

SUBJECT: Establishing the centennial parks conservation fund

COMMITTEE: Culture, Recreation & Tourism — committee substitute recommended

VOTE: 6 ayes — Ashby, Bailes, Flores, Holland, Morrison, Troxclair
0 nays
3 absent — Martinez, Collier, Garcia

SENATE VOTE: On final passage (April 18) — 26 - 3

WITNESSES: None (*considered in a formal meeting on May 2*)

BACKGROUND: Some have suggested that a dedicated state fund for purchasing new land to create state parks would help the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department make sustainable investments in new parks.

DIGEST: CSSJR 74 would amend the Texas Constitution to allow for the establishment of the centennial parks conservation fund as a trust fund outside the treasury. The fund could be used only for the creation and improvement of state parks. The fund would consist of:

- money appropriated to the fund;
- money transferred or deposited to the credit of the fund by general law;
- investment earnings and interest earned on amount credited to the fund; and
- gifts grants and donations received for the fund.

The Legislature could appropriate money from the centennial parks conservation fund to the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department or the department's successor in function for the purposes prescribed for the fund by this resolution and general law.

For purposes of the constitutional restriction on the rate of growth of appropriations, money in the fund would be dedicated by the Texas Constitution and an appropriation of state tax revenues to the fund would be treated as if it were an appropriation of revenues dedicated by the Texas Constitution.

The bill would require the comptroller to transfer \$1 billion of the unencumbered balance of the general revenue fund that existed on that date to the centennial parks conservation fund on January 1, 2023. This requirement would expire December 31, 2024.

The ballot proposal would be presented to voters at an election on November 7, 2023, and would read: "The constitutional amendment providing for the creation of the centennial parks conservation fund to be used for the creation and improvement of state parks.

NOTES: SB 1648 by Parker, the enabling legislation for CSSJR 74, is also on the calendar for second reading consideration today.