

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center
82R4108 NAJ-D

S.J.R. 28
By: Rodriguez
Natural Resources
3/21/2011
As Filed

AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

The City of El Paso owns and operates 2,830 acres of parkland and more than 200 park sites, including 27 recreation centers and 15 pools. The City of El Paso is the largest municipality within El Paso County, but more than 20 percent of city park users reside outside the city limits.

El Paso's park system is significantly underfunded. The annual operations budgets of the city and county do not keep pace with growth or inflation and are used mainly for park maintenance. Per capita spending on El Paso parks is one of the lowest among the 50 largest cities in the United States. El Paso needs a stable source of operational funding for capital investment and to expand staff capacity and productivity in a cost-effective manner.

In 2009, the City of El Paso formed a Blue Ribbon Committee on Regional Parks to evaluate and provide recommendations to the city council regarding the creation of a regional parks system. The group studied the viability of a regional park system, the structure and funding options for a local model, and the process for obtaining state approval. Shortly after the conclusion of this study, both the El Paso City Council and the El Paso County Commissioners Court agreed to seek a constitutional amendment to allow El Paso County to be included in the list of Texas counties authorized to create conservation and reclamation districts to develop parks and recreational facilities and finance those parks and facilities with taxes.

If the voters approve the constitutional amendment, the City of El Paso and the County of El Paso will work during the interim to jointly create proposed enabling legislation for consideration by the 83rd Legislature.

As proposed, S.J.R. 28 proposes a constitutional amendment authorizing the legislature to permit conservation and reclamation districts in El Paso County to issue bonds supported by ad valorem taxes to fund the development and maintenance of parks and recreational facilities.

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 Section 59(c-1), Article XVI, Texas Constitution, to authorize the legislature, for development of such parks and recreational facilities, to authorize indebtedness payable from taxes as may be necessary to provide for improvements and maintenance only for a conservation and reclamation district all or part of which is located in certain counties, including El Paso County.

SECTION 2. Provides that the legislature intends by the amendment proposed by Section 1 of this resolution to expand the authority of the legislature with regard to conservation and reclamation districts in El Paso County. Provides that the proposed amendment should not be construed as a limitation on the powers of the legislature or of a district with respect to parks and recreational facilities as those powers exist immediately before the amendment takes effect.

SECTION 3. Requires the proposed constitutional amendment to be submitted to the voters at an election to be held November 8, 2011. Sets forth the required language of the ballot.