HOUSE
RESEARCH
ORGANIZATION bill digest

SB 2242
Zaffirini
5/22/2009   (Peña)

SUBJECT: Local government political contribution and expenditure reporting

COMMITTEE: Elections — favorable, without amendment

VOTE: 7 ayes — T. Smith, Allen, Anchia, Bohac, Bonnen, B. Brown, Heflin

                    0 nays

                    2 absent — Peña, Harper-Brown

SENATE VOTE: On final passage, May 1 — 31-0

WITNESSES: No public hearing

BACKGROUND: In December 2008, the Texas Ethics Commission issued a report
                    recommending a variety of statutory changes, including allowing local
                    governments to use commission software and hardware to file required
                    disclosure reports online.

DIGEST: SB 2242 would allow Texas Ethics Commission software and resources to
                    be used for the filing of political contribution and expenditure reports by:

                    • local government entities;
                    • local government officers;
                    • candidates for local government offices, and;
                    • specific-purpose committees for supporting, opposing, or assisting
                      a local government officer, candidate, or entity.

                    The Texas Ethics Commission could provide assistance to a local
                    government entity, officer, candidate, or specific-purpose committee by
                    developing software to facilitate electronic filing, maintaining reports on
                    political contributions and expenditures, and providing public access to the
                    electronic reports through the commission's website, and could enter into
                    an intergovernmental contract with a local government entity to provide
                    assistance. Any provision of the bill would not be mandatory during a
                    fiscal period for which the Legislature did not make a specific
                    appropriation to implement the provision.

The bill would take effect September 1, 2009.

NOTES: The Legislative Budget Board estimates that the Texas Ethics Commission
would need updated software and two additional staff to provide training
and assistance with information requests, at a cost of about $2.6 million in
fiscal 2010-2011 and about $600,000 for each succeeding biennium.

A similar bill, HB 3924 by Peña, reported favorably, as substituted, by the
House Elections Committee on April 17.