

2026

BAIL BOND HANDBOOK

TEXAS ASSOCIATION OF COUNTIES

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INTRODUCTION

This Handbook is designed and written as a reference tool. It is not intended to provide legal advice. Every situation is factually different, and your county attorney or outside legal counsel should be contacted to obtain legal advice. A county commissioners' court can employ legal counsel to advise and represent it in civil matters, and the commissioners' court can likewise employ legal counsel to represent the county's bail bond board in civil matters. Op. Tex. Att'y Gen. No. GA-0153 (2004).

Because the Texas Legislature made numerous and substantial changes to the Code of Criminal Procedure in the 89th legislative session 2025, for ease of reference, we have highlighted in yellow both the new statutes and the new portions of existing statutes.

As a result of the numerous changes to the applicable statutes, Flowers Davis, PLLC recommends that you consult legal counsel when attempting to navigate your way through these substantial changes in the law. Your county attorney or district attorney may be able to guide you through this new, and increasingly complex landscape. If not, the Legal Department at Texas Association of Counties or your TAC Law Enforcement Representative can assist you. Additionally, for TAC Members that have coverage through TAC, those members can call the TAC legal counsel normally assigned to your County for assistance. Flowers Davis, PLLC is always happy to help county government and county officials, and Lee Correa, Jose Castaneda, Robert Davis and the rest of the Flowers Davis Governmental Entity Defense Section will be happy to try to answer your questions. With TAC's guidance and educational programs, we all should be able to get through the initial training period associated with these new laws.

This Handbook incorporates statutory language that became effective on September 1, 2025; however, certain portions of existing statutes became effective on other dates. Where that is the case, we have included a footnote stating the effective date.

SUMMARY OF MAJOR UPDATES **FROM THE 89TH LEGISLATIVE SESSION**

1. Senate Bill No. 9

The passage of S.B. 9 brings in a multi-faceted approach to overhauling the pretrial practice of Texas.¹ The bill emphasized the institution of evidence-based practices, increased magistrate discretion to revoke bonds, prosecutorial input in limited situations, transparency of decision making, and limiting eligibility for cashless bonds. Judges are now mandated to incorporate the “Public Safety Report System” (PSRS) when setting bail. The PSRS is a system intended to provide a magistrate with a detailed report of an inmate’s criminal history and other relevant risk factors that will influence their decision in setting bail.² This PSRS report is now made available to the State’s attorney upon request. Notably, S.B. 9 specifically put the creation, management, and facilitation of the PSRS on the Office of Court Administration of the Texas Judicial System (OCA). Additionally, the bill grants the OCA the authority to provide grant funding to reimburse counties for costs related to system integration.

Moreover, S.B. 9 extensively modified Article 17.027 dealing with defendants who commit new felonies while previously released on bail.³ A county must now have a designated person to receive out-of-county electronic notices of new felony charges/potential violations of bail conditions. Additionally, the bill set a timeframe of “not later than the next business day after the date the defendant is taken before the magistrate...” for sending and receiving the notices. After the receipt of the electronic notice, the court from the underlying case “shall” consider whether to revoke or modify the terms or conditions of the underlying bond. Further, the bill carves out authority for a magistrate appointed under Chapter 54, Government Code to deny bail if a defendant meets certain criteria such as, (1) having two prior felony convictions; (2) committing a

¹ S.B. 9 created, changed, and reorganized an extensive number of statutes across different statutory codes. This Handbook covers the portions of S.B. 9 relevant to the bail process, which are contained mostly in Chapter 17 of the Code of Criminal Procedure. The following list includes statutes amended or created by S.B. 9 that the reader may wish to examine further:

Art. 16.24. Reporting of Conditions of Pretrial Intervention Program, TEX. CODE OF CRIM. PRO.
Art. 27.20. Confinement Before Sentencing on Plea of Guilty or Nolo Contendere for Certain Offenses, TEX. CODE OF CRIM. PRO.
Art. 42.01. Judgment, TEX. CODE OF CRIM. PRO.
Art. 42.0195. Finding Regarding Failure to Appear, TEX. CODE OF CRIM. PRO.
Art. 44.01. Appeal by State, TEX. CODE OF CRIM. PRO.
Art. 56A.051. General Rights, TEX. CODE OF CRIM. PRO.
Sec. 72.038. Bail Form, TEX. GOV’T CODE.
Sec. 51A.003(b). Notice to Victims, TEX. HUMAN RESOURCES CODE.

² For a more extensive list of the “relevant risk factors,” see the statutory changes in Art. 17.021 at pg. 15.

³ It is likely that a 2023 Attorney General Opinion prompted the Legislature to amend Art. 17.027. The Attorney General Opinion stated, pursuant to Texas Constitution article I, section 11a, only a district judge may deny bail to a person accused of a felony committed while on bail for a prior felony, regardless of which court is designated by 17.027(a)(1) to set bail. Tex. Att’y Gen. Op. AC-0002 (2023).

new felony while released on bail, parole, or community supervision; or (3) if the defendant is subject to an immigration detainer, just to name a few.⁴

Additionally, S.B. 9 created Art. 17.029, Code of Criminal Procedure. This new statute creates a review process for bail decisions made by magistrates who do not have jurisdiction to try the felony charged.⁵ An attorney representing the State must file, with the district clerk, a request to review a bail decision made by such a magistrate pursuant to Art. 17.028. After a request is filed, a district judge then has until the next business day to review a bail decision, and if the bail decision is modified to increase the amount of bail or to incorporate new conditions, the district judge shall issue a summons to the defendant and give him or her a reasonable opportunity to appear before issuing an arrest warrant. Conversely, S.B. 9 also created Art. 17.092 limiting which magistrates may reduce the bond amount or conditions set by a district judge.

Furthermore, S.B. 9 added violent offenses, along with a few other Penal Code violations, to the list of offenses precluding eligibility to cashless personal bonds.⁶ Also, S.B. 9 restructured the rules and language of Art. 17.071 to emphasize the extensive role the OCA is to take in managing charitable bail organizations. This made clear that a sheriff's office collaborates but does not handle administrative matters pertaining to charitable bail organizations posting bail for defendants.

Lastly, S.B. 9 modified Art. 44.01 to authorize the State to appeal a court order granting bail that is considered insufficient by the prosecuting attorney. The prosecuting attorney is limited by a list of offenses and other criteria in which bail amount may be appealed to the court of appeals. Furthermore, it should be noted that the court of appeals can affirm, modify, or reject the bail amount set and remand the case to the lower court with or without guidance of bail amount.

2. Senate Bill No. 1610

The Texas Legislature made it a priority with S.B. 1610 to enhance the tools of the Texas Civil Commitment Office and law enforcement when dealing with individuals who have been civilly committed as sexually violent predators under Chapter 841, Health and Safety Code. While S.B. 1610 creates new criminal offenses and modifies many others, it also modifies the magistration process and duties as it relates to location of magistration, timeframe, notice requirements for bail reductions, and personal bond disqualification.

In particular, S.B. 1610 amends Article 15.17 to allow a magistrate to perform the duties at the civil commitment facility, thus alleviating the need for transportation to and from a jail and the commitment facility in which the individual resides. However, the bill did not change the initial 48-hour timeframe of Art. 15.17 or the ability for magistration to occur via video conference.

⁴ See Article 17.027 at pg. 21 for the full list of criteria to be considered by a magistrate to deny bail.

⁵ Newly created Article 17.029 applies to all magistrates who are not district judges.

⁶ See Article 17.03 at pg. 29.

