

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center
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S.B. 824
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AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

Over the last several years, the Senate Committee on International Relations and Trade (IRT) conducted interim studies concerning the needs of small and rural communities of the state. By working with stakeholders, agencies, and rural officials/advocates, IRT has discovered that there are a number of state agencies that have a variety of programs and services impacting small and rural communities. Although a number of different programs serve these communities, there is little or no meaningful coordination at the state level, which decreases program access and efficiency. IRT has developed and issued recommendations during the last several interims designed to more effectively and efficiently address the needs of Texans' small and rural communities.

As proposed, S.B. 824 provides for better coordination of services and programs, and cooperation between different state agencies to ensure that the state's effort to address the needs of small and rural communities has the maximum impact upon the communities they are designed to serve.

As proposed, S.B. 824 amends current law relating to the coordination of rural and small community initiatives.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

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

SECTION BY SECTION ANALYSIS

SECTION 1. Amends Title 7, Government Code, by adding Chapter 793, as follow:

CHAPTER 793. COORDINATION OF RURAL AND SMALL COMMUNITIES

Sec. 793.001. DEFINITIONS. Defines "agency," "coordinator," and "task force" in this chapter.

Sec. 793.002. INTERAGENCY COORDINATION OF RURAL AND SMALL COMMUNITY INITIATIVES. (a) Authorizes the governor to designate an employee of the governor's office, an agency, or the office of the secretary of state to act as the state's rural and small community coordinator (coordinator). Requires the coordinator to:

- (1) examine state and federal programs that address the needs of rural and small communities;
- (2) act as an ombudsman for governmental agencies within the state to help reduce regulations by improving communication and cooperation between federal, state, and local governments;
- (3) study the best practices found in other states and within the state and work with agencies to develop a coordinated state plan to implement

similar programs tailored to the needs of the state's rural and small communities; and

(4) work with federal, state, and local governmental entities to resolve any infrastructure, capacity, and economic development programs to allow rural and small communities to manage better guided growth and become less dependent on state funds and services.

(b) Requires the coordinator to coordinate programs and initiatives that address the needs of rural and small communities within the agency and with other agencies and local officials involved in rural and small community projects in the state.

(c) Requires the coordinator to work with other agencies and local officials involved in rural and small community projects in the state to:

(1) coordinate efforts to address rural and small community issues;

(2) identify nonprofit self-help groups and community development organizations to help with rural and small community initiatives;

(3) set goals for each state fiscal year for rural and small community initiatives in the state, including goals to:

(A) address regional asset identification and development;

(B) ensure access to state and federal programs through better outreach and application streamlining;

(C) increase international competitiveness, import capacity, and export capacity;

(D) increase potential for entrepreneurial and small business development opportunities;

(E) improve technical assistance needed to build local capacity;

(F) assist efforts for youth retention and workforce skill development; and

(G) increase regional planning and coordination;

(4) ensure that the goals set under this subsection are met each state fiscal year; and

(5) coordinate state outreach efforts to rural and small communities and to stakeholders capable of providing needed services.

(d) Requires the following agencies, if the governor designates a coordinator under Subsection (a), to designate an officer or employee of the agency to serve as the agency's liaison to the coordinator:

(1) the Texas Department of Rural Affairs;

(2) the Texas Water Development Board;

(3) the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality;

(4) the Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs;

- (5) the Health and Human Services Commission;
- (6) the Parks and Wildlife Department;
- (7) the Texas Department of Transportation;
- (8) the Department of Public Safety of the State of Texas;
- (9) the office of the secretary of state;
- (10) the Department of Agriculture;
- (11) the office of the comptroller; and
- (12) the Texas Workforce Commission.

(e) Requires each agency's liaison under Subsection (d) to be a deputy executive director or a person of equivalent or higher authority at the agency. Provides that this subsection does not authorize the creation of a new position for rural and small community coordination at a state agency.

(f) Requires the coordinator, in coordinating rural and small community initiatives under this section, to consider the advice and recommendations of the task force under Section 793.003.

Sec. 793.003. TEXAS RURAL AND SMALL COMMUNITY ADVISORY TASK FORCE. (a) Requires the coordinator to appoint to serve on the Texas Rural and Small Community Advisory Task Force (task force):

- (1) at least one representative from each agency listed under Section 793.002(d);
- (2) two representatives who are members of organizations that represent the interests of rural and small communities;
- (3) two representatives who are county officials from rural counties;
- (4) two representatives from the councils of government that serve regions that are predominantly rural or composed of small communities;
- (5) two representatives who are officials from small municipalities;
- (6) two representatives who are board members of nonprofit or community development organizations;
- (7) two representatives of institutions of higher education who specialize in rural community and economic development;
- (8) two representatives of local small business development corporations; and
- (9) two representatives of local economic development corporations.

(b) Requires each agency's representative under Subsection (a)(1) to serve in a resource capacity only and to be a deputy executive director or a person of equivalent or higher authority at the agency.

(c) Requires the coordinator to make appointments under Subsection (a) so that different geographic regions of the state are represented in order to better develop a plan that can meet the needs of unique rural and small communities.

(d) Requires the coordinator to serve as the presiding officer of the task force.

(e) Provides that Chapter 2110 (State Agency Advisory Committees) does not apply to the task force.

Sec. 793.004. TEXAS RURAL AND SMALL COMMUNITY COORDINATED PLAN.

(a) Requires the task force to develop and adopt the Texas Rural and Small Community Coordinated Plan (plan). Requires the plan to include:

(1) short-term recommendations and initiatives that the state, including the coordinator and each entity represented on the task force may follow after the adoption of the plan for the ensuing two years, and the ensuing four years;

(2) long-term recommendations and initiatives that the state, including the coordinator and each entity represented on the task force, may follow after the adoption of the plan for the ensuing five years, 10 years, and 15 years; and

(3) recommendations on what the state can do to:

(A) increase and improve delivery, access, and administration of programs that benefit rural and small communities in the state;

(B) increase regional and individual capacity in rural and small communities in the state;

(C) address any important problem identified by the task force that currently impedes development, growth, and commerce in rural and small communities;

(D) increase international competitiveness, import capacity, and export capacity;

(E) increase potential for entrepreneurial and small business development opportunities;

(F) improve technical assistance needed to build local capacity;

(G) assist efforts for youth retention and workforce skill development; and

(H) decrease the dependency of rural and small communities on state funds and services and increase sustainable economic growth and community development in those communities.

(b) Authorizes each entity represented on the task force to incorporate the plan's applicable recommendations and initiatives into the entity's operations.

(c) Requires the task force to adopt an updated plan before the fourth anniversary of the date the plan is adopted or the date an updated plan is adopted.

Sec. 793.005. QUARTERLY REPORTS. Requires each entity represented on the task force to submit quarterly reports to the coordinator regarding any action taken by the entity on behalf of the task force or in furtherance of a plan or recommendation adopted by the task force, including:

(1) the status of projects;

- (2) the funding of expenditures;
- (3) the planning and research conducted;
- (4) the community and technical assistance provided;
- (5) the information collected; and
- (6) the direct role of the entity in promoting community and economic development through federal, state, and local government funding.

SECTION 2. Requires the coordinator, if one is designated by the governor under Section 793.002, Government Code, not later than September 1, 2012, to submit to the governor, lieutenant governor, speaker of the house of representatives, members of the legislature, and Legislative Budget Board a detailed written report of the plan adopted under Section 793.004, Government Code, as added by this Act, and any recommendations for legislative action.

SECTION 3. Effective date: upon passage or September 1, 2011.