

SUBJECT: Establishing a grant program for the preserving historical records

COMMITTEE: Culture, Recreation, and Tourism — committee substitute recommended

VOTE: 5 ayes — Hilderbran, Kuempel, Dunnam, Gallego, Phillips
0 nays
2 absent — Baxter, Dukes

WITNESSES: For — Cynthia Beeman, Texas Historical Records Advisory Board;
Shirley Brown, City of Austin; Martha Doty, Texas State Library and
Archives Commission; Gloria Meraz, Texas Library Association;
(*Registered, but did not testify:* Rachael Pitts, Texas Municipal League)

Against — None

On — Randy Lee, Stewart Title Guaranty Company; Mark Lehman, Texas
Association of Realtors

BACKGROUND: Government Code, sec. 441.157 establishes a grant-in-aid program to
assist local governments in records management programs or preserving
historically valuable local government records.

DIGEST: CSHB 2697 would repeal the current grant-in-aid program and establish a
new one. It would permit the Texas State Library and Archives
Commission to offer grants, subject to appropriations, to counties, other
local governmental entities, and the state archives to preserve historically
valuable records. The grants could be used for preservation, improvements
to records management programs, or emergency disaster recovery. The
commission also could offer training and other support to local
governmental officials.

The bill would take effect September 1, 2005.

**SUPPORTERS
SAY:** Texas counties collect and store documents that may be of significant
historical value to the state's history. However, the quality of the
preservation work, and whether it is done at all, varies widely by county.

Historically, the existing grant-in-aid program has not been funded by the state, and local governments' documents are not uniformly protected from decay or destruction. The state needs to start over with a new grant program to preserve historical documents.

**OPPONENTS
SAY:**

This bill is not needed because it would do what the existing statute does and there still is no funding for the grant program in either the House or Senate appropriations proposal for fiscal 2006-07.

NOTES:

The substitute remove d a fee in the filed version.

The fiscal note estimates that this bill would cost the state \$4.2 million in general revenue-related funds. These costs are associated with the need for staff to administer the new grant and training programs, as well as expenditures for historical document preservation and grant awards.