this age of the Internet, electronic banking, cellular phones and other advances in technology, there is no reason not to relieve applicants for this particular license of the obligation to drive across Texas in order to sit for a single exam.

Furthermore, HB 930 would actually increase revenues to the state. The fiscal note on the bill estimates a total revenue increase of almost \$5,600. The expenses of expanding exam locations would more than be offset by the increased fees collected for the exams.

OPPONENTS  
SAY:

No apparent opposition.