Additionally, an individual who has been civilly committed⁷ is now disqualified from release without bond for fine-only misdemeanors.⁸ Further, changes to Art. 17.091 impose a notice requirement to the State’s attorney for bail reductions related to a defendant who has been civilly committed.⁹ Moreover, S.B. 1610 also disqualifies a civilly committed individual from being released due to delay caused by the State’s inability to be ready for trial within 90 days of detention.¹⁰

Further, S.B. 1610 created Article 17.411 imposing mandatory and discretionary conditions of bond for civilly committed individuals.¹¹ Notably, Art. 17.411 grants a magistrate broad authority to levy “any reasonable condition of bond” related to safety of the community or the safety of a civil commitment facility. Lastly, Art. 17.411 mandates a magistrate revoke the bond of a committed individual if the magistrate finds by a preponderance of the evidence that an violation of bond occurred. These are only the most relevant changes made through S.B. 1610 as it pertains to bail bonds. Needless to say, many statutory changes have transpired related to civilly committed sexually violent predators. It would be prudent for sheriff’s offices and magistrates to research the proper designation and qualification of an individual as a person who has been civilly committed under Chapter 841, Health and Safety Code.¹²

3. Proposition 3

Proposition 3 was approved by 61% of Texas voters. Voters agreed with a constitutional amendment granting judges the authority to deny bail to individuals accused of certain violent or sexual felonies. The amendment adds Section 11d to Article 1 of the Texas Constitution. Notably, the new section sets the legal standard of proof for the prosecutor in a hearing denying bail---the prosecutor must show, by a preponderance of the evidence, that bail would not guarantee the defendant’s court appearance or, by clear and convincing evidence, that bail would not ensure public safety. To be sure, many of the prohibitions and standards to deny bail in Section 11d already existed to some degree in Sections 11a—11c of the Texas Constitution and throughout the Code of Criminal Procedure. However, Proposition 3 constitutionalized the existing procedures and standards, thereby making future changes to those statutes difficult to enact. Lastly, the new constitutional amendment provides a list of factors a judge or magistrate must consider. As

⁷ This Article applies to a person civilly committed under Chapter 841, Health and Safety Code (sexually violent predator), not Chapter 874, Health and Safety Code.

⁸ See Article 15.17(b) at pg. 11.

⁹ See Article 17.091 changes at pg. 50.

¹⁰ See Article 17.151 at pg. 56.

¹¹ See Article 17.411 at pg. 80 for conditions.

¹² It should be noted that while not necessarily relevant to bail bonds, S.B. 1610 modified Art. 66.102, Code of Criminal Procedure, to include information in the computerized criminal history system that an individual has been subject to any civil commitment order under Chapter 841, Health and Safety Code. That system is maintained by the Texas Department of Public Safety. See 17.021(h)(h-1).

previously mentioned, many of the factors were already considered by magistrates, under existing statutes, when considering denying bail.

I.

NON-BAIL BOND BOARD COUNTIES

In a county without a bail bond board, the taking of bail bonds is generally governed by Chapter 17 of the Texas Code of Criminal Procedure. Op. Tex. Att’y Gen. No. JC-0541 (2002); *see Castaneda v. Gonzalez*, 985 S.W.2d 500, 503 (Tex. App.—Corpus Christi 1988, no writ). Neither the sheriff nor other county officials in a non-bail bond board county may adopt licensing rules modeled on the Bail Bond Board Act contained within the Texas Occupations Code. Op. Tex. Att’y Gen. No. LO98-105 (1998). If your county does not have a bail bond board, the county and its officials are limited to complying with the provisions of Chapter 17 and the attorney general opinions and cases that interpret those provisions. This section of the handbook should help guide you through that process.

A. BAIL

1. WHAT IS BAIL

Bail is defined in Texas by the Texas Code of Criminal Procedure as follows:

a. Art. 17.01. Definition of “Bail”

“Bail” is the security given by the accused that he will appear and answer before the proper court the accusation brought against him, and includes a bail bond or a personal bond.

It must be recognized by county officials, and especially by magistrates, that bail is not meant as a punishment. It is meant to secure the appearance of the accused. The ability to be accorded reasonable bail is something that the founders of our nation believed in strongly enough to include in the Bill of Rights. Specifically, the Eighth Amendment leads off by stating that “excessive bail shall not be required . . .” From a practical standpoint, reasonable bail, and people who are willing to post reasonable bail for inmates, are essential to keeping jail population down. Pre-trial detainees should never be subjected to any form of punishment. Overcrowding our jails with inmates who should be allowed reasonable bail and afforded due process, subjects our sheriffs to unnecessary liability. Magistrates and judges enjoy absolute immunity for the performance of their judicial duties; whereas law enforcement officials are only afforded a qualified immunity, which is under increasing attack.

The primary intent of enacting the original “Bail Bondsman Act” in 1973, as well as all its subsequent amendments, was to preserve the constitutional right to bail and to provide “*practical procedures*” governing the giving or making of a bail bond to guarantee the appearance of the

accused in court. Op. Tex. Att’y Gen. No. JM-271 (1984); *see Robinson v. Hill*, 507 S.W.2d 521 (Tex. 1974). The right to bail is described below in Article 1.07:

b. Art. 1.07. Right to Bail

Any person shall be eligible for bail unless denial of bail is expressly permitted by the Texas Constitution or by other law. This provision may not be construed to prevent bail after indictment found upon examination of the evidence, in such manner as may be prescribed by law.

This Article was amended by the 2023 Legislature. While changes were made to the wording, which may make it appear that “any person” was not eligible for bail under the previous version of the statute, that is not the case. This change merely replaces “all prisoners” with “any person,” presumably to make it clear that anyone arrested has the right to bail, whether they are identified as an arrestee, detainee or inmate, not just someone classified as a “prisoner.” As stated above, the ability to be accorded reasonable bail is something that the founders of our nation believed in strongly enough to include in the Bill of Rights, specifically the Eighth Amendment. Of note, the exception which allows for denial of bail for capital offenses when proof is evident, is still in place, it is just referenced in the amended statute as “denial of bail is expressly permitted by the Texas Constitution or by other law.”

B. WHEN AND HOW BAIL MUST BE SET

1. ACCUSED MUST BE TAKEN BEFORE MAGISTRATE

Article 14.06 of the Code of Criminal Procedure provides as follows:

a. Art. 14.06. Must Take Offender Before Magistrate¹³

(a) Except as otherwise provided by this article, in each case enumerated in this Code, the person making the arrest or the person having custody of the person arrested shall take the person arrested or have him taken without unnecessary delay, **but not later than 48 hours after the person is arrested**, before the magistrate who may have ordered the arrest, before some magistrate of the county where the arrest was made without an order, or, to provide more expeditiously to the person arrested the warnings described by Article 15.17, before a magistrate in any other county of this state. The magistrate shall immediately perform the duties described in Article 15.17 in any manner permitted by that article.

(a-1) On presentation of a person arrested for committing an offense described by Article 17.292(a), the person making the arrest or the person having custody, as

¹³ Article 2A.151 and 2A.152 of the Texas Code of Criminal Procedure identify magistrates for purposes of setting bond and performing other duties of a “magistrate” listed under the Code of Criminal Procedure.

applicable, shall provide to the magistrate the information regarding the arrested person that is necessary for the issuance of a magistrate's order for emergency protection as provided by Article 17.292(d-3).¹⁴

(b) A peace officer who is charging a person, including a child, with committing an offense that is a Class C misdemeanor, other than an offense under Section 49.02, Penal Code, may, instead of taking the person before a magistrate, issue a citation to the person that contains:

1. written notice of the time and place the person must appear before a magistrate;
2. the name and address of the person charged;
3. the offense charged;
4. information regarding the alternatives to the full payment of any fine or costs assessed against the person, if the person is convicted of the offense and is unable to pay that amount; and
5. the following admonishment, in boldfaced or underlined type or in capital letters:¹⁵

“IF YOU ARE CONVICTED OF A MISDEMEANOR OFFENSE INVOLVING VIOLENCE WHERE YOU ARE OR WERE A SPOUSE, INTIMATE PARTNER, PARENT, OR GUARDIAN OF THE VICTIM OR ARE OR WERE INVOLVED IN ANOTHER, SIMILAR RELATIONSHIP WITH THE VICTIM, IT MAY BE UNLAWFUL FOR YOU TO POSSESS OR PURCHASE A FIREARM, INCLUDING A HANDGUN OR LONG GUN, OR AMMUNITION, PURSUANT TO FEDERAL LAW UNDER 18 U.S.C. SECTION 922(g)(9) OR SECTION 46.04(b), TEXAS PENAL CODE. IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS WHETHER THESE LAWS MAKE IT ILLEGAL FOR YOU TO POSSESS OR PURCHASE A FIREARM, YOU SHOULD CONSULT AN ATTORNEY.”

