

SUBJECT: Contributions for Speaker's Reunion Day or Governor for a Day ceremonies

COMMITTEE: House Administration — committee substitute recommended

VOTE: 9 ayes — Goolsby, Luna, Bailey, Chisum, Geren, Giddings, Hamric, Hawley, Maxey
0 nays
2 absent — Allen, D. Jones

WITNESSES: None

BACKGROUND: Government Code, ch. 303 authorizes a Speaker's Reunion Day ceremony to honor former members of the House and a Governor for a Day ceremony to honor a state senator's tenure as president pro tempore. The code prohibits contributions of more than \$100 and requires the chairman of each ceremony to report to the Texas Ethics Commission contributions of \$50 or more made to finance the events. The contributions are not considered political contributions for purposes of relevant state law, but the reports are available to the public. If there is an outstanding balance after all debts have been paid, the chairman of the ceremony must distribute the remainder to a charity designated by the House speaker or Senate president pro tem, respectively.

DIGEST: CSHB 2147 would raise the cap on contributions to the Speaker's Reunion Day or Governor for a Day ceremonies from \$100 to \$500. It would provide an alternative for disposition of outstanding balances, allowing the chairman to place the funds in an account established for the exclusive purpose of conducting the ceremonial days. The account would have to be in the name of the office of president pro tem or speaker, as appropriate. The funds in such an account would have to be combined and used with contributions given for the next Speaker's Reunion Day or Governor for a Day ceremony.

The bill would take immediate effect if finally passed by a two-thirds record vote of the membership of each house. Otherwise, it would take effect September 1, 2001.

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SUPPORTERS SAY:	CSHB 2147 is needed to raise the contribution limit because of the increasing expense of hosting the Speaker's Reunion Day and Governor for a Day ceremonies. The events are so popular that with each new session, more and more former members return and bring family members and friends to enjoy the festivities.
	 The contribution limit would remain low enough to prevent any individual or organization from contributing more than the average person could contribute.
OPPONENTS SAY:	No apparent opposition.
NOTES:	HB 2147 as filed would have removed the requirement for the chairman to distribute an outstanding balance to charity and would have required the chairman to place the balance in an account established for the purpose of conducting these ceremonies.