

SUBJECT: Creating a border advocacy division

COMMITTEE: State, Federal, and International Relations — favorable, with amendment

VOTE: 7 ayes — Hunter, Berman, Chavez, Isett, C. Jones, Madden, Juan Solis
0 nays
2 absent — P. Moreno, Elkins

WITNESSES: For — Mike Allen, Texas Border Infrastructure Coalition
Against — None

DIGEST: HB 564, as amended, would require the governor to establish a border advocacy division in the Governor's Office or in the Secretary of State's Office, as determined by the governor. The governor would have to appoint a director of the division to serve at the will of the governor and could appoint the secretary of state as the director. If the governor chose to establish the division in the Secretary of State's Office, any and all funds appropriated by the 76th Legislature for a border advocacy division in the Governor's Office would be transferred to the Secretary of State's Office.

The bill would require the border advocacy division to:

- ! examine trade issues between the United States, Canada, and Mexico;
- ! work with federal, state, and local government agencies in the Texas-Mexico border region to improve communication and cooperation among government agencies;
- ! work with federal officials to resolve transportation issues involving infrastructure, including roads and bridges, to improve the movement of goods and services across the border;
- ! work with federal officials to streamline border crossing needs;
- ! work to increase funding for the North American Development Bank to fund water and wastewater facilities; and
- ! explore the sale of excess electric power from Texas to Mexico.

This bill would take immediate effect if finally passed by a two-thirds record

vote of the membership of each house.

**SUPPORTERS
SAY:**

The border region is very important to the well-being of the entire state and faces crucial challenges related to transportation, trade, and a wide range of other issues. Although the Governor's Office now is involved in border issues, no legislative directive ensures that the office will be committed to such issues in the future. HB 564 would establish a precedent in statute for the direct focus of the Governor's Office on border issues.

The bill would allow the governor to establish the border advocacy division in the Secretary of State's Office, where considerable expertise in border issues already exists. It would ensure that any border advocacy division was adequately funded and staffed, either through the current resources in the Secretary of State's Office or through the authority to allocate general revenue from the 76th Legislature for the Governor's Office.

**OPPONENTS
SAY:**

The offices of the governor and secretary of state already perform the responsibilities that the bill outlines for a border advocacy division. The Governor's Office does not need a legislative directive to focus on border-related issues.

**OTHER
OPPONENTS
SAY:**

The range of issues affecting the border region is much more extensive than the list of responsibilities for the border advocacy division outlined by the bill. The list should be expanded to include other critical issues such as health care, education, economic development, and the environment.

NOTES:

The committee amendment would allow the governor to establish the border advocacy division in the Secretary of State's Office and to require any funds appropriated to the division by the 76th Legislature to be transferred to the Secretary of State's Office if the division were established in that office.

According to the bill's fiscal note, the general revenue cost of nearly \$240,000 for fiscal 2000-01 would apply only if the governor elected to establish the border advocacy division in the Governor's Office. If the governor elected to establish the division in the Secretary of State's Office, the bill would have no significant fiscal impact.