

- SUBJECT:** Renaming ORCA as the Texas Department of Rural Affairs
- COMMITTEE:** Agriculture and Livestock — favorable, without amendment
- VOTE:** 8 ayes — Gonzalez Toureilles, Anderson, B. Brown, Crabb, Hardcastle, Heflin, Rios Ybarra, Swinford
- 0 nays
- 1 absent — Kleinschmidt
- WITNESSES:** For — Wallace Klussmann, Office of Rural Community Affairs; Bob Turner, Pecos County Rural Rail Transit District)
- Against — None
- On — (*Registered, but did not testify*, Charles S. "Charlie" Stone, Office of Rural Community Affairs)
- BACKGROUND:** In 2001, the 77th Legislature enacted HB 7 by Chisum et al., which created the Office of Rural Community Affairs (ORCA) as a state agency dedicated to serving the needs of rural Texas. ORCA's main functions include coordinating rural programs among state agencies, participating in disaster relief efforts, and awarding grants to rural communities and non-profit hospitals that operate in rural areas.
- DIGEST:** HB 1918 would change the name of ORCA to the Texas Department of Rural Affairs.
- The bill would take effect September 1, 2009.
- SUPPORTERS SAY:** Changing the name of ORCA to the Texas Department of Rural Affairs would make it known that ORCA is indeed a state agency. The name ORCA has the word "office" in the title rather than "department," and most state agencies are referred to as departments. HB 1918 would make it clear to the public and other state agencies that ORCA is an official state agency and not just a rural advocacy non-profit organization.

Since its inception, ORCA has operated as a statewide agency serving all rural areas of Texas and awarding over 4,891 grants totaling more than \$642,309,774. These funds have gone out to communities and counties for economic development, disaster relief, infrastructure, and healthcare, benefiting more than 4 million people in Texas. Changing ORCA's name to the Texas Department of Rural Affairs would enhance ORCA's credibility with respect to its requests for federal and state funding. According to the fiscal note, any cost from the name change could be absorbed in the agency's existing budget.

OPPONENTS
SAY:

No apparent opposition.