

SUBJECT: Expanding preservation efforts by the Texas Historical Commission

COMMITTEE: State, Federal and International Relations — favorable, without amendment

VOTE: 7 ayes — Hunter, Moreno, Chavez, Palmer, Seaman, West, Wise
1 nay — Isett
1 absent — Pitts

SENATE VOTE: On final passage, Local and Uncontested Calendar, May 12 — 31-0

WITNESSES: None

DIGEST: SB 984 would require the State Preservation Board to consult with the Texas Historical Commission before approving construction modifications of the Capitol, Capitol grounds, or General Land Office Building that could impact the historic architecture.

The bill also would authorize the commission to provide loans, in addition to the grants it now provides, to assist in the preservation of a historic structure. As a condition of a loan or grant, the commission could require the recipient to periodically report on and provide evidence that funds were being used appropriately and that the property was being preserved according to the terms of the loan or grant. The commission could enter into agreements with federal or local governmental agencies, in addition to other state agencies or private institutions, and could accept funds raised or services provided by volunteers to carry out its purpose.

In addition, the commission could contract with or establish and participate in an affiliated nonprofit organization formed to raise funds for or provide services or other benefits to the commission.

SB 984 also would require the commission to preserve, interpret and place monuments at sites in and outside Texas that were historically significant to the state and would authorize it to seek federal assistance to carry out these duties.

SB 984 would take effect September 1, 1997.

**SUPPORTERS
SAY:**

SB 984 would promote the role of the Texas Historical Commission (THC) as the state's lead agency in preserving the historical heritage of Texas. Since the Capitol and the Capitol grounds are the some of the state's most important historic sites, it only makes sense that THC should provide advice on any modifications to the Capitol and its grounds or to the General Land Office Building. Allowing the commission to offer loans in addition to grants would establish a continuum of funds that could be used to preserve valuable historic sites.

Furthermore, allowing the commission to work with or establish a non-profit foundation or organization would enhance its role in preserving important historic properties. A non-profit organization could participate in direct support of the commission's goals or participate in activities endorsed by the commission to ensure increased protection of historic properties. Historic sites are a very high priority for tourists visiting Texas, and they are worthy of attention. Expanding state efforts toward historic would represent a positive business move to generate additional revenue as well as preserving the past for the future.

**OPPONENTS
SAY:**

The State Preservation Board was created expressly to preserve, maintain, and restore the State Capitol and its grounds and the old General Land Office Building. The board has done an excellent job in restoring the Capitol to its former grandeur and has been very sensitive to its place in history. There is no need to require the board to consult with another agency with a different agenda every time a construction modification is considered.

