Senate Research Center

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S.B. 1893

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State Affairs

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As Filed

AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

The State of Texas is currently divided by statute into nine administrative judicial regions with one regional presiding judge appointed by the governor in each region. The regional presiding judges are responsible for assisting with the administration of justice for the trial courts within their region. Their duties include, but are not limited to, temporarily assigning judges to courts as needed, appointing and overseeing the child protection and child support courts, hearing recusal motions filed in the trial courts, reviewing appeals from the denial of public information requests within the judicial branch, reviewing appeals from the Judicial Branch Certification Commission, and appointing prosecutors in a public integrity unit case following recusal of the sitting prosecutor. Over time, the workload of the regional presiding judges has increased, especially in the First and Second Administrative Judicial Regions.

In addition to workload concerns, the current boundaries of the administrative judicial regions cause several district courts to be split across two regions, causing the district judges in those counties to be required to work with two regional presiding judges depending on the county. This alignment increases complexity of the judicial administration structure.

S.B. 1893 reworks the current boundaries of the administrative judicial regions to help with these workload concerns as well as more closely align the districts to eliminate the overlap between district judges as well as appellate districts.

As proposed, S.B. 1893 amends current law relating to the administrative judicial regions in this state.

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 74.042, Government Code, as follows:

> Sec. 74.042. ADMINISTRATIVE REGIONS. (a) Provides that the state is divided into 13, rather than nine, administrative judicial regions (AJRs).
>
> > (b) Provides that the First AJR is composed of the counties of Austin, Brazoria, Chambers, Colorado, Fort Bend, Galveston, Grimes, Harris, Waller, and Washington, rather than certain other counties.
> >
> > (c) Provides that the Second AJR is composed of the counties of Archer, Clay, Cooke, Denton, Hood, Jack, Montague, Parker, Tarrant, Wichita, Wise, and Young, rather than certain other counties.
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> > (d) Provides that the Third AJR is composed of the counties of Bastrop, Bell, Blanco, Burnet, Caldwell, Coke, Comal, Concho, Fayette, Hays, Irion, Lampasas, Lee, Llano, McCulloch, Milam, Mills, Runnels, San Saba, Schleicher, Sterling, Tom Green, Travis, and Williamson, rather than certain other counties.

(e) Provides that the Fourth AJR is composed of the counties of Atascosa, Bandera, Bexar, Brooks, Dimmit, Duval, Edwards, Frio, Gillespie, Guadalupe, Jim Hogg, Jim Wells, Karnes, Kendall, Kerr, Kimble, Kinney, LaSalle, Mason, Maverick, McMullen, Medina, Menard, Real, Starr, Sutton, Uvalde, Val Verde, Webb, Wilson, Zapata, and Zavala, rather than certain other counties.

(f) Provides that the Fifth AJR is composed of the counties of Collin, Dallas, Grayson, Hunt, Kaufman, and Rockwall, rather than certain other counties.

(g) Provides that the Sixth AJR is composed of the counties of Bowie, Camp, Cass, Delta, Fannin, Franklin, Gregg, Harrison, Hopkins, Hunt, Lamar, Marion, Morris, Panola, Red River, Rusk, Titus, Upshur, and Wood, rather than certain other counties.

(h) Provides that the Seventh AJR is composed of the counties of Armstrong, Bailey, Briscoe, Carson, Castro, Childress, Cochran, Collingsworth, Cottle, Crosby, Dallam, Deaf Smith, Dickens, Donley, Floyd, Foard, Garza, Gray, Hale, Hall, Hansford, Hardeman, Hartley, Hemphill, Hockley, Hutchinson, Kent, King, Lamb, Lipscomb, Lubbock, Lynn, Moore, Motley, Ochiltree, Oldham, Parmer, Potter, Randall, Roberts, Sherman, Swisher, Terry, Wilbarger, Wheeler, and Yoakum, rather than certain other counties.

(i) Provides that the Eight AJR is composed of the counties of Andrews, Brewster, Crane, Crockett, Culberson, El Paso, Hudspeth, Jeff Davis, Loving, Pecos, Presidio, Reagan, Reeves, Terrell, Upton, Ward, and Winkler, rather than certain other counties.

(j) Provides that the Ninth AJR is composed of the counties of Hardin, Jasper, Jefferson, Liberty, Montgomery, Newton, Orange, Polk, San Jacinto, and Tyler, rather than certain other counties.

(k) Provides that the Tenth AJR is composed of the counties of Bosque, Burleson, Brazos, Coryell, Ellis, Falls, Freestone, Hamilton, Hill, Johnson, Leon, Limestone, Madison, McLennan, Navarro, Robertson, Somervell, and Walker.

(l) Provides that the Eleventh AJR is composed of the counties of Baylor, Borden, Brown, Callahan, Coleman, Comanche, Dawson, Eastland, Ector, Erath, Fisher, Gaines, Glasscock, Haskell, Howard, Jones, Knox, Martin, Midland, Mitchell, Nolan, Palo Pinto, Scurry, Shackelford, Stephens, Stonewall, Taylor, and Throckmorton.

(m) Provides that the Twelfth AJR is composed of the counties of Anderson, Angelina, Cherokee, Gregg, Henderson, Houston, Nacogdoches, Rains, Rusk, Sabine, San Augustine, Shelby, Smith, Trinity, Upshur, Van Zandt, and Wood.

(n) Provides that the Thirteenth AJR is composed of the counties of Aransas, Bee, Calhoun, Cameron, DeWitt, Goliad, Gonzales, Hidalgo, Jackson, Kenedy, Kleberg, Lavaca, Live Oak, Matagorda, Nueces, Refugio, San Patricio, Victoria, Wharton, and Willacy.

SECTION 2. Amends Section 74.254(a), Government Code, to provide that the judicial committee for additional resources is composed of the chief justice of the Texas Supreme Court and the presiding judges, rather than the nine presiding judges, of the AJRs.

SECTION 3. (a) Provides that the Tenth, Eleventh, Twelfth, and Thirteenth AJRs are created on the effective date of this Act.

(b) Requires the governor, on the effective date of this Act and with the advice and consent of the senate, to appoint a judge to serve as presiding judge in each of the Tenth,

Eleventh, Twelfth, and Thirteenth AJRs and of any AJR in which a vacancy in office occurs because the presiding judge of an AJR is no longer qualified to serve as the presiding judge of the AJR because of the composition of the AJR on the effective date of this Act.

(c) Requires the county in which a presiding judge appointed under Subsection (b) resides, on the effective date of this Act, to provide adequate quarters for the operation of the applicable AJR.

SECTION 4. Effective date: September 1, 2017.