

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center

H.B. 2519
By: Gallego (Madla)
Finance
5-6-97
Engrossed

DIGEST

Big Bend National Park is the oldest, largest, and most popular national park in Texas. Though located in far West Texas, the park is used by people from all across the state. Over the last few years, visitation at Big Bend has continued to increase. Though Big Bend is a federal park, many Texas residents would like to find a way to actively and directly contribute to the well-being of the park. Other states allow their residents to be a part of the preservation of the park through the purchase of special license plates. In California, license plates commemorating Yosemite National Park are among the state's most popular license plates. The funds raised through sale of the license plates go towards preserving and protecting the park for future generations.

H.B. 2519 would authorize the Texas Department of Transportation to issue specially designed license plates honoring Big Bend National Park. The funds generated would then be transferred to the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department which would, in turn, give the money in the form of a grant to a designated nonprofit organization whose primary function is the improvement and preservation of Big Bend National Park.

PURPOSE

As proposed, H.B. 2519 authorizes the Texas Department of Transportation to issue specially designed license plates honoring Big Bend National Park.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

This bill does not grant any additional rulemaking authority to a state officer, institution, or agency.

SECTION BY SECTION ANALYSIS

SECTION 1. Requires, except as provided by Subsection (b), the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) to issue specially designed license plates for passenger cars and light trucks to support the activities of a nonprofit organization designated by the Parks and Wildlife Department that has as its principal purpose the improvement or preservation of Big Bend National Park. Provides that TxDOT is not required to issue license plates under this section unless the designated organization can establish a commitment for the purchase of at least 1,000 sets of the license plates. Sets forth requirements regarding the license plates. Requires TxDOT to issue license plates under this section to certain persons. Provides that the fee for replacement of a lost, stolen, or mutilated plate under this section is \$35, in addition to the fee prescribed by Section 502.184(a). Sets forth requirements regarding the use of each fee collected under this section. Requires the Parks and Wildlife Department to establish reporting and other mechanisms necessary to ensure that the money is expended for purposes for which it is dedicated. Requires an owner of a vehicle registered under this section, if the owner disposes of the vehicle during the registration year, to return the special license plates to TxDOT.

SECTION 2. Effective date: September 1, 1997.

SECTION 3. Emergency clause.