

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center
85R21478 TSR-D

C.S.S.B. 554
By: Kolkhorst
Intergovernmental Relations
4/6/2017
Committee Report (Substituted)

AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

Water districts, like all governmental entities, are required by law to hold regular public meetings. These districts have the power to tax, issue bonds, and eminent domain over a prescribed geographic area, yet many hold their public meetings outside of the district. District residents are often required to drive substantial distances from their district in the evening after work. This can discourage meeting attendance and hinder a resident who wishes to participate in the management of their local utility district.

Currently, Section 49.062, Water Code, allows the board of a district to designate a meeting place outside of the district, but if at least 25 qualified voters are residing in the district and the board determines that the meeting place deprives the residents of a reasonable opportunity to attend the meeting, then five voters may petition the district to change the meeting location. The Texas Commission on Environmental Quality may also change the locations if five voters petition.

C.S.S.B. 554 requires a district to include a description of the process to change the meeting location on the meeting notice required by Section 49.062(c), Water Code. They would only be required to post the description once per year at the first meeting of the year. This will enable more residents to be aware of the simple process required to move the meeting location to a more convenient location. The law permits the location to be a residence within the district, so there should be no substantial extra cost for new meeting facilities. C.S.S.B. 554 is designed to allow more citizens to participate in the management of their local water districts.

C.S.S.B. 554 amends current law relating to notice requirements for certain special districts that hold board meetings outside the district.

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 Section 49.063, Water Code, by adding Subsection (c), as follows:

(c) Provides that this subsection applies only to notice for the district's first meeting of each calendar year. Requires a district that does not have a meeting place within the district to include in the notice required under Subsection (a) (relating to requirements for a notice of meetings of the district governing board) a description of the petition process under Section 49.062(c) (relating to the designation of a meeting place by the board under certain circumstances).

SECTION 2. Effective date: September 1, 2017.