

## Selling state property to federally recognized Indian tribes

HB 1406 by Blanco (Hinojosa)

---

**DIGEST:** HB 1406 would have allowed the General Land Office to directly sell state property to federally recognized Indian tribes in the same way that it may sell property directly to political subdivisions.

**GOVERNOR'S REASON FOR VETO:** "Current law gives political subdivisions like cities and counties a preference over private buyers when the General Land Office sells land owned by the State. This practice might be justified in rare cases when there are compelling reasons to ensure that State land continues to benefit the public. In general, however, when selling land the State should seek the best financial terms for the taxpayers. Existing law's preference for political subdivisions is already questionable. House Bill 1406 sought to expand this questionable preference to Indian tribes, which are not political subdivisions of the State."

**RESPONSE:** **Rep. César Blanco**, the bill's author, said: "It is disappointing that Gov. Abbott would deny our state's federally recognized Indian tribes the ability to purchase real property from the General Land Office in the same direct manner as cities or counties. Federally recognized tribes are government entities, and as such, they should be afforded similar treatment in the purchase of state land."

HB 1406 would have created an even playing field, increasing the ability of our Indian tribes to advance the interests of their community. In his veto statement, the governor stated that the ability of the General Land Office to sell directly to cities and counties was already questionable and cited this concern as his reason for denying similar treatment to federally recognized Indian tribes. However, the governor's office would have retained its authority to veto any sale it deemed improper or not in the state's interest under the Natural Resources Code. The governor instead decided to veto HB 1406, override the near-unanimous will of the Legislature, and deny federally recognized Indian tribes an important development tool to advance their communities."

**Sen. Juan "Chuy" Hinojosa**, the Senate sponsor, had no comment on the veto.

**NOTES:** HB 1406 passed on the Local, Consent, and Resolutions Calendar and was not analyzed in a *Daily Floor Report*.