

SUBJECT: Creating a new office of district attorney in Chambers County

COMMITTEE: Judiciary — favorable, without amendment

VOTE: 6 ayes — Hartnett, Hughes, Alonzo, Gonzales, Hopson, Van Arsdale
0 nays
3 absent — Keel, Solis, Straus

WITNESSES: For — Jimmy Sylvia, Chambers County
Against — None

BACKGROUND: Liberty County and Chambers County share a district attorney who represents the state in all cases before the 75th, 253rd, and 344th judicial districts. The commissioners court of either county may supplement the salary of the district attorney by up to \$5,000 a year. Sixty percent of the supplement must come from Liberty County and the other 40 percent must come from Chambers County.

Government Code, ch. 46 governs the salary and duties of professional prosecutors in Texas.

DIGEST: HB 2569 would allow voters of the 344th Judicial District to elect a district attorney for Chambers County. The commissioners court of Chambers County could elect to supplement the salary of the district attorney up to \$5,000 per year.

Voters of Liberty County would elect a district attorney for the 253rd and the 75th districts. The commissioners court of Liberty County could supplement to the salary of the district attorney by any amount.

The district attorney of Chambers County would be subject to the provisions of the Government Code, ch. 46.

The bill would take effect January 1, 2009.

**SUPPORTERS
SAY:**

HB 2569 would be a cost effective way to speed up the administration of justice in Chambers County, which is experiencing massive population growth as well as rapidly growing dockets. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, while Liberty County has nearly three times the population of Chambers County, the criminal docket in Chambers County is almost twice that of Liberty County. The need is great for another office of district attorney in Chambers County. The bill would have no impact on the fiscal 2006-07 budget because it would not take effect until 2009.

**OPPONENTS
SAY:**

By fiscal 2010, this bill would cost the state about \$152,000 per year, money that should be directed toward more pressing state budget needs.

NOTES:

According to the fiscal note, adding a new district attorney would cost the state \$101,515 in fiscal 2009, and \$152,273 per year thereafter. The cost includes the district attorney's salary and benefits, and office expenses.