

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center

H.B. 3588
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Criminal Justice
5-13-97
Engrossed

DIGEST

Currently, the statutory county criminal court judges of Tarrant County are not authorized to employ magistrates. The appointment of one or more magistrates will enable the statutory county criminal court judges to better manage their dockets and bring matters to trial in a more timely manner. Additionally, it will allow the criminal courts to handle more criminal cases in a cost effective and efficient manner, reduce the growing backlog of cases, and delay the need to seek authority from the state to establish additional courts. This bill will provide regulations regarding criminal law magistrates in Tarrant County.

PURPOSE

As proposed, H.B. 3588 provides regulations regarding criminal law magistrates in Tarrant County.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

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

SECTION BY SECTION ANALYSIS

SECTION 1. Amends Section 54.651(a), Government Code, to require the judges of the county criminal courts of Tarrant County to jointly appoint the number of magistrates set by the commissioners court to perform the duties authorized by this subchapter.

SECTION 2. Amends Section 54.656(a), Government Code, to authorize a judge to refer to a magistrate any criminal case for proceedings involving an occupational driver's license, among others. Makes a conforming change.

SECTION 3. Amends Section 54.659, Government Code, to require the court, at the request of a party in a felony case, to provide a court reporter to record the proceedings before the magistrate.

SECTION 4. Emergency clause.
Effective date: upon passage.