

SUBJECT: Requiring mandatory arbitration for certain municipal fire departments

COMMITTEE: Urban Affairs — favorable, without amendment

VOTE: 8 ayes — Cortez, Holland, Bernal, Campos, Jarvis Johnson, Minjarez, Morales Shaw, Slaton

1 nay — Gates

WITNESSES: For — Patrick M. "Marty" Lancton, Houston Professional Fire Fighters Association; (*Registered, but did not testify:* Christopher Steele, San Antonio Professional Firefighters Association; Rene Lara, Texas AFL-CIO; Glenn Deshields and Aidan Alvarado, Texas State Association of Firefighters)

Against — Ray Hunt, Houston Police Officers' Union; Dave Martin, Mayor's Office, City of Houston; Samuel Pena, Mayor's Office, City of Houston; (*Registered, but did not testify:* George Craig, Houston Police Department)

BACKGROUND: Local Government Code sec. 174.153 allows a public employer or an association that is a bargaining agent to request under certain circumstances binding arbitration to resolve an impasse in collective bargaining.

Some have suggested that legislative action requiring mandatory arbitration could resolve an ongoing contractual dispute between the City of Houston and its firefighters.

DIGEST: HB 2087 would require the fire department of a city with a population of at least 1.9 million (Houston) and a bargaining agent for the department's employees to submit to binding interest arbitration if the parties reached an impasse in collective bargaining or were unable to settle after the 61st day after the appropriate lawmaking body failed to approve a collective bargain contract.

Each party would be required to send the other a written notice specifying each issue in dispute for purposes of binding arbitration no later than the fifth day after:

- the date an impasse was reached;
- the expiration of an extension period of no more than 15 days as agreed to by the parties; or
- the 61st day after the appropriate lawmaking body failed to approve a collective bargain contract.

Such notice would be considered sent on the date it was placed in the mail, personally delivered, or transmitted by email or any other means of electronic transfer.

The bill would take effect September 1, 2021.