

SUBJECT: Requiring courts to give preference to murder and capital murder trials

COMMITTEE: Criminal Jurisprudence — favorable, without amendment

VOTE: 9 ayes — Moody, Cook, Bhojani, Bowers, Darby, Harrison, Leach, C. Morales, Schatzline
0 nays

SENATE VOTE: On final passage (May 15) — 29 – 1

WITNESSES: For — Kim Ogg, Harris County District Attorneys Office (*Registered, but did not testify*; Jennifer Szimanski, Combined Law Enforcement Associations of Texas; Cally Conklin, Crime Stoppers of Houston; M Paige Williams, Dallas County Criminal District Attorney John Creuzot; James Parnell, Dallas Police Association; David Batton, Harris County Deputies Organization FOP 39; Jessica Anderson, Houston Police Department; Ray Hunt, Houston Police Officers' Union; Brian Hawthorne, Sheriffs' Association of Texas; AJ Louderback, Texas Sheriffs Regional Alliance; Sarah Berel-Harrop)

Against — None

BACKGROUND: Concerns have been raised that defendants facing murder and capital murder charges may have to wait long periods for hearings and trials due to court backlogs, which increases the chances for evidence to be lost, witnesses to disappear, and prosecutions to be impaired.

DIGEST: SB 402 would include murder and capital murder among the offenses to which trial courts would be required to give preference over other offenses when scheduling hearings and trials.

The bill would take effect September 1, 2023.