(c) If the person resides in the county where the offense occurred, a peace officer who is charging a person with committing an offense that is a Class A or B

¹⁴ See Article 17.292 on page 69.

¹⁵ The admonishment does not deal with any bonding issues.

misdemeanor may, instead of taking the person before a magistrate, issue a citation to the person that contains written notice of the time and place the person must appear before a magistrate of this state as described by Subsection (a), the name and address of the person charged, and the offense charged.

(d) Subsection (c) applies only to a person charged with committing an offense under:

- (1) Section 481.121, Health and Safety Code, if the offense is punishable under Subsection (b)(1) or (2) of that section;
- (1-a) Section 481.1161, Health and Safety Code, if the offense is punishable under Subsection (b)(1) or (2) of that section;
- (2) Section 28.03, Penal Code, if the offense is punishable under Subsection (b)(2) of that section;
- (3) Section 28.08, Penal Code, if the offense is punishable under Subsection (b)(2) or (3) of that section;
- (4) Section 31.03, Penal Code, if the offense is punishable under Subsection (e)(2)(A) of that section;
- (5) Section 31.04, Penal Code, if the offense is punishable under Subsection (e)(2) of that section;
- (5-a) Section 37.10, Penal Code, if the offense is for tampering with a temporary tag issued under Chapter 502 or 503, Transportation Code;
- (6) Section 38.114, Penal Code, if the offense is punishable as a Class B misdemeanor, or
- (7) Section 521.457, Transportation Code.

The bolded emphasis has been added to the code section referenced above.

As set forth in Article 14.06 above, a person arrested with or without a warrant must be taken before a magistrate **within 48 hours of arrest**, and the magistrate must perform the duties set forth in Article 15.17 (see below for this Article). One of those duties is to set the bond of the accused.

The 48-hour-rule is exceptionally important, not only for the purpose of setting a reasonable bond within a reasonable period of time, but also for complying with the Fourth

Amendment requirements relating to unreasonable seizures. If an accused is held for more than 48 hours after a warrantless arrest, it presumptively violates the Fourth Amendment to the United States Constitution. *County of Riverside v. McLaughlin*, 500 U.S. 44, 55-57, 111 S.Ct. 1661, 114 L.Ed.2d 49 (1991). The Fourth Amendment requires a prompt determination of probable cause by a magistrate following a warrantless arrest, and failure to provide such a determination within 48 hours shifts the burden to the government to demonstrate a bona fide emergency or extraordinary circumstances justifying the lengthier delay. *Id.*; *United States v. Adekunle*, 2 F.3d 559, 561 (5th Cir. 1993).

What to do in situations in which a magistrate has not determined whether probable cause exists within the required amount of time, is discussed later in this Handbook.

2. DUTIES OF MAGISTRATE AND ARRESTING OFFICER FOLLOWING ARREST

In cases where an arrest has been made either with or without a warrant, the magistrate has certain duties, as set forth below, that must be performed. One of those duties is to set bond. Article 15.17 states as follows:

a. Art. 15.17. Duties of Arresting Officer and Magistrate

(a) In each case enumerated in this Code, the person making the arrest or the person having custody of the person arrested shall without unnecessary delay, **but not later than 48 hours after the person is arrested**,¹⁶ take the person arrested or have him taken before some magistrate of the county where the accused was arrested or, to provide more expeditiously to the person arrested the warnings described by this article, before a magistrate in any other county of this state. The arrested person may be taken before the magistrate in person or the image of the arrested person may be presented to the magistrate by means of a videoconference. **If the arrested person is civilly committed as a sexually violent predator under Chapter 841, Health and Safety Code, and residing at a civil commitment facility as defined by Section 1.07, Penal Code, the magistrate may also choose to perform the duties of this article at the civil commitment facility.** The magistrate shall inform in clear language the person arrested, either in person or through a videoconference, of the accusation against him and of any affidavit filed therewith, of his right to retain counsel, of his right to remain silent, of his right to have an attorney present during any interview with peace officers or attorneys representing the state, of his right to terminate the interview at any time, and of his right to have an examining trial. The magistrate shall also inform the person arrested of the

¹⁶ To emphasize the standard again, holding an inmate for more than 48 hours after a warrantless arrest, presumptively violates the Fourth Amendment. *County of Riverside v. McLaughlin*, 500 U.S. 44, 55-57, 111 S.Ct. 1661, 114 L.Ed.2d 49 (1991). If such a determination is not made within 48 hours, the government must show an emergency, or extraordinary circumstances caused the delay. *Id.*; *United States v. Adekunle*, 2 F.3d 559, 561 (5th Cir. 1993).

person's right to request the appointment of counsel if the person cannot afford counsel. The magistrate shall inform the person arrested of the procedures for requesting appointment of counsel. If applicable, the magistrate shall inform the person that the person may file the affidavit described by Article 17.028(f). If the person does not speak and understand the English language or is deaf, the magistrate shall inform the person in a manner consistent with Articles 38.30 and 38.31, as appropriate. The magistrate shall ensure that reasonable assistance in completing the necessary forms for requesting appointment of counsel is provided to the person at the same time. If the person arrested is indigent and requests appointment of counsel and if the magistrate is authorized under Article 26.04 to appoint counsel for indigent defendants in the county, the magistrate shall appoint counsel in accordance with Article 1.051. If the magistrate is not authorized to appoint counsel, the magistrate shall without unnecessary delay, but not later than 24 hours after the person arrested requests appointment of counsel, transmit, or cause to be transmitted to the court or to the courts' designee authorized under Article 26.04 to appoint counsel in the county, the forms requesting the appointment of counsel. The magistrate shall also inform the person arrested that he is not required to make a statement and that any statement made by him may be used against him. The magistrate shall allow the person arrested reasonable time and opportunity to consult counsel and shall, after determining whether the person is currently on bail for a separate criminal offense and whether the bail decision is subject to Article 17.027, admit the person arrested to bail if allowed by law. A record of the communication between the arrested person and the magistrate shall be made. The record shall be preserved until the earlier of the following dates: (1) the date on which the pretrial hearing ends; or (2) the 91st day after the date on which the record is made if the person is charged with a misdemeanor or the 120th day after the date on which the record is made if the person is charged with a felony. For purposes of this subsection, "videoconferencing" means a two-way electronic communication of image and sound between the arrested person and the magistrate and includes secure Internet videoconferencing.

(a-1) If a magistrate is provided written or electronic notice of credible information that may establish reasonable cause to believe that a person brought before the magistrate has a mental illness or is a person with an intellectual disability, the magistrate shall conduct the proceedings described by Article 16.22¹⁷ or 17.032, as appropriate.

¹⁷ S.B. 2479 was passed in the 88th legislative session, amending Article 16.22 of the Code of Criminal Procedure to require jails to report any offender believed to have a mental illness or intellectual disability to the magistrate judge. Previously, only people facing a Class B misdemeanor or higher offenses had to be reported to the magistrate. The magistrate is no longer required to order the interview and collection of other information if the defendant was only arrested or charged with an offense punishable as a Class C misdemeanor. This bill added Health and Safety Code § 573.012(d-1) and amended § 573.012(h) so that a peace officer who transports an apprehended person to a competency restoration facility is not required to remain at the facility and may now leave the facility

(a-2) On presentation of a person arrested for committing an offense described by Article 17.292(a), the person making the arrest or the person having custody, as applicable, shall provide to the magistrate the information regarding the arrested person that is necessary for the issuance of a magistrate's order for emergency protection as provided by Article 17.292(d-3).

