

# **[2015 Session] Fully Support the Legislative Appropriations Request for the Texas Commission on Jail Standards**

## **Policy Background:**

The Texas Commission on Jail Standards assists counties in complying with jail standards and trains Sheriffs and jail administrators in efforts to keep jail populations manageable. It also provides counties with much-needed and frequently requested technical assistance on the creation and operation of their jails and services. Through these efforts, the Commission protects Texas counties from costly federal lawsuits, facilitates safer environments for local jail staff and inmates, and better ensures the safe reentry of men and women to our communities.

Texas policy-makers should continue to support the Commission so it can successfully fulfill its mission, and they should provide adequate resources to help county jail facilities comply with the requirements set out by the Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA).

## **Key Facts:**

- The Commission is requesting less than \$2 million over two years, not including exceptional items.<sup>[1]</sup> To put this small figure into even greater perspective, the Commission's entire annual budget is what the Texas Department of Criminal Justice spends in roughly 3 hours.
- With this limited funding, the Commission is required to monitor and assist each of Texas' 254 counties, including the 244 facilities it has regulatory authority over.<sup>[2]</sup>
- In September 2003, the U.S. Congress unanimously passed PREA,<sup>[3]</sup> aimed at preventing sexual assault and victimization in juvenile facilities, adult prisons, jails, lockups, and other detention facilities. Over the course of 10 years, experts around the country developed what have become the PREA standards in an effort to substantially reduce the occurrences of prison rape in adult and juvenile facilities. PREA standards are mandatory, and state and local facilities that do not comply with federal standards stand to lose 5% of particular federal funds.

Additionally, states and localities that are not in compliance with the standards may be vulnerable to litigation.

### Relevant Bills:

- **Bill Number:** [HB 1](#) (author: Otto | sponsor: Nelson)  
**Bill Caption:** General Appropriations Bill.  
**Hearing Notice:** House Appropriations Committee, Subcommittee on Articles I, IV & V, [Notice of Public Hearing on February 19, 2015](#)  
**Outcome:** **Effective 9/1/15**
- **Bill Number:** [SB 2](#) (Nelson)  
**Bill Caption:** General Appropriations Bill.  
**Hearing Notice:** Senate Finance Committee, [Notice of Public Hearing on February 23, 2015](#)

### Other TCJE Materials:

- **Report:** *Texas Commission on Jail Standards: The State's Solution for Implementing a Strong County Jail System, While Protecting Counties From Liability* [December 2012]

### Outside Publications:

- Texas Commission on Jail Standards, *Legislative Appropriations Request for Fiscal Years 2016 and 2017*
- Legislative Budget Board, *Summary Tables for Legislative Budget Estimates (House 2016-17 Biennium)* – See Figure 1, Article V
- Legislative Budget Board, *Recommendations: House Version* – See Article V [V-26, page 616]
- Legislative Budget Board, *Recommendations: Senate Version* – See Article V [V-26, page 615]

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[1] Texas Commission on Jail Standards, *Legislative Appropriations Request For Fiscal Years 2016 and 2017*, July 28, 2014, p. 2.A. (page 2 of 2).

[2] Ibid, p. 1 of 3.

[3] Prison Rape Elimination Act of 2003 (PREA), 42 U.S.C. §§ 15601-15609 (2003).