

SUBJECT: Establishing the Texas 1836 Project to promote patriotic education

COMMITTEE: State Affairs — committee substitute recommended

VOTE: 12 ayes — Paddie, Hernandez, Deshotel, Harless, Howard, Hunter, P. King, Metcalf, Raymond, Shaheen, Slawson, Smithee

0 nays

1 absent — Lucio

WITNESSES: For — Amie Calhoun, Civics4Yall; Ed Heimlich, Informed Citizens; Tom Glass, Texas Constitutional Enforcement; (*Registered, but did not testify:* Mia McCord, Texas Conservative Coalition; Angela Smith; Calvin Tillman)

Against — (*Registered, but did not testify:* Susana Carranza, League of Women Voters of Texas; and 12 individuals)

DIGEST: CSHB 2497 would establish the 1836 Project as an advisory committee to promote patriotic education and increase awareness of Texas values. Patriotic education would include the presentation of the history of the state's founding and foundational principles, examination of how Texas has grown closer to those principles throughout its history, and explanation of why commitment to those principles is beneficial and justified.

The 1836 Project would be composed of nine members who would serve two-year terms and could not be removed except for inefficiency, neglect of duty, or malfeasance. The governor, lieutenant governor, and House speaker each would appoint three members, and the governor would appoint one member as the presiding officer to convene regular meetings and coordinate and direct project activities.

Duties of the 1836 Project would be to promote awareness among Texas residents of the following as they related to the history of prosperity and

democratic freedom in the state:

- Texas history, including the indigenous peoples of the state, the state's Spanish and Mexican heritage, Tejanos, the Texas War for Independence, annexation of Texas by the United States, and Juneteenth;
- the founding documents and founders of the state; and
- state civics.

The 1836 Project would have the following additional duties:

- advising the governor on the core principles of the founding of Texas and how those principles further enrich the lives of its residents;
- facilitating the development and implementation of the Gubernatorial 1836 Award to recognize student knowledge of Texas Independence;
- advising state agencies with regard to their efforts to ensure patriotic education was provided to the public at state parks, battlefields, monuments, museums, installations, landmarks, cemeteries, and other places important to the Texas War for Independence and founding of the state; and
- facilitating, advising on, and promoting other activities to support public knowledge of and patriotic education on the Texas War for Independence and founding of Texas.

The bill would permit the 1836 Project to solicit statements and contributions from intellectual and cultural figures.

Pamphlets. CSHB 2497 would require the 1836 Project to provide a pamphlet to the Texas Department of Public Safety for distribution to persons who received a driver's license. The pamphlet, which would have to be provided by September 1, 2022, would explain the significance of Texas policy decisions that promote liberty and freedom for businesses and families. The contents would have to include an overview of Texas history and civics, the legacy of economic prosperity in Texas, and the

abundant opportunities for businesses and families in the state.

Funding. The Texas Education Agency (TEA) would be required to provide funding and administrative support for the 1836 Project, including for the pamphlets required by the bill.

Report. The bill would require the 1836 Project to prepare a report that included a description of the project's activities, its findings and recommendations, a plan for carrying out its duties, any proposals for legislation, and any other matter the project considered appropriate. The report would have to be prepared by September 1, 2022, and TEA would have to publish the report on its website.

Expiration. The 1836 Project would be abolished September 1, 2036.

The bill would take effect September 1, 2021, and appointments to the 1836 Project would have to be made as soon as possible after that date.

SUPPORTERS
SAY:

CSHB 2497 would expand civic awareness of the importance of Texas history and state economic policies through the establishment of an advisory committee called the Texas 1836 Project, named for the year Texas gained independence from Mexico. The bill would deepen civics education both in and beyond the classroom. Every Texan, regardless of age, would benefit from having a deeper understanding of this history of opportunity and limited government in order for the Texas legacy to last for future generations.

The bill would ensure that all aspects of Texas history, including contributions made by indigenous peoples, the state's Spanish and Mexican heritage, and the significance of Juneteenth were part of the Texas 1836 Project's public awareness campaign.

While some say the bill is unnecessary because public schools already teach Texas history, the bill also would benefit those who have moved to Texas from other states and do not know the details of Texas history. Regardless of the political party of state leaders who would appoint the

advisory committee, the Texas 1836 Project is expected to be a bipartisan effort that would include many perspectives about the story of Texas.

CRITICS
SAY:

CSHB 2497 could be an unnecessary and costly effort to raise awareness of Texas history when public school students in the state already are required to study the subject in grades 4 and 7. Because the bill would create an advisory committee that was appointed by the governor, lieutenant governor, and House speaker, the 1836 Project could include members who all came from one political party and policy perspective.

NOTES:

CSHB 2497 would have an estimated negative impact of about \$2.3 million through the biennium ending August 31, 2023.