(b) After an accused charged with a misdemeanor punishable by fine only is taken before a magistrate under Subsection (a) and the magistrate has identified the accused with certainty, the magistrate may release the accused without bond and order the accused to appear at a later date for arraignment in the applicable justice court or municipal court. The order must state in writing the time, date, and place of the arraignment, and the magistrate must sign the order. The accused shall receive a copy of the order on release. If an accused fails to appear as required by the order, the judge of the court in which the accused is required to appear shall issue a warrant for the arrest of the accused. If the accused is arrested and brought before the judge, the judge may admit the accused to bail, and in admitting the accused to bail, the judge should set as the amount of bail an amount double that generally set for the offense for which the accused was arrested. This subsection does not apply to an accused who:

- (1) has previously been convicted of a felony or a misdemeanor other than a misdemeanor punishable by fine only; or
- (2) is civilly committed as a sexually violent predator under Chapter 841, Health and Safety Code, at the time of the offense.

(c) When a deaf accused is taken before a magistrate under this article or Article 14.06 of this Code, an interpreter appointed by the magistrate qualified and sworn as provided in Article 38.31 of this Code shall interpret the warning required by those articles in a language that the accused can understand, including but not limited to sign language.

(d) If a magistrate determines that a person brought before the magistrate after an arrest authorized by Article 14.051 of this code was arrested unlawfully, the magistrate shall release the person from custody.¹⁸ If the magistrate determines that

immediately after the peace officer and provides to the facility the required documentation and after the person is taken into custody by appropriate facility staff. S.B. 2479 took effect September 1, 2023.

¹⁸ An arrest under Article 14.051 is a warrantless arrest by an officer from another state who is in fresh pursuit of a fleeing felon. As stated above, if an accused is held for more than 48 hours after a warrantless arrest, it presumptively violates the Fourth Amendment to the United States Constitution as established in *County of Riverside v. McLaughlin*, 500 U.S. 44, 55-57, 111 S.Ct. 1661, 114 L.Ed.2d 49 (1991). The Fourth Amendment requires a prompt determination of probable cause following a warrantless arrest, and failure to provide such a determination within 48

the arrest was lawful, the person arrested is considered a fugitive from justice for the purposes of Article 51.13 of this code, and the disposition of the person is controlled by that article.

(e) In each case in which a person arrested is taken before a magistrate as required by Subsection (a) or Article 15.18(a), a record shall be made of:

- (1) the magistrate informing the person of the person's right to request appointment of counsel;
- (2) the magistrate asking the person whether the person wants to request appointment of counsel; and
- (3) whether the person requested appointment of counsel.

(f) A record required under Subsection (a) or (e) may consist of written forms, electronic recordings, or other documentation as authorized by procedures adopted in the county under Article 26.04(a). The counsel for the defendant may obtain a copy of the record on payment of a reasonable amount to cover the costs of reproduction or, if the defendant is indigent, the court shall provide a copy to the defendant without charging a cost for the copy.

(g) If a person charged with an offense punishable as a misdemeanor appears before a magistrate in compliance with a citation issued under Article 14.06(b) or (c), the magistrate shall perform the duties imposed by this article in the same manner as if the person had been arrested and brought before the magistrate by a peace officer. After the magistrate performs the duties imposed by this article, the magistrate except for good cause shown may release the person on personal bond. If a person who was issued a citation under Article 14.06(c) fails to appear as required by that citation, the magistrate before which the person is required to appear shall issue a warrant for the arrest of the accused.

(h) Not later than 24 hours after the time a magistrate determines that no probable cause exists to believe that a person committed the offense for which the person was arrested, the magistrate shall enter in the record written findings to support that finding.

We believe the addition of Subsection (h) will make officers' Probable Cause Affidavits that much more important because Magistrates will likely incorporate the Probable Cause Affidavit language into his or her findings. As a reminder, it is important to strike the appropriate

hours shifts the burden to the government to demonstrate a bona fide emergency or extraordinary circumstances justifying the lengthier delay. *Id.*; *United States v. Adekunle*, 2 F.3d 559, 561 (5th Cir. 1993).

balance between making too much information public in a Probable Cause Affidavit and providing enough information to support a finding of probable cause.

Going back to time-tested law, it is still safe to say that a magistrate may still not set bail by *telephone*. Op. Tex. Att’y Gen. No. DM-0057 (1991). A court also may not require aailable defendant to satisfy a “split bond,” where a portion of the bond amount is designated as a personal bond and the remaining portion of the bond amount is a secured bail bond backed by a surety or paid with cash. Op. Tex. Att’y Gen. No. JC-0215 (2000). As is set forth in *Ex parte Rodriguez*, 583 S.W.2d 792 (Tex. Crim. App. 1979) and *Ex parte Deaton*, 582 S.W.2d 151 (Tex. Crim. App. 1979), a court does not have discretion to require a cash bond or security bond *to the exclusion of the other*. Op. Tex. Att’y Gen. No. GA-0048 (2003). In other words, the court cannot insist on a cash bond only, but must set an amount for the bond that can be paid in cash or that can be satisfied with a surety bond. Following these precedents, the Court of Criminal Appeals in *Professional Bondsmen of Texas v. Carey*, 762 S.W.2d 691 (Tex. App.—Amarillo 1988, no writ) and *Ex parte Tucker*, 977 S.W.2d 713 (Tex. App.—Fort Worth 1998), *pet. dismiss’d*, 3 S.W.3d 676 (Tex. Crim. App. 1999)(per curiam) determined that a court also does not have authority to require a partial cash or surety bond to a personal bond, or to permit or require a cash deposit of less than the full amount of the bail set. Op. Tex. Att’y Gen. No. GA-0048 (2003). A court has discretion to set the amount of bail, but not to require that bail be secured in a particular manner, or to impose conditions not contemplated by Chapter 17. Op. Tex. Att’y Gen. No. GA-0048 (2003).

C. DEFINITION AND REQUIREMENTS OF BAIL BONDS

1. WHAT IS A BAIL BOND

A “bail bond” is defined by the Texas Code of Criminal Procedure, and includes “surety bonds,” “cash bonds” and “personal bonds.” The Code of Criminal Procedure specifically defines “bail bond” as follows:

a. Art. 17.02. Definition of “Bail Bond”

A “bail bond” is a written undertaking entered into by the defendant and the defendant’s sureties for the appearance of the principal therein before a court or magistrate to answer a criminal accusation; provided, however, that the defendant on execution of the bail bond may deposit with the custodian of funds of the court in which the prosecution is pending current money of the United States in the amount of the bond in lieu of having sureties signing the same. Any cash funds deposited under this article shall be receipted for by the officer receiving the funds and, on order of the court, be refunded in the amount shown on the face of the receipt less the administrative fee authorized by Section 117.055, Local Government Code, if applicable, after the defendant complies with the conditions of the defendant’s bond, to:

- (1) any person in the name of whom a receipt was issued, including the defendant if a receipt was issued to the defendant; or
- (2) the defendant, if no other person is able to produce a receipt for the funds.

It is important to note that this section of the Texas Code of Criminal Procedure mentions three types of “bail bonds.” The first type of bail bond is a bond executed by the criminal defendant as the “principal” and one or more “sureties” to secure his appearance before the Court, which is often referred to as a “surety bond.” The second type of bond addressed in Article 17.02 of the Code of Criminal Procedure is what is often referred to as a “cash bond.”¹⁹ A “cash bond” occurs when the criminal defendant executes the bond himself as principal and posts the entire amount of the bond in cash with the “custodian of funds of the court” in lieu of having sureties sign the bond. The third type of bond is referred to as a “personal bond,” which is often referred to as a “PR Bond,” wherein the person may be released from jail in certain cases and upon certain conditions.

