

## **BILL ANALYSIS**

Senate Research Center  
85R5579 JTS-F

S.B. 937  
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Intergovernmental Relations  
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As Filed

### **AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT**

Due to the recent rising number of self-represented litigants, some counties have established legal self-help centers. Self-help centers provide specialized staff, including attorneys, and materials to assist those choosing to represent themselves navigate through various legal matters. Current law allows county commissioners courts to collect court fees for the purpose of establishing a county law library, but it does not explicitly authorize these fees to be used for establishing a legal self-help center. What's more, rural counties often are unable to collect sufficient fees to maintain a law library or self-help center.

S.B. 937 would clarify that the funds collected for law libraries can also be used to establish and maintain self-help centers and allow county commissioners from multiple counties to join efforts to create a multi-county law library. These changes would enhance low-income Texans' access to legal resources and the justice system.

As proposed, S.B. 937 amends current law relating to county law libraries.

### **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 323.021, Local Government Code, by amending Subsection (a) and adding Subsection (c), as follows:

(a) Authorizes the commissioners court of a county, by order, to establish and maintain a county law library at the county seat or another location determined by the commissioners court.

(b) Authorizes the commissioners court of a county to establish, maintain, and operate in cooperation with other counties a joint free county law library for the benefit of the cooperating counties in the same manner that a joint county library is authorized to be established and operated under Section 323.010 (Joint Library).

SECTION 2. Amends Section 323.023(b), Local Government Code, as follows:

(b) Authorizes the county law library fund to be used only for, in addition to certain other purposes, establishing and maintaining a self-help center to provide resources to county residents representing themselves in legal matters. Makes nonsubstantive changes.

SECTION 3. Effective date: upon passage or September 1, 2017.