

# BILL ANALYSIS: HB 470

BY Judge Shepard

MARCH 2025

## ISSUE

Public safety concerns are on the rise in Austin, prompting increased attention from Texans and their elected officials. In 2022, both the violent crime rate and the property crime rate in Austin were higher than the national average ([U.S. News & World Report, n.d.](#)). Further, Austin's homicide rate was "trending above the state and national average" as of July 2024 ([Velez, 2024](#)). "The last four years have definitely been the most murderers that we've ever had," the Austin Police Department reported ([Velez, 2024](#)). The challenges surrounding public safety have been compounded by Austin's management of its law enforcement resources. A key factor in this issue is the jurisdictional divide in the city. The area surrounding the Capitol, along with numerous other-owned buildings, does not fall under the City of Austin's authority. Instead, this region, known as the Capitol Complex, is under state jurisdiction.

The Capitol Complex was first created by the Texas Legislature in 1993 and amended in 1997. Law enforcement and public safety within the Capitol Complex are managed by the Texas Department of Public Safety. The present boundaries of the Capitol Complex are to the north by Martin Luther King, Jr., Boulevard, to the east by Trinity Street, to the west by Lavaca Street, and to the south by 10th Street, and includes the William P. Clements building on West 15th Street ([Texas State Preservation Board, n.d.](#)).

House Bill (HB) 470 seeks to increase the boundaries of the Capitol Complex, which would give the Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS) greater jurisdiction. This legislative initiative broadens the definition of the Capitol Complex to include additional areas and strengthens the Department of Public Safety's role in maintaining security. It introduces measures for modern security management, such as the regulation of unmanned aircraft, and establishes an interlocal agreement with the City of Austin to delineate responsibilities, thus ensuring a seamless and effective approach to safeguarding this central governmental hub. Through these provisions, the bill aims to bolster security, promote thorough coordination between agencies, and ensure fiscal responsibility in managing public safety resources.

## ANALYSIS

**Section 1** states that the bill may be known as the Texas Capitol Public Safety Protection Act.

**Section 2** begins by increasing the boundaries of the Capitol Complex. It adds to the Capitol Complex by increasing the southern, eastern, and western boundaries. This includes the following: the northern boundary at 10th Street, the eastern boundary at Brazo's Street, the western boundary at Colorado Street, and the southern boundary at Lady Bird Lake. It also adds that other locations may become part of the Capitol Complex, if they are approved by the commission.

**Section 3** states that the Department of Public Safety has "primary responsibility for law enforcement and security services within the boundaries of the Capitol Complex," including private property located within its

*continued*

boundaries ([HB 470, 2024, p. 2](#)). Next, it states that the director shall adopt rules regarding the use of unmanned aircraft (i.e., drones) and that these rules may prohibit their use in certain areas or grant permission for limited use in designated areas of the Capitol Complex. This section also mandates that an interlocal cooperation agreement between DPS and the City of Austin specifying responsibilities for public safety, general law enforcement, and parking enforcement be executed. This interlocal agreement will direct the City of Austin to carry out the responsibilities delegated to it and under the supervision of DPS. This interlocal agreement shall include a formula for calculating the cost incurred by DPS to police the Capitol Complex. This formula shall be used to show the costs to DPS for the preceding year for its role providing law enforcement services in the Capitol Complex, and shall be submitted to the Texas Comptroller.

**Section 4** states that once the comptroller has deducted the amount indicated by the formula for the cost of DPS to execute its law enforcement duties within the Capitol Complex, the comptroller may send the deducted share of tax revenue collected by the City of Austin to the General Revenue Fund. This amount can only be used for Capitol Complex law enforcement.

**Section 5** adds a requirement that the Department of Public Safety and the City of Austin must amend their agreement within 90 days after the effective date of this Act to ensure compliance with the new provisions.

**Section 6** states that the bill takes effect immediately if it receives a two-thirds vote of all members of both the Texas House and Texas Senate. If a two-thirds vote is not secured in each chamber, then the effective date of this bill is September 1, 2025.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

- Outline the key components of the interlocal agreement, possibly providing a template within the bill to streamline its implementation.
- Explain in detail the formula used to calculate the costs to DPS, and add an explanation as to what specific services are required.
- Clearly state how deductions from the City of Austin's tax share to fund certain services will directly benefit the Capitol Complex and how they will be managed within the Department of Public Safety.
- Attach a map that shows the expanded borders in order to accurately show the increase in size mandated by this bill.

## REFERENCE

HB 470. Filed. 89th Texas Legislature. Regular. (2025). <https://capitol.texas.gov/tlodocs/89R/billtext/html/HB00470I.htm>

Texas State Preservation Board. (n.d.). *Capitol complex map*. Retrieved February 13, 2025, from [https://tspb.texas.gov/plan/maps/doc/capitol\\_complex\\_map.pdf](https://tspb.texas.gov/plan/maps/doc/capitol_complex_map.pdf)

U.S. News & World Report. (n.d.). *Austin, Texas: Crime rate & safety*. Retrieved February 13, 2025, from <https://realestate.usnews.com/places/texas/austin/crime>

Velez, A. (2024, July 3). *Report shows Austin's homicide rate trends above state and national levels*. CBS Austin. <https://cbsaustin.com/news/local/report-shows-austins-homicide-rate-trends-above-state-and-national-levels>

