

SUBJECT: Establishing a police service animals monument at the Capitol Complex

COMMITTEE: Culture, Recreation and Tourism — committee substitute recommended

VOTE: 9 ayes — K. King, Gervin-Hawkins, Burns, Clardy, Frullo, Israel, Krause, Martinez, C. Morales

0 nays

WITNESSES: For — James Babb, Texas Municipal Police Association; (*Registered, but did not testify:* Jennifer Szimanski, CLEAT; John Sierega, Texas Municipal Police Association; Thomas Parkinson)

Against — None

DIGEST: CSHB 1677 would require the State Preservation Board (SPB) to establish a Texas Police Service Animals Memorial Monument using SPB approval procedures on the grounds of the Capitol Complex adjacent to the Texas Peace Officers' Memorial Monument. The monument would recognize and honor police service animals that were killed in the line of duty.

SPB would be responsible for maintaining the monument. It would have to establish a maintenance schedule for the monument and select persons to maintain it. SPB could receive money from private entities for the maintenance. Those donations and any income from investment of the funds would have to be deposited in the Capitol fund to the credit of a separate interest-bearing account established for the monument. An entity that collected funds to maintain the monument would be required to send that money to SPB for deposit in the account.

The bill would take effect September 1, 2021.

SUPPORTERS SAY: CSHB 1677 would recognize and honor the estimated 23 service animals killed in the line of duty in Texas. Service dogs help with drug and bomb detection, search for missing persons, and assist with crowd control. They are essential partners with their peace officer handlers, and it is

appropriate that the monument be located adjacent to the Texas Peace Officers Memorial on the north side of the Capitol.

The bill puts the State Preservation Board in control of the memorial and authorizes them to follow board approval procedures and collect private donations to maintain the monument. It is an appropriate role for the Legislature to decide if new monuments should be erected on the Capitol grounds, and the Legislature has done so in the past via legislation, including bills and concurrent resolutions.

**CRITICS
SAY:**

CSHB 1677 could lessen the role of the State Preservation Board (SPB) in making decisions about the site and design of a new monument on the historic Capitol grounds. The bill's requirement that the service dog memorial be connected to the footprint of an existing monument raises site selection questions best answered by SPB through its normal processes.