



LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

March 24, 2015

FROM: Michele Smith, TADC President

This is an update on recent actions regarding [HB 1603](#), by Jason Villalba (R-Dallas), relating to the creation of Chancery Courts, and [HB 1644](#) by John Smithee (R-Amarillo), the Lawyers Civility Oath.

As TADC previously reported, [HB 1603](#) by Villalba, establishes a seven-member chancery court with civil jurisdiction concurrent with the district courts for virtually all contract and business-related actions involving entities organized under the Business Organizations Code. The court has statewide jurisdiction over any matter within its purview. Chancery judges are appointed by the Governor with the advice and consent of the Senate. Judges serve staggered six-year terms and are eligible for reappointment. Appeals from the Chancery Court are to a Chancery Appeals Court consisting of seven active court of appeals justices appointed by the Governor

[HB 1603](#) was heard before the House Business and Industry Committee today, March 24, 2015. The TADC position was represented by President Michele Smith who offered testimony **AGAINST** the legislation citing numerous concerns including serious access to justice issues, cases being handled by appointed judges who never stand for election, loss of local control by local judges, funding, logistical concerns and whether there is real need for the creation of a specialty court for businesses.

The bill was left pending in the committee.

The House Business and Industry Committee is listed below. If you have concerns with [HB 1603](#), we would ask that contact your Representative or a member of the committee and make them aware.

House Business & Industry Committee

Rep. Oliveira, René O. Chair

Rep. Simmons, Ron Vice Chair

Rep. Collier, Nicole

Rep. Fletcher, Allen

Rep. Rinaldi, Matt

Rep. Romero, Jr., Ramon

Rep. Villalba, Jason

HB 1644 by John Smithee, relating to the creation of the Lawyers Civility Oath was heard today in the House Judiciary and Civil Jurisprudence Committee. As the TADC has reported, this is a bill with universal support in the legal community which adds to the lawyer’s oath, a pledge “to conduct oneself with integrity and civility in dealing and communicating with the court and all parties”

The TADC testified **IN FAVOR** of **HB 1644** along with representatives of TEXABOTA and the TTLA. The bill was left pending in committee.

On a related note, **SB 534** by Senator Kirk Watson (D-Austin), the companion bill to **HB 1644**, was reported favorably from the full Senate, by a 31-0 vote, early this afternoon. TADC also testified **IN FAVOR** of this legislation.

We hope you find this information valuable. If you have any questions, concerns, or suggestions, please contact the TADC.

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