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HOUSE RESEARCH ORGANIZATION

daily floor report

Wednesday, March 5, 1997
75th Legislature, Number 29
The House convenes at 10 a.m.

The House is expected to consider on third reading the bills approved on second reading yesterday. The Senate meets at 11:30 a.m.

Background information on how HRO bill analyses are prepared for the *Daily Floor Report*, including the role played by members and staff in the process, starts on page 2.


Henry Cuellar
Chairman
75-29

PREPARATION OF HRO BILL ANALYSES FOR THE *DAILY FLOOR REPORT*

The House Research Organization was established to provide an independent review of legislation that comes before the House and produce thorough, impartial, balanced analyses summarizing all points of view. Members and staff are a primary source of the information used to prepare the bill analyses in the *Daily Floor Report*.

The HRO makes no recommendations and draws no conclusions. Its purpose is to concisely package information about each bill, gathering a broad range of arguments from supporters and opponents.

The House Research Organization staff either analyzes or digests every bill placed on the daily calendar. The HRO does not analyze bills sent to the Local and Consent Calendars Committee.

The *Daily Floor Report* is now distributed to members' offices over the Capitol Intranet through Netscape. Early in the session it will be available on the evening before floor consideration of bills on the daily calendar. Later in the session, when the large number of bills on the calendar requires publishing the *Daily Floor Report* in multiple parts, each part will be made available as soon as time allows. Members receive a printed copy of the *Daily Floor Report* at their desk on the House floor on the morning that bills are considered.

BILL ANALYSIS FORMAT

- SUBJECT:** A one-line summary of the bill
- COMMITTEE:** The House committee that reported the bill — the action taken
(Example: Elections — committee substitute recommended)
- VOTE:** The vote in committee, listing individual votes
- SENATE VOTE:** The vote on final passage of Senate bills, with individual nay votes noted.
- WITNESSES:** A list of those filing a witness affirmation form for the House committee hearing on the bill. If no House committee hearing was held on a Senate bill, the witnesses for the hearing on the House companion bill are listed. If a committee substitute changed the original bill substantially and the witnesses testified on the original version, that fact is noted.
- BACKGROUND:** An optional section establishing the context in which the bill was introduced. Most often this section is used to summarize current law the bill proposes to amend and other information needed to clarify the digest of the bill.
- DIGEST:** A narrative summary of major provisions of the bill, rather than a section-by-section description. The digest includes only what is in the bill itself and no additional commentary.
- Should a proposed floor substitute be made available to the HRO by the bill's author, the substitute may be summarized in the digest in lieu of the version of the bill reported from committee.
- SUPPORTERS SAY:** Reasons given by supporters for voting for the bill, argued persuasively from the point of view of supporters. This section may include the purpose of the bill, an explanation of its provisions, and rebuttal of any criticisms made about the bill. *These are arguments being made by supporters of the bill, not the HRO, which makes no recommendations.*
- OPPONENTS SAY:** Questions, drawbacks, concerns and criticisms, argued persuasively from the point of view of critics of the bill. Although grouped generally under the heading of "Opponents," the arguments presented in this section include any questions raised or concerns expressed about a bill, regardless of whether those making the arguments are actively trying to defeat the bill. *These are arguments being made by opponents or critics of the bill, not the HRO, which makes no recommendations.*

"No apparent opposition" means that, within the time constraints allowed to gather arguments, no serious questions or criticisms were found concerning the bill.

**OTHER
OPPONENTS
SAY:**

This optional section is usually reserved for arguments raised by those who may agree with the essential purpose of the bill but disagree with how the bill would accomplish that purpose. These arguments are usually framed as "this bill would go too far" or "this bill would not go far enough." If no other opposing arguments are being made, these arguments are presented under the "Opponents" section.

NOTES:

This section includes legislative history, including how the original version of the bill was changed in committee, and may list similar bills considered in previous sessions or filed during the current session.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q. When does the HRO begin analyzing a bill?

A. Information on bills is gathered throughout the legislative process, but often the HRO staff has only a day to compile information on the bills set on the daily calendar, especially during the latter part of the session.

Q. Where do the arguments come from?

A. The staff surveys a broad range of interested persons and groups that may have a position on a bill. House members and their staffs are a primary source of arguments. Committee witnesses, lobbyists, interest groups, senators and their staffs, state agencies, local officials, persons directly affected by the bill, and a wide variety of other sources are contacted, as time permits, to obtain a diverse range of viewpoints on each bill.

It has long been the policy of the HRO to keep sources confidential, except to cite sources of statistical studies or published research reports. Arguments are presented as generic public policy positions rather than as quotations from individual supporters or opponents. The emphasis is on the policy points being made, not on who is making them. Arguments that are clearly spurious or inaccurate are not used.

Q. What role does the author of the bill play in preparing a bill analysis?

A. The HRO *always* contacts the author of a bill being analyzed. The author is the principal source for explaining the bill's purpose, providing the primary supporting arguments, and responding to any opposing arguments. If the author is unavailable, the major points of the bill analysis are reviewed with members of the author's staff, who are asked to convey them to the author for a response.

Q. What role does the HRO steering committee play?

A. The 15-member HRO steering committee serves as the governing, policy-making and oversight board for the organization. The steering committee is required to be broadly representative of the House membership. To preserve the independence, objectivity and credibility of the work of the organization, the members of the steering committee have no direct involvement in the preparation of the *Daily Floor Report* or other HRO reports, nor do they review reports prior to publication.

The steering committee ensures that HRO reports are balanced, impartial and accurate. Any comments, questions or complaints should be addressed to the chairman of the steering committee.

Q. How is the *Daily Floor Report* distributed?

A. The *Daily Floor Report* is transmitted over the Capitol Intranet through Netscape to members' offices and the laptop computers on the House floor. The *Daily Floor Report* and individual bill analyses are available to view and print through Netscape as soon as they are transmitted, usually the evening before the bills are scheduled for floor consideration. House members receive one printed copy of the *Daily Floor Report* at their desks on the House floor shortly before the House convenes each day.