

- SUBJECT:** Modifying entrance examination procedures for Houston police recruits
- COMMITTEE:** Urban Affairs — favorable, without amendment
- VOTE:** 6 ayes — Bailey, Murphy, Menendez, Cohen, Latham, Martinez Fischer
0 nays
1 absent — Mallory Caraway
- WITNESSES:** For — Kirk Munden, City of Houston Police Department; (*Registered, but did not testify*: Mark Clark, Houston Police Officers' Union)
Against — None
- BACKGROUND:** Local Government Code, sec. 143.025 provides for open, competitive entrance examinations for entry-level police and fire positions for departments located in municipalities that have adopted civil service agreements. The statute establishes procedures for the weighting and administration of the exam. The statute also provides for the locations at which an exam may be administered and for the maintenance of eligibility lists based on exam performance.

Ch. 143, subch. G regulates civil service employment matters in municipalities with a population of 1.5 million or greater (Houston) unless otherwise stated.
- DIGEST:** HB 2269 would add sec. 143.1041 to subch. G to provide for the administration of open, competitive exams to each person who applied and was admitted to or enrolled in a police officer training academy as a trainee. The bill would retain current exam requirements, including:
- a person could be admitted to the police department only as a result of the examination;
 - an examinee could not take the exam unless at least one other examinee was present;
 - an exam could be held in multiple locations on the same day at the same time;

- an additional 5 points would be added to the grades of those who served in the U.S. armed forces, were honorably discharged and made a passing grade on the exam; and
- a minimum passing grade on the exam would be 70 percent.

The bill would take effect September 1, 2007, and would apply only to examinations administered on or after that date.

**SUPPORTERS
SAY:**

HB 2269 simply would change the point in the recruitment process at which the Houston Police Department could offer a civil service exam. Current law has been interpreted to require the exam to be administered before new recruits could be inducted into a training academy. This procedure complicates the Department's recruiting efforts because it requires potential applicants to take the examination and subsequently enroll in the academy.

The Houston Police Department had more than 600 officer vacancies as of April 2007. In response to the large number of vacancies, the Department is taking proactive measures to recruit new officers from Houston and elsewhere. Recruits come from various locations around Texas and nationally, and many are required to travel to take exams and attend training. The need to administer exams before training creates inconveniences for both the Police Department and potential recruits, as it requires applicants to be physically present for the examination.

Discharged military personnel offer one potential source of recruits who often are required to travel significant distances to take entrance exams. HB 2269 would allow recruits to come to Houston for training academy and then take exams after completing the required courses. Exam passage rates are close to 100 percent, so the probability that trainees would pass through academy courses then fail the civil service exam would be small.

The bill would not alter effectively any procedural or administrative aspects of civil service exams for police, nor change procedures for fire department recruitment.

**OPPONENTS
SAY:**

No apparent opposition.

NOTES:

The companion bill, SB 339 by Ellis, passed the Senate on March 28 on the Local and Uncontested Calendar and was reported favorably, without amendment by the House Urban Affairs Committee on April 11 and recommended for the Local and Consent Calendars Committee, making it eligible to be considered in lieu of HB 2269.