“Cash bonds” need no further detailed explanation, but the requirements for “surety bonds” and “personal bonds” will have to be examined in depth in the following sections of this paper.

D. PUBLIC SAFETY REPORT SYSTEM

Article 17.021 is a code section added by the Texas Legislature in 2021. The Article adds a new type of report that must be obtained prior to any hearing under Art. 15.17, in which an arrestee appears before a magistrate to have probable cause determined after a warrantless arrest, and in which the magistrate instructs the arrestee on his or her Miranda rights and sets bail and bond. The purpose of this report is to provide the magistrate with information to assist the magistrate in determining the amount and type of bond to set.

¹⁹ Article 17.02 provides for the refund of a cash bail bond. *See* TEX. CODE CRIM. PRO. ANN. art. 17.02 (2022). Prior to a 2011 amendment, article 17.02 provided that the refund of a cash bail bond could be made only to the defendant. *See* Act of May 27, 1965, 59th Leg., R.S., ch. 722, 1965 Tex. Gen. Laws 317, 374 (“Any cash funds deposited ... shall be refunded to the defendant . . .”). With the amendment, article 17.02 now provides that cash funds be refunded in the amount shown on the face of the receipt less the administrative fee authorized by Section 117.055, LOCAL GOVERNMENT CODE, to (1) any person in the name of whom a receipt was issued, including the defendant if a receipt was issued to the defendant; or (2) the defendant, if no other person is able to produce a receipt for the funds. TEX. CODE CRIM. PRO. ANN. art. 17.02. This change was made because family members or friends would often post the cash bond, the defendant would get the money, and the person actually posting the cash bond would never get the money back.

1. PUBLIC SAFETY REPORTS

(a) Art. 17.021. Public Safety Report System²⁰

(a) The Office of Court Administration of the Texas Judicial System shall develop and maintain a public safety report system that is available for use for purposes of Article 17.15.

(b) The public safety report system must:²¹

- (1) state the requirements for setting bail under Article 17.15 and list each factor provided by Article 17.15(a);
- (2) provide the defendant's name and date of birth or, if impracticable, other identifying information, the cause number of the case, if available, and the offense for which the defendant was arrested;
- (3) provide information on the eligibility of the defendant for a personal bond;
- (4) provide information regarding the applicability of any required or discretionary bond conditions;
- (5) provide, in summary form, the criminal history of the defendant, including information regarding:
 - (A) previous misdemeanor or felony convictions;
 - (B) pending charges;
 - (C) **any** previous sentences imposing a term of confinement;
 - (D) **any** previous convictions or pending charges for:
 - (i) offenses that are offenses involving violence as defined by Article 17.03; or
 - (ii) offenses involving violence directed against a peace officer;

²⁰ Changes and additions to Article 17.021 were made by S.B. 9.

²¹ Subsection (b) has an effective date of April 1, 2026.

(E) previous failures of the defendant to appear in court following release on bail;

(F) whether the defendant is currently on community supervision, parole, or mandatory supervision for an offense;

(G) whether the defendant is currently released on bail or participating in a pretrial intervention program and any conditions of that release or participation;

(H) outstanding warrants for the defendant's arrest that have been entered into the National Crime Information Center database or the Texas Crime Information System established under Section 411.0541, Government Code, including a warrant issued under Article 42A.751 of this code or Section 508.251, Government Code; and

(I) any current protective orders, as defined by Section 72.151, Government Code, for which the defendant is the subject; and

(6) be designed to collect and maintain the information provided on a bail form submitted under Section 72.038, Government Code.

(c) The office shall provide access to the public safety report system to the appropriate officials in each county and each municipality at no cost. This subsection may not be construed to require the office to provide an official or magistrate with any equipment or support related to accessing or using the public safety report system.

(c-1) On request by an attorney representing the state, the office shall provide to the attorney access to the public safety report system for the purpose of allowing the attorney to access a bail form submitted to the office under Section 72.038, Government Code.²²

(d) The public safety report system may not:

(1) be the only item relied on by a judge or magistrate in making a bail decision;

²² Subsection (c-1) has an effective date of January 1, 2026.

- (2) include a score, rating, or assessment of a defendant's risk or make any recommendation regarding the appropriate bail for the defendant; or
- (3) include any information other than the information listed in Subsection (b).

(e) The office shall use the information maintained under Subsection (b)(6) to collect data from the preceding state fiscal year regarding the number of defendants for whom bail was set after arrest, including:

- (1) the number for each category of offense;
- (2) the number of personal bonds; and
- (3) the number of monetary bonds.

(f) Not later than December 1 of each year, the office shall submit a report containing the data described by Subsection (e) to the governor, lieutenant governor, speaker of the house of representatives, and presiding officers of the standing committees of each house of the legislature with primary jurisdiction over the judiciary.

(g) The Department of Public Safety shall assist the office in implementing the public safety report system established under this article and shall provide criminal history record information to the office in the electronic form necessary for the office to implement this article.

(h) The public safety report system must be configured to allow a county or municipality to integrate the jail records management system and case management systems used by the county with the public safety report system.²³

(h-1) The office may provide grants to reimburse counties and municipalities for costs related to integrating the systems described by Subsection (h). The office is not required to provide a grant under this subsection unless the office is appropriated money for that purpose. This subsection expires August 31, 2027.²⁴

(i) The office may modify the public safety report system to incorporate technological advances to the system's features regarding notices and to any other

²³ Subsection (h) has an effective date of January 1, 2026.

²⁴ Subsection (h-1) has an effective date of January 1, 2026.

processes the office determines will enhance the system's availability to protect the public.

(b) Art. 17.022. Public Safety Report²⁵

(a) A magistrate considering the release on bail of a defendant charged with an offense punishable as a Class B misdemeanor or any higher category of offense shall order that:

- (1) the personal bond office established under Article 17.42 for the county in which the defendant is being detained, if a personal bond office has been established for that county, or other suitably trained person including judicial personnel or sheriff's department personnel, use the public safety report system developed under Article 17.021 to prepare a public report with respect to the defendant; and
- (2) the public safety report prepared under Subdivision (1) be provided to the magistrate as soon as practicable but not later than 48 hours after the defendant's arrest.

(b) A magistrate may not, without the consent of the sheriff, order a sheriff or sheriff's department personnel to prepare a public safety report under this article.

(c) Notwithstanding Subsection (a), a magistrate may personally prepare a public safety report, before or while making a bail decision, using the public safety report system developed under Article 17.021.

(d) The magistrate shall:

- (1) consider the public safety report before setting bail; and
- (2) promptly but not later than 72 hours after the time bail is set, submit the bail form described by Section 72.038, Government Code, in accordance with that section.

(e) In the manner described by this article, a magistrate may, but is not required to, order, prepare, or consider a public safety report in setting bail for a defendant charged only with a misdemeanor punishable by fine only or a defendant who receives a citation under Article 14.06(c). If ordered, the report shall be prepared for the time and place for an appearance as indicated in the citation.

²⁵ Changes and additions to Article 17.022 were made by S.B. 9.

(f) A magistrate may set bail for a defendant charged only with an offense punishable as a misdemeanor without ordering, preparing, or considering a public safety report if the public safety report system is unavailable for longer than 12 hours due to a technical failure at the Office of Court Administration of the Texas Judicial System.

(g) In the manner described by this article, a magistrate may order, prepare, or consider a public safety report in setting bail for a defendant who is not in custody at the time the report is ordered, prepared, or considered.

Aside from Class C misdemeanors, the only exception to the requirement for magistrates to receive the Public Safety Report within 48 hours and consider the Public Safety Report in setting bail, is for misdemeanor charges, and only then if the Public Safety Report System is unavailable for 12 hours due to a technical failure at the Office of Court Administration. The magistrate then has 72 hours following the time that bail is set to tender a required report form to the Office of Court Administration in compliance with Section 72.038, Government Code. This form is not a court order, but rather a data collection tool for the Office of Court Administration.

