

**SUBJECT:** Increasing the penalty for tampering with a temporary motor vehicle tag

**COMMITTEE:** Criminal Jurisprudence — committee substitute recommended

**VOTE:** 5 ayes — Moody, Bhojani, Bowers, Darby, Harrison  
0 nays  
4 absent — Cook, Leach, C. Morales, Schatzline

**WITNESSES:** For — Jose Escribano, Travis County Constable Precinct 3; David Kohler; (*Registered, but did not testify*: Clifford Sparks, City of Dallas; Jennifer Szimanski, Combined Law Enforcement Associations of Texas (CLEAT); M. Paige Williams, Dallas County District Attorney John Creuzot; James Parnell, Dallas Police Association; Ray Hunt, Houston Police Officers' Union; Alexa Aragonese, Mayor's Office, City of Houston; Carlos Ortiz, San Antonio Police Officers' Association; Buddy Mills, Sheriffs' Association of Texas; John Wilkerson, Texas Municipal Police Association (TMPA))  
  
Against — (*Registered, but did not testify*: Susan Stewart)

**DIGEST:** CSHB 914 would expand the definition of "governmental record" to include a temporary vehicle tag. The bill also would make the offense of tampering with a temporary vehicle tag a class A misdemeanor (up to one year in jail and/or a maximum fine of \$4,000). If the person committed the offense in the county in which they lived, a peace officer could issue a citation instead of bringing the person before a magistrate.  
  
The bill would take effect September 1, 2023, and would apply only to offenses committed on or after that date.

**SUPPORTERS SAY:** CSHB 914 would deter people from fabricating fraudulent temporary vehicle tags by classifying the tags as governmental records. Case law already reflects this designation, and amending the Penal Code to align with case law would address this inconsistency.

Falsified vehicle tags prevent law enforcement from tracing vehicles used in crimes such as robbery, kidnapping, human trafficking, and murder. Elevating the penalty for tampering or falsifying temporary vehicle tags would improve public safety by giving prosecutors the necessary tools to hold those who altered temporary tags accountable.

**CRITICS  
SAY:**

CSHB 914 would not go far enough to prevent the creation of fraudulent tags. Because paper tags are too easy to alter and forge, the Legislature should outlaw them altogether and require temporary vehicle tags to be metal.