

## **BILL ANALYSIS**

Senate Research Center

S.B. 1911  
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Enrolled

### **AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT**

When defendants appear in court with an attorney, their likelihood of success is greater. Accordingly, pro se litigants are often at a disadvantage during the legal process. Some resources exist for pro se litigants in Texas, but where there is information, it is often inconsistent and difficult to access. S.B. 1911 requires a court to include on its website (if available) a link to a legal self-help resources website maintained by the Office of Court Administration in consultation with the Texas Access to Justice Commission. This would improve access to self-help resources for Texans facing court proceedings without an attorney to represent them and provide them with a better shot at a fair outcome in court. (Original Author's / Sponsor's Statement of Intent)

S.B. 1911 amends current law relating to the provision of certain self-help resources by state and county courts, including through the Internet website of a state court and in the office of the court clerk.

### **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 Subchapter I, Chapter 51, Government Code, by adding Section 51.808, as follows:

Sec. 51.808. NOTICE OF SELF-HELP RESOURCES. (a) Requires the clerk of each court in this state to:

(1) post on the court's Internet website, if any, a link to:

(A) the self-help resources Internet website designated by the Office of Court Administration of the Texas Judicial System (OCA) in consultation with the Texas Access to Justice Commission, that includes information on:

(i) lawyer referral services certified under Chapter 952 (Lawyer Referral Services), Occupations Code;

(ii) the name, location, and any Internet website of any local legal aid office; and

(iii) any court-affiliated self-help center serving the county in which the court is located; and

(B) the State Law Library's Internet website; and

(2) conspicuously display in the clerk's office in a location frequently accessed by the public a sign with the information described in Subdivision (1).

(b) Requires OCA to prescribe the format for the information required under Subsection (a).

SECTION 2. Amends Section 323.021, Local Government Code, by amending Subsection (a) and adding Subsection (c), as follows:

(a) Authorizes the commissioners court of a county by order to establish and maintain a county law library at the county seat or another location determined by the commissioners court, rather than establish and maintain a county law library at the county seat.

(c) Authorizes the commissioners court of a county to establish, maintain, and operate in cooperation with other counties a joint free county law library for the benefit of the cooperating counties in the same manner that a joint county library is authorized to be established and operated under Section 323.010 (Joint Library).

SECTION 3. Amends Section 323.023(b), Local Government Code, to authorize the county law library fund to be used only for certain purposes, including establishing and maintaining a self-help center to provide resources to county residents representing themselves in legal matters.

SECTION 4. Requires OCA, as soon as practicable after the effective date of this Act, to prescribe the format of the information required under Section 51.808, Government Code, as added by this Act.

SECTION 5. Effective date: September 1, 2017.