

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center

S.B. 1179
By: Birdwell
Veteran Affairs & Border Security
5/26/2021
Enrolled

AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

A person who reports for jury service is entitled to receive financial reimbursement for travel and other expenses. The court presents jurors with jury donation cards, which gives compensated jurors the ability to donate their reimbursement to any one of a number of funds. Most of these funds are instituted to benefit the victims of crime. Statute provides no guidance on when jury donation cards should be distributed to jurors. Most often, these cards are distributed prior to trial.

Research has shown that if jurors receive these donation cards before the adjudicative phase of a criminal proceeding, it produces an undue influence on their disposition to convict. Many jurors—confronted with an opportunity to help victims—are more inclined to convict a defendant than had they not received jury donation cards beforehand.

S.B. 1179 amends the Government Code by specifying juror donation cards be distributed after a trial concludes in order to avoid any outside influences from coming to bear on the jury's decision-making process.

S.B. 1179 amends current law relating to the procedure for donating juror reimbursements.

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 Sections 61.003(a) and (e), Government Code, as follows:

(a) Requires each person who reported for jury service, after jury service is concluded, to be personally provided a form letter that when signed by the person directs the county treasurer to donate all, or a specific amount designated by the person, of the person's daily reimbursement under Chapter 61 (General Provisions) to certain programs. Makes conforming and nonsubstantive changes.

(e) Makes conforming and nonsubstantive changes to this subsection.

SECTION 2. Makes application of this Act prospective.

SECTION 3. Effective date: September 1, 2021.