The magistrate cannot order the sheriff or sheriff's office personnel to prepare the Public Safety Report without the sheriff's consent, but, presumably, the magistrate could order the personal bond office or judicial staff to prepare the Public Safety Report. This Article also allows the magistrate to prepare the report himself before or at the time of setting bail.

We do not express any opinion regarding the new amendments and the arguments against them. Regardless of these arguments, the sheriff must use his very best efforts to get the arrestee before a magistrate within 48 hours of arrest to avoid potential liability. Hopefully, as education of the new amendments increases, and as magistrates and others in the criminal justice process become more familiar with the laws as they now exist, the process will become faster and more workable. If the sheriff in a county simply cannot find a magistrate willing to complete this process within 48 hours, we believe that there is a workable solution for sheriffs to avoid potential liability for an Eighth Amendment violation. We address that solution as we go through the Articles in this Handbook.

E. AUTHORITY TO RELEASE ON BAIL

1. WHEN A DEFENDANT MAY BE RELEASED ON BAIL

a. Art. 17.023. Authority to Release on Bail in Certain Cases

- (a) This article applies only to a defendant charged with an offense that is:
- (1) punishable as a felony; or
 - (2) a misdemeanor punishable by confinement.

(b) Notwithstanding any other law, a defendant to whom this article applies may be released on bail only by a magistrate who is:

(1) any of the following:

(A) a resident of this state;

(B) a justice of the peace serving under Section 27.054 or 27.055, Government Code; or

(C) a judge or justice serving under Chapter 74, Government Code; and

(2) in compliance with the training requirements of Article 17.024.

(c) A magistrate is not eligible to release on bail a defendant described by Subsection (a) if the magistrate:

(1) has been removed from office by impeachment, by the supreme court, by the governor on address to the legislature, by a tribunal reviewing a recommendation of the State Commission on Judicial Conduct, or by the legislature's abolition of the magistrate's court; or

(2) has resigned from office after having received notice that formal proceedings by the State Commission on Judicial Conduct have been instituted as provided by Section 33.022, Government Code, and before final disposition of the proceedings.

b. Art. 17.024. Training on Duties Regarding Bail

(a) The Office of Court Administration of the Texas Judicial System shall, in consultation with the court of criminal appeals, develop or approve training courses regarding a magistrate's duties, including duties with respect to setting bail in criminal cases. The courses developed must include:

(1) an eight-hour initial training course that includes the content of the applicable training course described by Article 17.0501; and

(2) a two-hour continuing education course.

(b) The office shall provide for a method of certifying that a magistrate has successfully completed a training course required under this article and has

demonstrated competency of the course content in a manner acceptable to the office.

(c) A magistrate is in compliance with the training requirements of this article if:

- (1) not later than the 90th day after the date the magistrate takes office, the magistrate successfully completes the course described by Subsection (a)(1);
- (2) the magistrate successfully completes the course described by Subsection (a)(2) in each subsequent state fiscal biennium in which the magistrate serves; and
- (3) the magistrate demonstrates competency as provided by Subsection (b).

(d) Any course developed or approved by the office under this article may be administered by the Texas Justice Court Training Center, the Texas Municipal Courts Education Center, the Texas Association of Counties, the Texas Center for the Judiciary, or a similar entity.

c. Art. 17.025. Officers Taking Bail Bond

A jailer licensed under Chapter 1701, Occupations Code, is considered to be an officer for the purposes of taking a bail bond and discharging any other related powers and duties under this chapter.

d. Art. 17.026. Electronic Filing of Bail Bond

In any manner permitted by the county in which the bond is written, a bail bond may be filed electronically with the court, judge, magistrate, or other officer taking the bond.

e. Art. 17.027. Release on Bail of Defendant Charged with Felony Offense²⁶

(a) Notwithstanding any other law:²⁷

- (1) if a defendant is **taken before a magistrate for** committing an offense punishable as a felony while released on bail for another offense

²⁶ Changes and additions to Article 17.027 were made by S.B. 9.

²⁷ Subsection (a) has an effective date of April 1, 2026.

punishable as a felony and the subsequent offense was committed in the same county as the previous offense, the defendant may be released on bail only by:

- (A) the court before whom the case for the previous offense is pending; or
 - (B) another court designated in writing by the court described by Paragraph (A); and
- (2) if a defendant is taken before a magistrate for committing an offense punishable as a felony while released on bail for another offense punishable as a felony and the subsequent offense was committed in a different county than the previous offense, electronic notice of the charge must be given to the individual designated to receive electronic notices for the county in which the previous offense was committed, not later than the next business day after the date the defendant is taken before the magistrate, for purposes of the court specified by Subdivision (1) determining whether any bail conditions were violated or taking any other applicable action such as an action described by Subsection (a-1).

(a-1) If a defendant is taken before a magistrate for committing an offense punishable as a felony while released on bail for another offense punishable as a felony, the court before which the case for the previous offense is pending shall consider whether to revoke or modify the terms of the previous bond or to otherwise reevaluate the previous bail decision.²⁸

(a-2) A magistrate appointed under Chapter 54, Government Code, may not release on bail a defendant who:

- (1) is charged with committing an offense punishable as a felony if the defendant:
 - (A) was released on bail, parole, or community supervision for an offense punishable as a felony at the time of the instant offense;
 - (B) has previously been finally convicted of two or more offenses punishable as a felony and for which the defendant was imprisoned in the Texas Department of Criminal Justice; or

²⁸ Subsection (a-1) has an effective date of April 1, 2026.

(C) is subject to an immigration detainer issued by United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement; or

(2) is charged with committing an offense under the following provisions of the Penal Code:

(A) Section 19.02 (murder);

(B) Section 19.03 (capital murder);

(C) Section 20.04 (aggravated kidnapping); or

(D) Section 22.021 (aggravated sexual assault).

(a-3) An order granting bail signed by a magistrate appointed under Chapter 54, Government Code, must include the names of each individual who appointed the magistrate and state that the magistrate was appointed by those individuals.

(b) This article may not be construed to extend any deadline provided by Article 15.17.

(c) The local administrative district judge for each county shall designate an individual to receive electronic notices under Subsection (a)(2). The county shall ensure that the name and contact information of the individual designated to receive notices under this subsection are included in the public safety report system developed under Article 17.021.²⁹

(d) An individual designated under Subsection (c) who receives an electronic notice under Subsection (a) shall promptly provide the notice to the court specified by Subsection (a)(1), to the district clerk, and to the attorney representing the state and the defendant's attorney, if known, in the pending case for the offense for which the defendant was initially released on bail. A notice provided under this subsection does not constitute an ex parte communication.³⁰

The 2025 Legislature removed the requirement that the subsequent offense be “committed while on bail.” The changes and additions to Art. 17.027, were made with public safety in mind in that they limit when a magistrate can release a reoffended felony defendant on bail. Specifically, when a defendant commits a felony offense while he or she is out of jail on bail for a previous felony offense, a court may not release the defendant on bail again unless: (1) it is the same court that previously released the defendant (if both offenses were in the same county); or (2) the court provides the original court with notice of the re-offense (if the offenses were committed in different

²⁹ Subsection (c) has an effective date of January 1, 2026.

³⁰ Subsection (d) has an effective date of January 1, 2026.

counties). The court that released the defendant on the original charge may consider whether conditions of bail were violated, and reevaluate its previous bail decision by revoking bail or modify the terms of the original bond.

The changes to Article 17.027 implement limitations on certain magistrates appointed in Bell, Dallas, Tarrant, El Paso, Harris, Lubbock, Bexar, Travis, Webb, Comal, Cameron, Burnet, Brazoria, Guadalupe, Collin, Kerr, Fort Bend, Tom Green, Grayson and Denton Counties, counties with certain populations, and drug courts. Please see TEXAS GOVERNMENT CODE, Chapter 54 for the specific limitations for magistrates in these counties.

f. Art. 17.028. Bail Decision

(a) Without unnecessary delay but not later than 48 hours after a defendant is arrested, a magistrate shall order, after individualized consideration of all circumstances and of the factors required by Article 17.15(a), that the defendant be:

- (1) granted personal bond with or without conditions³¹;
- (2) granted surety or cash bond with or without conditions; or
- (3) denied bail in accordance with the Texas Constitution and other law.

