

CHAPTER 833

H.B. No. 253

AN ACT

relating to providing a uniform jury handbook to jurors in a civil or criminal case.

Be it enacted by the Legislature of the State of Texas:

SECTION 1. Chapter 23, Government Code, is amended by adding Subchapter C to read as follows:

SUBCHAPTER C. UNIFORM JURY HANDBOOK

Sec. 23.201. DEFINITION. In this subchapter, "state bar" means the State Bar of Texas.

Sec. 23.202. UNIFORM JURY HANDBOOK; CONTENTS. (a) The state bar shall publish a uniform jury handbook that:

- (1) informs jurors in lay terminology of the duties and responsibilities of a juror;
- (2) explains basic trial procedures and legal terminology; and
- (3) provides other practical information relating to jury service.

(b) The state bar shall review and update the uniform jury handbook annually. A Spanish language version of the handbook shall be published and made available.

Sec. 23.203. DISTRIBUTION OF HANDBOOK. (a) The state bar shall distribute copies of the uniform jury handbook to each trial court of this state in sufficient numbers to meet the requirements of this subchapter.

(b) The clerk of a trial court shall provide each juror in a civil or criminal case with a copy of the uniform jury handbook. The juror shall read the handbook before the juror begins jury service.

(c) The handbook is a public document. The state bar or a trial court may distribute the handbook to promote the public's understanding of jury service.

Sec. 23.204. CONFLICT WITH INSTRUCTION OR CHARGE. If a provision of the uniform jury handbook is in conflict with an instruction or charge of a trial judge in a case, the instruction or charge supersedes the provision of the handbook.

SECTION 2. (a) A legislative oversight committee shall jointly develop with the State Bar of Texas the uniform jury handbook required by Subchapter C, Chapter 23, Government Code, as added by this Act. The speaker of the house of representatives shall appoint five members of the house of representatives to serve on the committee. The lieutenant governor shall appoint five members of the senate to serve on the committee. The speaker of the house of representatives and the lieutenant governor shall make the appointments required by this subsection not later than October 1, 1993.

(b) The State Bar of Texas shall publish and distribute the uniform jury handbook as required by this Act not later than January 1, 1994.

SECTION 3. This Act takes effect September 1, 1993, except that Section 1 takes effect January 1, 1994.

SECTION 4. The importance of this legislation and the crowded condition of the calendars in both houses create an emergency and an imperative public necessity that the constitutional rule requiring bills to be read on three several days in each house be suspended, and this rule is hereby suspended.

Passed by the House on April 29, 1993, by a non-record vote; the House refused to concur in Senate amendments to H.B. No. 253 on May 18, 1993, and requested the appointment of a conference committee to consider the differences between the two houses; the House adopted the conference committee report on H.B. No. 253 on May 27, 1993, by a non-record vote; passed by the Senate, with amendments, on May 13, 1993, by a viva-voce vote; at the request of the House, the Senate appointed a conference committee to consider the differences between the two houses; the Senate adopted the conference committee report on H.B. No. 253 on May 27, 1993, by a viva-voce vote.

Approved June 19, 1993.

Effective Sept. 1, 1993, except Section 1 effective Jan. 1, 1994.