
Court Reporters Certification Board

Staff Contact: Katrina Daniel

S.B. 273 Shapleigh (Dunnam/Hartnett)

Summary

Since 1914, the courts of Texas have identified the need to preserve a record of court proceedings, and have considered court reporters to be officers of the court. In 1977, the Legislature created the Court Reporters Certification Board (the Board) to regulate the court reporter profession. In fiscal year 2002, the Legislature appropriated \$156,525 to the Board. Agency appropriations were offset by \$303,873 in fees paid into the General Revenue Fund from licensees. The agency currently employs three staff.

The Board's major functions include:

- administering the quarterly court reporter examination and certifying court reporters;
- registering court reporting firms; and
- processing complaints and taking disciplinary action against certified court reporters and court reporting firms.

Senate Bill 273 contains all of the Sunset Commission's recommendations, and several additional provisions affecting the Board. Senate Bill 273 continues the Board and enacts several provisions that conform the agency's operations and licensing procedures to standard practices seen in other regulatory bodies. The legislation also merges the Board into the Office of Court Administration for administrative purposes. The list below summarizes the major provisions of S.B. 273, and a more detailed discussion follows.

Sunset Provisions

1. Continue the Court Reporters Certification Board for 12 Years.
2. Conform Key Elements of the Board's Programs to Commonly Applied Occupational Licensing Practices.

Provisions Added by the Legislature

3. Administratively Attach the Board to the Office of Court Administration.
4. Clarify the Application of Texas Laws Governing Court Reporters.

Sunset Provisions

1. Continue the Court Reporters Certification Board for 12 Years.

Senate Bill 273 continues the functions of the Court Reporters Certification Board for the standard 12-year period to certify court reporters and register court reporting firms.

2. Conform Key Elements of the Board's Programs to Commonly Applied Occupational Licensing Practices.

The bill includes seven provisions that bring the Board in line with standard licensing agency practices, consisting of the following.

- Requires the Board to define which criminal convictions disqualify an individual from licensure.
- Requires the Board to adopt a Court Reporter's Code of Ethics.
- Eliminates onerous complaint filing requirements.
- Authorizes the Board to adopt a policy allowing staff to dismiss cases without Board approval.
- Authorizes the Board to levy administrative penalties, and requires a penalty matrix in procedure.
- Requires the Board to make information available to the public on its Web site or through email.
- Requires the Board to post information on its Web site regarding conditions that may negatively affect certification.

Provisions Added by the Legislature

3. Administratively Attach the Board to the Office of Court Administration.

Senate Bill 273 requires the Board to receive administrative support from the Office of Court Administration, while allowing the Board to retain its policy authority in the regulation of court reporters.

4. Clarify the Application of Texas Laws Governing Court Reporters.

The legislation ensures that Texas state laws governing court reporters and court reporting firms do not apply to firms and court reporters outside of Texas. Because some larger court reporting firms have branches in Texas as well as other states, concerns arose that Texas laws may affect branches in other states. The bill clarifies that the laws only apply in Texas.

Fiscal Implication Summary

Senate Bill 273 transfers the administrative support of the Court Reporters Board to the Office of Court Administration, resulting in a positive fiscal impact of \$60,000 to the State over the biennium. The savings are attributable to a reduction of one staff position and associated costs.

Fiscal Year	Savings to the General Revenue Fund
2004	\$30,000
2005	\$30,000
2006	\$30,000
2007	\$30,000
2008	\$30,000

