

**SUBJECT:** Allowing 24-number bingo, expanding use of card-minding devices

**COMMITTEE:** Licensing and Administrative Procedures — favorable, without amendment

**VOTE:** 8 ayes — Hamilton, Quintanilla, Geren, Gutierrez, Harless, Kuempel, Menendez, Thompson

0 nays

1 absent — Driver

**WITNESSES:** For — Richard Bunkley, Littlefield Corp; Steven Hieronymus, Trend Gaming Systems, LLC; (*Registered, but did not testify*: Mark Gottschalk)

Against — Rob Kohler, Christian Live Commission Baptist General Convention of Texas; (*Registered, but did not testify*: Pat Carlson, Texas Eagle Forum; Joshua Houston, Texas Impact; Tony McDonald, Young Conservatives of Texas; Suzii Payntor, Christian Life Commission Texas Baptist Convention)

On — Steve Bresnen, Coalition for the Survival of Charitable Bingo; (*Registered, but did not testify*: Philip Sanderson, Texas Lottery Commission)

**DIGEST:** HB 3282 would revise the state’s bingo act to authorize a game called “24-number bingo,” which could be played at the same time as other forms of bingo. The game would be played with prizes awarded when designated numbers or symbols conformed to 24 randomly preselected numbers or symbols.

Players of 24-number bingo would be able to use card-minding devices to display the available credit value associated with a player’s bingo account and to make transactions using their credit. Credit value would be the value of money accounted for by a card-minding device. It would include prize money won and the initial credits bought from a point-of-sale station for deposit in a person’s bingo account. Credit values could be used to buy bingo cards or pull-tab bingo tickets.

The bill would exempt prizes of \$25 or less that were paid for 24-hour bingo from being counted toward the overall cap of \$2,500 on prizes awarded on a single bingo occasion.

This bill would take immediate effect if finally passed by a two-thirds record vote of the membership of each house. Otherwise, it would take effect September 1, 2011. The Lottery Commission would be required to adopt rules to implement HB 3282 as soon as practicable after the effective date, but not later than December 1, 2011.

**SUPPORTERS  
SAY:**

HB 3282 would authorize a new type of bingo game that could help address a trend of declining interest in bingo and help charities earn more for their activities. The new, popular game, called 24-number bingo, could increase player interest and excitement. Twenty-four number bingo is a widely played game used by groups supporting the military, and should be available to the numerous Texas charities to raise funds to do good works throughout the state.

Twenty-four bingo is a traditional bingo game well within current law and the spirit of the Bingo Act. It is played with balls marked with numbers while players look for pre-established patterns. Balls are randomly selected, but called before the start of play. Players buy cards and then mark them with the ball selection.

Electronic card-minding devices are legal now and should be available for 24-hour bingo as they are for other games. HB 3282 would improve the usefulness of these devices to players of 24-number bingo and charities by allowing them to store players' prizes and to purchase bingo cards and pull-tab tickets. Currently, these transactions must be done through a bingo worker. Using technology for them would solve problems, such as loss through theft and mistake, that are related to the handling of cash in bingo halls. It also would improve the oversight and auditing of the cash by the charities and the Lottery Commission through electronic records.

The bill would in no way move card-minding devices closer to becoming gambling devices. Players would not be able to insert cash or credit cards into them or to receive cash from them. Those activities would still take place with cashiers. The changes made by the bill simply would take advantage of technology to help players and charities handle transactions that already are occurring. HB 3282 is a narrowly drawn bill to deal only

with 24-number bingo so it would not expand the use of card-minding devices for other games.

By exempting small prizes for 24-number bingo from the cap on prizes, HB 3282 would treat these games the same way as pull-tab bingo prizes. It would be appropriate to exempt these low-value prizes awarded in fast-moving games to increase the number of winners and to keep players excited and interested in the games.

**OPPONENTS  
SAY:**

Charitable bingo in Texas should be kept as close as possible to the traditional game of bingo. Authorizing new games such as 24-number bingo would move away from that traditional game that most voters thought they were approving when the game was authorized.

The uses of card-minding devices should not be expanded. As they expand they become more like electronic, prohibited gambling devices, and this moves bingo away from the traditional game supported by Texans.

Prizes, no matter how small, should not be exempted from the cap. When this happens, the cap no longer functions as an upper limit on prizes.

**OTHER  
OPPONENTS  
SAY:**

HB 3282 should authorize expanded use of card minding devices for all games, not just 24-number bingo.