

SUBJECT: Allowing Texas Rangers' unsolved crimes unit to locate outside of Austin

COMMITTEE: Public Safety — favorable, without amendment

VOTE: 5 ayes — Merritt, Frost, P. King, Lewis, Rodriguez
0 nays
4 absent — Burnam, Driver, Mallory Caraway, Vo

SENATE VOTE: On final passage, April 23 — 30-0 on Local and Uncontested Calendar

WITNESSES: (*On House companion, HB 2862:*)
For — None
Against — None
On — (*Registered, but did not testify:* L.C. Wilson, DPS-Texas Rangers)

BACKGROUND: In 2001, the 77th Legislature enacted HB 1748 by Giddings, that added Government Code, sec. 411.262 to create an unsolved crimes investigation team within the Department of Public Safety (DPS) and commanded by the chief of the Texas Rangers. Upon request by a prosecutor and approval of the DPS director, the team helps local law enforcement investigate unsolved crimes such as murder and other felonies.

Government Code, sec. 411.262 requires that the program be located at the DPS headquarters in Austin. Peace officers on the team must have at least four years' experience as a peace officer and either a degree from a higher education institution in law, accounting, or computer science or at least two years' experience in the investigation of homicides or other major felonies.

DIGEST: SB 1775 would amend Government Code, sec. 441.262 to rename the unsolved crimes unit as the Unsolved Crimes Investigation Program and

would delete the requirement that it be located at the DPS headquarters in Austin.

The bill would require that a peace officer assigned to the team be a Texas Rangers sergeant or higher-ranked officer and would eliminate the requirement for a college degree to serve with the program.

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, 2009.

**SUPPORTERS
SAY:**

SB 1775 would provide flexibility for the DPS Unsolved Crimes Investigation Program to be located outside of Austin so that it could provide more timely assistance to small police departments and rural county sheriffs' departments. The Texas Rangers already are recognized as elite law enforcement throughout the nation, and the investigation unit would benefit from having senior and experienced Rangers as members of the program.

**OPPONENTS
SAY:**

No apparent opposition

NOTES:

The companion bill, HB 2862 by Kuempel was reported favorably from the Public Safety Committee on April 8 and placed on the May 14 General State Calendar, where no further action was taken.