

SUBJECT: Allowing the Historical Commission to conduct online retail sales

COMMITTEE: Culture, Recreation & Tourism — committee substitute recommended

VOTE: 7 ayes — Ashby, Martinez, Bailes, Flores, Holland, Morrison, Troxclair  
0 nays  
2 absent — Collier, Garcia

WITNESSES: For — Angela Oglesbee, Fairfield Texas City Council, Freestone County Historical Commission; Laurie Limbacher, Texas Historical Commission (*Registered, but did not testify*: Rick Thompson, County Judges and Commissioners Association of Texas; Ron Hinkle, Texas Travel Alliance; Sandy Emmons)  
  
Against — None  
  
On — (*Registered, but did not testify*: Mark Wolfe, Texas Historical Commission)

DIGEST: CSHB 2719 would amend certain powers and funding mechanisms of the Texas Historical Commission (THC), including authorizing the commission to conduct online retail sales, increasing the cap on certain grant funding programs, and expanding what historical sites were under the commission's jurisdiction.  
  
CSHB 2719 would allow THC to establish, manage, and operate gift and souvenir retail establishments and provide online retail services related to the its goals. THC would be authorized to employ the necessary staff, establish procurement standards in collaboration with the comptroller and the Department of Information Resources, and hire a nonprofit corporation to assist with the establishment of online retail.  
  
CSHB 2719 also would create the Texas Historical Commission Retail Operations Fund as a special fund outside the treasury and administered

by the comptroller. Created to support THC's retail operations, the fund would consist of money from its retail sales and interest gained but would not include appropriated money. Money from the fund could be spent without appropriation and used only to support state historic sites and THC's retail operations.

CSHB 2719 would specify that real property would not have to be donated to be included in the historic sites system or to be acquired or restored by THC. The bill also would increase from \$6 million to \$10 million the maximum amount for historic courthouse preservation grants to an individual county.

The bill would amend the jurisdiction of THC by removing references to individual historic sites and defining a "historic site" under THC's jurisdiction as any real property significant to the history of the state that the commission administered or acquired for use by the public.

This bill would take effect September 1, 2023.

**SUPPORTERS  
SAY:**

CSHB 2719 would improve and clarify THC's operations by updating current statute regarding THC. The bill would establish in statute the commission's ability to purchase and acquire property while working towards its mission. Allowing the commission to run online retail shops would financially support the commission's work in historic site preservation. Furthermore, creating a fund from revenue sales would help the commission reach its goals by generating revenue to offset appropriation requests.

The cap on state preservation grants has not been updated in 16 years, which has shifted the financial burden of courthouse restoration away from the state and onto individual counties. Increasing this cap to \$10 million would create a better balance between state and county preservation funding.

Current statute lists several historic sites which fall under the commission's jurisdiction and are eligible to use the Sporting Goods Sales

Tax. Replacing this list with a single, inclusive definition would clarify language and ensure eligibility for future sites to use the tax.

CRITICS  
SAY:

No concerns identified.