

**SUBJECT:** Establishing grant programs for rural sheriff's and prosecutor's offices

**COMMITTEE:** County Affairs — committee substitute recommended

**VOTE:** 8 ayes — Neave Criado, Stucky, Gerdes, J. Jones, Orr, Rosenthal, Schatzline, Tinderholt  
0 nays

**SENATE VOTE:** On final passage (March 28) — 30 - 0

**WITNESSES:** For — Shane Deel, Callahan County Attorney's Office; Jennifer Tharp, Comal County Criminal District Attorney's Office; David Holmes, County Attorney, Hill County; Carlos Lopez, Justices of the Peace and Constables Association of Texas; Brian Hawthorne, Sheriffs Association of Texas (*Registered, but did not testify*: Philip Mack Furlow, 106th Judicial District Attorney; Adam Sibley, Damon Kersh, 220th Judicial District Attorney's Office; Carlos Garcia, 79th Judicial District for Jim Wells County and Brooks County; Chris Jones, Combined Law Enforcement Associations of Texas; Rick Thompson, County Judges and Commissioners Association of Texas; Jennifer Henderson, County Treasurers' Association of Texas, Schleicher County; James Parnell, Dallas Police Association; James Stainton, District Attorney- 271st District; Joe Morris, Game Warden Peace Officers Association; David Batton, Harris County Deputies Organization FOP 39; Ray Hunt, Houston Police Officers' Union; Anthony Kivela, Houston Police Retired Officers Association; Jama Pantel, Justices of the Peace and Constables Association of Texas; Thomas Wilson, Smith County Criminal District Attorney's Office; Dallas Reed, Texas Municipal Police Association; AJ Louderback, Texas Sheriffs Regional Alliance; Brien Casey, Williamson County Deputies Association; Noel Johnson, Williamson County Deputies Association; and nine individuals)  
  
Against — None  
  
On — Adam Haynes, Conference of Urban Counties; Robert Kepple,

Texas District and County Attorney's Association (*Registered, but did not testify*: Shawn Hall Lecuona, Kri'ah b'shalom; Will Counihan, Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts)

**BACKGROUND:** Some have suggested that a grant program to provide salary assistance to rural sheriff's and prosecutor's offices would improve productivity and ensure professional law enforcement and legal representation throughout Texas.

**DIGEST:** CSSB 22 would establish rural sheriff's office and rural prosecutor's office salary assistance grant programs.

**Rural sheriff's office salary assistance grant program.** CSSB 22 would require the comptroller to establish and administer the rural sheriff's office salary assistance grant program to support the state purpose of ensuring professional law enforcement throughout the state by providing financial assistance to sheriff's offices and constable's offices in qualified counties.

A qualified county could apply for a grant to the comptroller not later than 30 days after the first day of its fiscal year. A county could submit only one application each fiscal year.

The comptroller would be required to award a grant to a qualified county using money appropriated to the comptroller for that purpose. The grant would be provided in the following applicable amounts:

- \$250,000 if the county had a population of less than 10,000;
- \$350,000 if the county had a population of 10,000 or more and less than 50,000; or
- \$500,000 if the county had a population of 50,000 or more and 300,000 or less.

A county that was awarded a grant could use the grant money only to provide a minimum annual salary of at least:

- \$75,000 for the county sheriff;

- \$45,000 for each deputy who makes motor vehicle stops in the routine performance of their duties; and
- \$40,000 for each jailer whose duties include the safekeeping of prisoners and the security of a jail operated by the county.

After using the grant money to satisfy the minimum salary requirements, a county could then use grant money to:

- increase the salary of a county sheriff, deputy, or jailer;
- hire additional deputies or staff for the sheriff's office;
- purchase vehicles, firearms, and safety equipment for the sheriff's office; or
- provide an aggregated maximum of \$25,000 to the constable's offices in the county for the purchase of vehicles, firearms, and safety equipment.

**Rural prosecutor's office salary assistance grant program.** CSSB 22 would require the comptroller to establish and administer the rural prosecutor's office salary assistance grant program to support the state purpose of ensuring professional legal representation of the people's interests throughout the state by providing financial assistance to qualified prosecutor's offices.

A prosecutor's office could apply for a grant to the comptroller within 30 days after the first day of its fiscal year. An office could submit only one application each fiscal year.

The comptroller would be required to award a grant to a qualified office that using money appropriated to the comptroller for that purpose. The grant would be provided in the following applicable amounts:

- \$100,000 if the office's jurisdiction had a population of less than 10,000;
- \$175,000 if the office's jurisdiction had a population of 10,000 or more and less than 50,000; or
- \$275,000 if the office's jurisdiction had a population of 50,000 or

more and 300,000 or less.

An office that was awarded a grant could use the grant money only to:

- supplement the salary of a district attorney, criminal district attorney, or county attorney with criminal prosecution duties, as applicable to the county, in addition to any other supplement authorized by law;
- increase the salary of an assistant attorney, an investigator, or a victim assistance coordinator employed at the office; or
- hire additional staff for the office.

**Other provisions.** The bill would prohibit a county from reducing the amount of funds provided to a sheriff's office, a constable's office, or a prosecutor's office because of grant funds provided under the bill.

The comptroller would be required to adopt rules necessary to implement the bill, including rules that established a grant application process, deadlines, and procedures for monitoring grant compliance and returning unused funds.

A qualified county or prosecutor's office could not apply for a rural sheriff's office salary assistance grant or a rural prosecutor's office salary assistance grant before January 1, 2024. The comptroller would be required to comply with the requirements of the bill by January 1, 2024.

The bill would take effect September 1, 2023.

**NOTES:**

According to the Legislative Budget Board, the fiscal implications of CSSB 22 cannot be determined, as the cost would be dependent on the number of counties applying for the grant and appropriations by the Legislature.