

SUBJECT: Quarantines

COMMITTEE: Health and Welfare reported favorably, with amendment

VOICE: 9 ayes—Madla\*, Ezzell, Delco, Glossbrenner\*, Gonzales\*, Orr, Untermeyer,  
Vaughan, Von Dohlen  
0 nays—  
1 present, not voting— J. Wilson (chr.)  
3 absent—Whitehead, Florence, Miller\*

WITNESSES: FOR: John R. Trautman, M.D., U. S. Public Health Service.

AGAINST: None

DIGEST: Under Texas law, Hansen's disease is referred to as leprosy and lepers are required to be isolated. In addition to renaming leprosy "Hansen's disease," this bill would remove Hansen's disease from the list of dangerous contagious diseases subject to modified quarantine. It would also repeal a statute establishing a home for lepers and providing funding authority for the isolation and care of lepers in Texas.

PRO: Every other state has removed Hansen's disease (leprosy) from the list of dangerous contagious diseases subject to quarantine. The disease is so rare and requires such extensive and prolonged contact to transmit that it does not pose a serious health problem to the general public. This bill would eliminate an outdated statute and would allow those with the disease to lead relatively normal lives while undergoing treatment.

The statute repealed by HB 769 is simply an authorizing statute for which funds have never been appropriated.

CON: There is no need to require quarantine in most cases of Hansen's disease. However, in cases where the patient will not cooperate and could endanger his family, quarantine powers are necessary. HB 769 should retain the provision giving county health officers the discretion to impose quarantines that was deleted in committee. This authority, however, should be extended to all local health officers, not just county officials.

COMMENTARY: Local health officials may now have the authority to impose quarantines for any disease. Article 4477, rule 17 gives local health authorities the general discretion to enforce restrictions not specified by statute, if necessary.

There were 9 cases of Hansen's disease in Texas in 1976, with the yearly average being less than 20 cases.

Person's contracting Hansen's disease in Texas are sent to the U. S. Public Health Service hospital in Carville, Louisiana, which specializes in the treatment of the disease. Further treatment is handled through certain local clinics or additional visits to the Carville hospital. The state pays for driving the patient from Texas to Carville and for doctors' services. Drugs are furnished by the federal government. The funds for this program would not be affected by HB 769.