

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center

S.B. 1744
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AUTHOR'S/SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

Since Mexico's entry into the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) in 1986 and the ratification of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) in November 1993, trade has increased exponentially between the United States and Mexico. Mexico is now the number one trade partner of the U.S.; however, this shift and a changing political climate has imposed significant infrastructure needs on the U.S.-Mexico border and demands that leaders develop strategies for meeting those needs. While achieving adequate security is a crucial issue along the Border, new security policies must not transform the U.S.-Mexico border into a "security fence," a highly fortified physical barrier that impedes the legitimate flow of commerce and people.

Currently, Texas participates in binational groups working in border infrastructure and economic development. These include the Border Legislative Conference (BLC) and the Border Governors' Conference. Because Texas has the largest contiguous border between the U.S. and Mexico, it has a vested interest in seeing that there is ongoing economic stability and growth of the border region. However, this economic stability and growth of the border region is dependent, in part, on coordination with neighboring states.

As proposed, S.B. 1745 creates the Texas-Mexico Strategic Investment Commission (commission) to put this effort in the hands of the legislature and encourage a collaborative approach between Texas and neighboring Mexican states so as to better address challenges and plan for the future. The bill assists in the creation of economic development by improving communication and cooperation between federal, state, and local governments; studying the flow of commerce at ports of entry between Texas and Mexico; improving border infrastructure; streamlining border crossing needs; identifying areas for possible trade and collaboration; identifying environmental concerns; and developing recommendations for addressing border challenges.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

This bill does not expressly grant any additional rulemaking authority to a state officer, institution, or agency.

SECTION BY SECTION ANALYSIS

SECTION 1. Amends Subtitle F, Title 4, Government Code, by adding Chapter 490, as follows:

Chapter 490. Texas-Mexico Strategic Investment Commission

Sec. 490.001. DEFINITIONS. Defines "commission" and "Texas-Mexico border region."

Sec. 490.002. PURPOSE. Provides that the ongoing economic stability and growth of Texas and the improved quality of life for all Texans is dependent in part on coordination with neighboring states. Provides that Texas and the Mexican border states of Chihuahua, Coahuila, Nuevo Leon, and Tamaulipas face common challenges in the areas of infrastructure, health care, access to and availability of water, economic development and trade, and environmental protection. Provides that the Texas-Mexico Strategic Commission (commission) will encourage a collaborative approach between Texas and neighboring Mexican states in specific areas so as to better address challenges and plan for the future.

Sec. 490.003. TEXAS-MEXICO STRATEGIC INVESTMENT COMMISSION; MEMBERS. (a) Sets forth the establishment of the commission.

(b) Sets forth the composition of the commission.

(c) Requires the border commerce coordinator to serve as the chair of the commission.

Sec. 490.004. FUNCTIONS OF COMMISSION. (a) Sets forth certain functional requirements for the commission.

(b) Requires the commission to work with local governments, metropolitan planning organizations, and other appropriate community organizations in the Texas Department of Transportation's Pharr, Laredo, and El Paso transportation districts, and with comparable entities in Mexican states bordering those districts, to address the unique planning and capacity needs of those areas. Requires the commission to assist those governments, organizations, and entities to identify and develop initiatives to address those needs.

(c) Requires the commission to work with industries and communities on both sides of the Texas-Mexico border to develop international industry cluster initiatives to capitalize on resources available in communities located adjacent to each other across the border.

(d) Authorizes the commission to meet at least once a year with representatives from the Mexico states of Chihuahua, Coahuila, Nuevo Leon, and Tamaulipas during the Border Governor's [sic] Conference to discuss issues and challenges of the Texas-Mexico border region and develop strategic collaborative approaches for addressing the challenges.

Sec. 490.005. FUNDING. (a) Authorizes the commission, in addition to any amount appropriated by the legislature, to request states agencies to apply for funds from the federal government or any other public or private entity. Authorizes the commission to solicit grants, gifts, and donations from private sources on the state's behalf. Provides that the use of a gift, grant, or donation solicited under this section must be consistent with the purpose of the commission.

(b) Requires the commission to review, and authorizes it to requires reports of, state agencies that receive appropriations, gifts, grants, donations, or endowments as a result of the commission's recommendations.

(c) Provides that a state agency may accept a gift, grant, donation, or endowment received as a result of the commission's recommendations.

SECTION 2. Effective date: upon passage or September 1, 2005.