

- SUBJECT:** Expanding the local option to create library districts
- COMMITTEE:** State, Federal and International Relations — committee substitute recommended
- VOTE:** 8 ayes — Hunter, Berman, Chavez, Elkins, Isett, C. Jones, Madden, Juan Solis
- 0 nays
- 1 absent — P. Moreno
- WITNESSES:** For — Marvin Herring, Bruce Hurley
- Against — None
- On — None
- BACKGROUND:** In 1997, the 75th Legislature allowed the creation of library districts. A community may vote to create a library district that levies a tax to support a library, provided the proposed district includes contiguous territory within one county and the proposed district is in a county with at least 100,000 people.
- DIGEST:** HB 1618 would allow the creation of a library district within any contiguous territory within one county of any size population. If the proposed boundaries to the district included any part of a city already providing a public library, then the governing authority of the city would have to consent by resolution to the creation of the library district.
- HB 1618 would take effect September 1, 1999.
- SUPPORTERS SAY:** HB 1618 would help small communities and counties across Texas finance public libraries. Under current law, only counties with at least 100,000 people may create a library district. HB 1618 would open the door to all counties wishing to create library districts. This is especially important for primarily rural counties distant from the variety of information resources available in urban centers.

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HB 1618 also would give communities a local option to introduce a stable source of funding for libraries. Currently, libraries must ask for local appropriations each year. If a community creates a library district, then a library could depend on a stable source of revenue to plan for and serve the community more effectively. HB 1618 would empower local communities to make local decisions about their taxes and community services.

OPPONENTS
SAY:

Expanding the local option to create library districts would allow creation of new local taxing districts. However worthy the cause, it could add one more possible tax to the load already being borne by overburdened taxpayers in a wider range of jurisdictions.

NOTES:

The original version of the bill would have lowered the county population limit from more than 100,000 to more than 50,000 for creation of library districts within a county.