(b) In setting bail under this article, the magistrate shall impose the least restrictive conditions, if any, and the personal bond or cash or surety bond necessary to reasonably ensure the defendant's appearance in court as required and the safety of the community, law enforcement, and the victim of the alleged offense.

(c) In each criminal case, unless specifically provided by other law, there is a rebuttable presumption that bail, conditions of release, or both bail and conditions of release are sufficient to reasonably ensure the defendant's appearance in court as required and the safety of the community, law enforcement, and the victim of the alleged offense.

(c-1) Subsections (b) and (c) may not be construed as requiring the court to hold an evidentiary hearing that is not required by other law.

(d) A judge may not adopt a bail schedule or enter a standing order related to bail that:

- (1) is inconsistent with this article; or

³¹ The Attorney General has interpreted bond conditions under Article 17.028 to be effective when a defendant gives the bond required by the magistrate's order, not when a defendant is merely eligible for bail. Op. Tex. Att'y Gen. No. KP-513 (2026). Bond conditions are enforceable when a defendant has "given the required bond." *Id.*; see TEX. CODE CRIM. PROC. art. 17.29(a).

- (2) authorizes a magistrate to make a bail decision for a defendant without considering each of the factors in Article 17.15(a).

(e) A defendant who is denied bail or who is unable to give bail in the amount required by any bail schedule or standing order related to bail shall be provided with the warnings described by Article 15.17.

(f) A defendant who is charged with an offense punishable as a Class B misdemeanor or any higher category of offense and who is unable to give bail in the amount required by a schedule or order described by Subsection (e), other than a defendant who is denied bail, shall be provided with the opportunity to file with the applicable magistrate a sworn affidavit in substantially the following form:

“On this ____ day of _____, 2____, I have been advised by _____ (name of the court or magistrate, as applicable) of the importance of providing true and complete information about my financial situation in connection with the charge pending against me. I am without means to pay _____ and I hereby request that an appropriate bail be set. (signature of defendant).”

(g) A defendant filing an affidavit under Subsection (f) shall complete a form to allow a magistrate to assess information relevant to the defendant’s financial situation. The form must be the form used to request appointment of counsel under Article 26.04 or a form promulgated by the Office of Court Administration of the Texas Judicial System that collects, at a minimum and to the best of the defendant’s knowledge, the information a court may consider under Article 26.04(m).

(g-1) The magistrate making the bail decision under Subsection (a) shall, if applicable:

- (1) inform the defendant of the defendant’s right to file an affidavit under Subsection (f); and
- (2) ensure that the defendant receives reasonable assistance in completing the affidavit described by Subsection (f) and the form described by Subsection (g).

(h) A defendant described by Subsection (f) may file an affidavit under Subsection (f) at any time before or during the bail proceeding under Subsection (a). A defendant who files an affidavit under Subsection (f) is entitled to a prompt review by the magistrate on the bail amount. The review may be conducted by the magistrate making the bail decision under Subsection (a) or may occur as a separate pretrial proceeding. The magistrate shall consider the facts presented and the rules established by Article 17.15(a) and shall set the defendant’s bail. If the magistrate

does not set the defendant's bail in an amount below the amount required by the schedule or order described by Subsection (e), the magistrate shall issue written findings of fact supporting the bail decision.

(i) The judges of the courts trying criminal cases and other magistrates in a county must report to the Office of Court Administration of the Texas Judicial System each defendant for whom a review under Subsection (h) was not held within 48 hours of the defendant's arrest. If a delay occurs that will cause the review under Subsection (h) to be held later than 48 hours after the defendant's arrest, the magistrate or an employee of the court or of the county in which the defendant is confined must provide notice of the delay to the defendant's counsel or to the defendant, if the defendant does not have counsel.

(j) The magistrate may enter an order or take other action authorized by Article 16.22 with respect to a defendant who does not appear capable of executing an affidavit under Subsection (f).

(k) This article may not be construed to require the filing of an affidavit before a magistrate considers the defendant's ability to make bail under Article 17.15.

(l) A written or oral statement obtained under this article or evidence derived from the statement may be used only to determine whether the defendant is indigent, to impeach the direct testimony of the defendant, or to prosecute the defendant for an offense under Chapter 37, Penal Code.

(m) Notwithstanding Subsection (a), a magistrate may make a bail decision regarding a defendant who is charged only with a misdemeanor punishable by fine only or a defendant who receives a citation under Article 14.06(c) without considering the factor required by Article 17.15(a)(6).

It does appear that the statute allows a magistrate to set a schedule or standing order relating to bail, but it is hard to imagine that any schedule or standing order could adequately address the complexities of the amendments that were just added and still afford the defendant with an individualized assessment of all the factors related to setting bail.

While the courts and magistrates have broad discretion in setting bonds, there are some limitations as to what a court or magistrate can do that appear to be unchanged by the recent amendments. As is set forth in *Ex parte Rodriguez*, 583 S.W.2d 792 (Tex. Crim. App. 1979) and *Ex parte Deaton*, 582 S.W.2d 151 (Tex. Crim. App. 1979), a court does not have discretion to require a cash bond or security bond *to the exclusion of the other*. Op. Tex. Att'y Gen. No. GA-0048 (2003). In other words, the court cannot set the financial amount of a bond and require that it only be satisfied through the payment of cash, as opposed to posting a surety bond. Following these precedents, the Court of Criminal Appeals in *Professional Bondsmen of Texas v. Carey*, 762 S.W.2d 691 (Tex. App.—Amarillo 1988, no writ) and *Ex parte Tucker*, 977 S.W.2d 713 (Tex.

App.—Fort Worth 1998), *pet. dismiss'd*, 3 S.w.3d 676 (Tex. Crim. App. 1999) (per curium) held that a court does not have authority to attach a monetary bond to a personal bond, or to permit or require a cash deposit of less than the full amount of the bail set. Op. Tex. Att’y Gen. No. GA-0048 (2003); see Op. Tex. Att’y Gen. No. JC-0215 (Tex.A.G.) (2000) (combining a financial payment with a personal bond is also referred to as a “split bond” and is not allowed). A court has discretion to set the amount of bail, but not to require that bail be secured in a particular manner, or to impose conditions not contemplated by Chapter 17. Op. Tex. Att’y Gen. No. GA-0048 (2003).

In a 2023 en banc decision, the Fifth Circuit held that a class of pretrial detainees’ challenge to Texas state court procedures for felony and misdemeanor pretrial bail, as allegedly violating their right to due process and equal protection by imposing and enforcing secured money bail without inquiry into and findings concerning their ability to pay, was moot by the legislature’s enactment of S.B. 6, specifically Articles 17.028(a), (b) and 17.15(a). *Daves v. Dallas Cnty.*, Texas, 64 F.4th 616, 634 (5th Cir. 2023)(en banc), *cert. denied*, 144 S.Ct. 548 (2024) More significantly, the Court found that the *Younger* abstention doctrine applied in this scenario and precluded federal courts from enjoining a state criminal prosecution begun prior to the institution of the federal suit except in very unusual situations, where necessary to prevent immediate irreparable injury, overruling its previous decision in *ODonnell v. Harris Cnty.*, 882 F.3d 528 (5th Cir. 2018). In support of its rationale for reconsidering the abstention doctrine, the Court stated:

A number of cases in this circuit and others are asking federal courts to judicially order and enforce state court bail reforms. Several federal courts, including the ODonnell I court, have rejected abstention without exhaustive consideration. But if abstention is mandated by *Younger*’s rationale, much time and money, as well as judicial resources, will be saved on litigation in federal court. The complexity of handling claims for institutional state bail reform in federal court is well demonstrated by the justiciability issues we confronted, and avoided, in the initial en banc proceeding. Friction exists with state criminal courts where, overlooking or misinterpreting abstention, federal courts have forced bail bond changes . . . Our Federalism, the guiding light behind *Younger*, seems to have been forgotten, especially in regard to this species of direct federal intervention into ongoing state criminal proceedings that already provide an opportunity to raise constitutional challenges.

