

SUBJECT: Designation and duties of the state historian

COMMITTEE: Culture, Recreation, and Tourism — favorable, without amendment

VOTE: 6 ayes — Hilderbran, Kuempel, Baxter, Dunnam, Gallego, Phillips
0 nays
1 absent — Dukes

SENATE VOTE: On final passage, April 28 — 31-0, on Local and Uncontested Calendar

WITNESSES: None

BACKGROUND: Government Code, ch. 3104, establishes the state poet laureate, musician, and artists.

DIGEST: SB 1787 would establish a Texas state historian to be appointed by the governor on the recommendation of the Texas Historical Commission and the Texas State Historical Association. The state historian would serve for two years and would not receive any compensation or reimbursement for expenses for serving as the historian. The bill would outline the duties of the state historian, which would include:

- enhancing the knowledge of Texans regarding Texas history and heritage;
- encouraging the teaching of Texas history in public schools;
- consulting with the governor, the lieutenant governor, the speaker, and the Legislature on matters related to the promotion of Texas history; and
- lecturing on matters of Texas history within the state historian's area of expertise.

The bill would take effect September 1, 2005.

SUPPORTERS SAY: A state historian would foster appreciation for the rich, unique history of Texas. Texas has more than 600 museums, about two-thirds of which are local history museums, and more historic courthouses, dating from the

mid-19th century, than any other state. Texas has historical markers, archeological finds, mountain passes, old trails, Indian camps and burial grounds, sites of battles and skirmishes, and early railroads. A state historian would provide guidance to the Legislature on enhancing knowledge of these assets and on expanding educational programs. Understanding Texas history, with its dynamic saga of diverse cultural participation, is especially important given the complex and rapidly changing demographics of the state.

Recognition of a state historian would be as meaningful to as many people as are the poet laureate, the state artists and state musician. While a legislative committee is used to appoint state artists, musicians and poet laureates, there are no statewide associations in Texas in those areas comparable to the Texas State Historical Association and no state agency similar to the Texas Historical Commission in size or scope. Given the strength of knowledge possessed by the commission and the association, the proposed approach would be more streamlined and result in an informed recommendation by the governor.

OPPONENTS
SAY:

No apparent opposition.