

**SUBJECT:** Salaries for Bexar County constables

**COMMITTEE:** County Affairs — committee substitute recommended

**VOTE:** 5 ayes — R. Lewis, Bonnen, Flores, Gutierrez, G. Lewis  
1 nay — Denny  
3 absent — Kamel, Chisum, Christian

**WITNESSES:** For — Ray Mullins, Alamo Area Peace Officers Association; Charlie Campos Jr., Bexar County Constables Association  
Against — John Thompson and Jim Allison, County Judges and Commissioners Association of Texas; Donald Lee, Conference of Urban Counties  
On — Rebecca Rentz, Harris County; Mark Mendez, Tarrant County; Craig Pardue, Dallas County

**DIGEST:** CSHB 3047 would require a commissioners court in a county of 700,000 or more residents and fewer than eight precincts to pay county constables a salary equal to 80 percent of the county judge's salary in addition to longevity pay.  
The bill would apply only to Bexar County.  
CSHB 3047 would take effect September 1, 1997, and apply to salaries paid in county fiscal years beginning after that date.

**SUPPORTERS SAY:** CSHB 3047 would give Bexar County constables a well deserved pay raise. Salaries for Bexar County constables are well below the salaries of other county constables even though they have the same responsibilities and perform the same functions. Bexar County constables are hardworking public servants who deserve a salary increase.  
The Bexar County commissioners court has neglected and abused its constables by refusing to pay them a living wage. Bexar County constables

have not had a salary increase since the mid-1970s, even though the cost-of-living has increased sharply in 20 years. CSHB 3047 would right the wrongs now being committed in Bexar County.

The bill would not assign an arbitrary dollar amount; rather, it would peg the a constable's salary to that of the county judge. The commissioners court would still retain discretion to raise or lower the actual dollar figure. CSHB 3047 would merely ensure equity in the salaries paid public officials in Bexar County.

**OPPONENTS  
SAY:**

CSHB 3047 would set an unfunded mandate that Bexar County officials might not be able to afford. Furthermore, the bill would set an unwise precedent for establishing the salaries of local officials at the state level. There are other ways to solve local problems. This bill is not so narrowly tailored that it would not affect other counties. El Paso County, for example, and Travis County both could eventually fall within the parameters of this legislation. Local salaries and budgets should be negotiated at the local level, not in Austin.

**OTHER  
OPPONENTS  
SAY:**

CSHB 3047 would artificially constrain the ability of the Bexar County commissioners court to appropriately set salaries commensurate with levels of experience and job duties. In addition, any salary increases or adjustments could only be granted if the salary of the county judge was increased.

**NOTES:**

The committee substitute changed the population bracket on the original bill from counties with a population greater than 1 million to counties with a population of 700,000 and fewer than eight constable precincts.