

**SUBJECT:** Modifying the composition of the Texas Historical Commission

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

**VOTE:** 6 ayes — Frullo, Faircloth, Fallon, Gervin-Hawkins, Krause, Martinez

0 nays

1 absent — D. Bonnen

**WITNESSES:** For — John Nau, Texas Historical Commission; (*Registered, but did not testify*: John Shepperd, Texas Foundation for Conservation)

Against — None

On — Mark Wolfe, Texas Historical Commission

**DIGEST:** HB 2417 would modify the composition of the Texas Historical Commission by increasing it from nine to 15 members, all appointed by the governor. The bill would require that one member be a professional archeologist, one be a professional historian, and one be a professional architect who was licensed in Texas and had expertise in historic preservation and architectural history. The remaining 12 commission members would represent the general public.

Individuals would not be eligible for appointment if they or their spouses had certain business interests connected to the commission.

HB 2417 would require the governor to appoint the additional six members to the commission, including the three professional positions, for terms expiring over a specified time frame.

The bill would take effect September 1, 2017.

**SUPPORTERS SAY:** HB 2417 would expand the Texas Historical Commission's membership in order to adequately represent all regions of the state. The commission's current composition of nine members is not enough to serve the 230 county historical commissions located throughout Texas.

SB 283 by Estes, enacted by the 83rd Legislature in 2013, provided for a gradual reduction in the size of the commission from 17 members to nine by 2019 in an effort to save costs and facilitate commission meetings by making it easier to achieve a quorum. In hindsight, the reduction in members was too drastic, and increasing to 15 members would ensure that the commission had proper representation from across the state.

HB 2417 also would ensure that three commission members had expertise in the fields of archeology, history, and architecture so that it could properly evaluate advice and recommendations made by commission staff.

**OPPONENTS SAY:** No apparent opposition.

**NOTES:** A companion bill, SB 763 by Huffman, passed unanimously on the Senate's Local and Uncontested Calendar on April 3 and was referred to the House Committee on Culture, Recreation and Tourism on April 12.