

SUBJECT: Allowing driver education schools to administer driver examinations

COMMITTEE: Homeland Security and Public Safety — favorable, without amendment

VOTE: 7 ayes — Pickett, Fletcher, Cortez, Flynn, Kleinschmidt, Lavender,
Simmons

0 nays

2 absent — Dale, Sheets

SENATE VOTE: On final passage, April 18 — 29-1 (Seliger)

WITNESSES: No public hearing

BACKGROUND: Texas averages more than 225,000 new drivers each year. Each driver's license applicant under the age of 18 must take a comprehensive driver education course. For those age 18 and over, a driver education course is not required, but drivers must pass the standard written test given by the Department of Public Safety (DPS) as well as an on-road test.

DIGEST: SB 1705 would allow the Department of Public Safety to authorize a driver education school as well as certain employers, governmental agencies, and other appropriate organizations that met certain certification standards to give the driving portion of the state's driver's license test.

The bill would take effect September 1, 2013.

SUPPORTERS SAY: SB 1705 would help address the long lines and grueling wait times that are commonplace at many DPS offices that administer the state-required road test for applicants for a new driver's license.

By turning to qualified driver education schools to help administer this important behind-the-wheel exam, the department would provide the convenience that driver's license applicants deserve. Some people have waited several hours at DPS offices before being given the exam, while others have had to wait weeks for an appointment to take the test, according to recent news reports and public testimony. SB 1705 would

bring relief to these offices so they could focus their attention on other services, such as driver's license renewals.

Driver education schools already administer the written exam that a person must pass to obtain a driver's license. The bill simply would extend this existing public-private cooperation to allow a qualified driver education school to also give the road test.

OPPONENTS
SAY:

Although it is a good idea to call on the private sector to help administer the state-required road test for a driver's license, SB 1705 would not address a conflict of interest inherent in allowing a driver education school to measure the progress of an applicant who was also that school's student.

OTHER
OPPONENTS
SAY:

Parents also should be allowed to administer the driving portion of the state-required test for a driver's license. Parents, many of whom devote hours helping their children learn to drive, understand more than anyone whether their child meets the state standards of a competent driver.