

- SUBJECT:** Permitting the electronic filing of bail bonds
- COMMITTEE:** Criminal Jurisprudence — favorable, without amendment
- VOTE:** 7 ayes — Herrero, Moody, Canales, Hunter, Leach, Shaheen, Simpson
0 nays
- WITNESSES:** For — Mandi Krasney and Joe Flack, Jr., Financial Casualty and Surety, Inc.; (*Registered, but did not testify*: Justin Arman, Texans for Accountable Government; Bill Hammond, Texas Association of Business; Patricia Cummings, Texas Criminal Defense Lawyers Association; Jeffrey Knoll; Heather Ross; Lee Spiller)

Against — (*Registered, but did not testify*: Kenneth Good, Professional Bondsmen of Texas)

On — (*Registered, but did not testify*: Scott Walstad, Professional Bondsmen of Texas)
- DIGEST:** HB 2499 would allow bail bonds to be filed electronically with courts, judges, magistrates, or other officers taking the bond.

The bill would take effect September 1, 2016.
- SUPPORTERS SAY:** HB 2499 would let courts and others know that they have authority to implement electronic filing systems for bail bonds. While some courts already are accepting electronically filed bail bonds and others are moving toward such systems, there is no explicit authority in state law to do so. HB 2499 would make it clear that bail bonds could be filed electronically so that all entities were aware of the option, but it would not mandate that an e-filing system be used.

By raising awareness of the option to file bail bonds electronically, HB 2499 could help the bail system transition along with other court systems to electronic filing. The civil court system’s transition to an e-filing

system is underway and will be required for all civil courts by July 2016. The Court of Criminal Appeals and the Texas Supreme Court are expected this summer to release rules for criminal court e-filing.

Because of the many benefits of e-filing, the state should do what it can to let courts know they can use the system for bail bonds. Filing bail bonds electronically can reduce costs for courts and sureties, make the process more secure, and increase accuracy in the transmittal of information on the bonds.

**OPPONENTS
SAY:**

HB 2499 is unnecessary. Rules concerning e-filing for criminal courts are expected this summer from the Court of Criminal Appeals and the Texas Supreme Court, and it might be best to wait for the rules before enacting legislation about the e-filing of bail bonds.