Daves, 64 F.4th at 623.

This decision should have a significant impact on other litigation in the Fifth Circuit involving constitutional challenges to state judicial procedures, and counties receiving pressure and threats of litigation from advocate groups seeking changes to state judicial processes.. However, recently a Federal District Judge in Austin did not follow *Daves* in *Ward et. al. v. Muth, in her official capacity as Executive Commissioner of the Texas Health and Human Services Commission*, 2026 WL 2446797 United States District Court (W.D. Tex. 2026)(stay denied pending appeal). On the other hand, in *Erwin v. Dallas County*, 2025 WL 249525 (Tex. App.—

Austin 15th, review denied June 12, 2026) a suit by Dallas County challenging the costs for the housing of those with mental health conditions passed from the state to counties, the court of appeals reversed a trial court order allowing the case to proceed denying a plea to the jurisdiction finding no jurisdiction. Interested readers should follow the *Muth* case which is on appeal to the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals for further guidance.

g. Art. 17.029. Review of Bail Decision³²

(a) This article applies only to a bail decision:

- (1) regarding a defendant charged with or arrested for an offense punishable as a felony; and
- (2) that was made under Article 17.028 by the magistrate of a court that does not have jurisdiction to try the offense with which the defendant is charged.

(b) Notwithstanding any other law, a district judge in any county in which the offense for which the person was arrested will be tried or in any county in which the charge for that offense will be filed has jurisdiction to modify a bail decision to which this article applies, regardless of whether the defendant has been previously indicted or an information has been previously filed for the offense for which the defendant was arrested.

(c) The local administrative judge for each county shall establish a procedure for the district clerk to notify each district judge in the county that the district clerk received a request to review a bail decision under this article.

(d) A district judge must review a bail decision as soon as practicable but not later than the next business day after the date a request to review the bail decision is filed with the district clerk by an attorney representing the state.

(e) A district judge reviewing a bail decision under this article shall comply with Article 17.09 and shall consider the facts presented and the rules established by Article 17.15(a) in setting the defendant's bail.

(f) If a district judge modifies a bail decision under this article to increase the amount of bail or to require additional conditions of bail for a defendant who is not in custody, the judge shall:

- (1) issue a summons for the defendant to appear before the judge; and

³² Article 17.029 was created by S.B. 9.

- (2) give the defendant a reasonable opportunity to appear before issuing a warrant for the defendant's arrest.

Note the Legislature provided in this Article that review of a bail decision is only available for a felony charge and if the bail decision was made by a court that does not have jurisdiction to try the arrestee on the charge for which he or she was arrested. See Article 17.03 below, and our commentary, for the meaning of similar terminology applied to personal bonds.

F. **PERSONAL BONDS**

Personal bonds provide an excellent tool for decreasing jail overcrowding, and good communication between the magistrates and the sheriff's office can assist in jail management and reduce the jail costs for the county through the use of personal bonds. Proper identification of those inmates eligible for personal bonds is very important, especially in light of the recent amendments. The more quickly such accused people are brought before magistrates, the more quickly such accused individuals can be moved out of the jail.

1. **Art. 17.03. Personal Bond**³³

(a) Except as **otherwise** provided by **this chapter**, a magistrate may, in the magistrate's discretion, release the defendant on his personal bond without sureties or other security.

(b) Only the court before whom the case is pending³⁴ may release on personal bond a defendant who:

(1) is charged with an offense under the following sections of the Penal Code:

(A) Section 30.02 (Burglary); or

(B) Section 71.02 (Engaging in Organized Criminal Activity);

³³ Changes and additions to Article 17.03 were made by S.B. 9.

³⁴ The Texas Attorney General has noted that terms such as "the court before whom the case is pending" is a troublesome phrase. Tex. Atty. Gen. Op. LO-97-103 (1997). Throughout Article 17, the different procedural contexts in which the phrase is used, combined with the complicated nature of statutorily prescribed criminal processes, the occasional lack of clear statutory procedures, and the varying local criminal docket procedures used throughout the state, make it difficult to fashion a uniform meaning for the phrase. *Id.* "Instead, courts and this office have defined when a case is "pending" based upon the context of the statute in which the term is employed." *Id.* (*citations omitted*). However, in 1997, the Attorney General concluded "the court before whom the case is pending," for purposes of article 17.03, means that court that will hear the defendant's case on the merits. Tex. Atty. Gen. Op. LO-97-103 (1997). In the Legislature's 2021 revisions to this article, there is nothing in the legislative history to suggest that the phrase would mean anything different than what is reflected in the 1997 Attorney General Opinion cited above.

- (2) is charged with a felony under Chapter 481, Health and Safety Code, or Section 485.033, Health and Safety Code, punishable by imprisonment for a minimum term or by a maximum fine that is more than a minimum term or maximum fine for a first degree felony; or
- (3) does not submit to testing for the presence of a controlled substance in the defendant's body as requested by the court or magistrate under Subsection (c) of this article or submits to testing and the test shows evidence of the presence of a controlled substance in the defendant's body.

(b-1) A magistrate may not release on personal bond a defendant who, at the time of the commission of the charged offense, is civilly committed as a sexually violent predator under Chapter 841, Health and Safety Code.

(b-2) Except as provided by Articles 15.21, 17.032, and 17.033, and 17.151, a defendant may not be released on personal bond if the defendant:

- (1) is charged with:
 - (A) an offense involving violence; or
 - (B) an offense under:
 - (i) Section 19.02(b)(4), Penal Code (murder as a result of a manufacture or delivery of a controlled substance in Penalty Group 1-B);
 - (ii) Section 22.07, Penal Code (terroristic threat), if the offense is punishable as a Class A misdemeanor or any higher category of offense;
 - (iii) Section 25.07, Penal Code (violation of certain court orders or conditions of bond in a family violence, child abuse or neglect, sexual assault or abuse, indecent assault, stalking, or trafficking case); or
 - (iv) Section 46.04(a), Penal Code (unlawful possession of firearm); or
- (2) while released on bail, parole, or community supervision for an offense involving violence, is charged with committing:

- (A) any offense punishable as a felony; or
- (B) an offense under the following provisions of the Penal Code:
 - (i) Section 22.01(a)(1) (assault);
 - (ii) Section 22.05 (deadly conduct); or
 - (iii) Section 42.01(a)(7) or (8) (disorderly conduct involving firearm).

(b-3) In this article:

- (1) “Controlled substance” has the meaning assigned by Section 481.002, Health and Safety Code.
- (2) “Offense involving violence” means an offense under the following provisions of the Penal Code:
 - (A) Section 19.02 (murder);
 - (B) Section 19.03 (capital murder);
 - (C) Section 20.03 (kidnapping);
 - (D) Section 20.04 (aggravated kidnapping);
 - (E) Section 20A.02 (trafficking of persons);
 - (F) Section 20A.03 (continuous trafficking of persons);
 - (G) Section 21.02 (continuous sexual abuse of young child or disabled individual);
 - (H) Section 21.11 (indecent with a child);
 - (I) Section 22.01(a)(1) (assault), if the offense is:
 - (i) punishable as a felony of the second degree under Subsection (b-2) of that section; or
 - (ii) punishable as a felony and involved family violence as defined by Section 71.004, Family Code;

- (J) Section 22.011 (sexual assault);
- (K) Section 22.02 (aggravated assault);
- (L) Section 22.021 (aggravated sexual assault);
- (M) Section 22.04 (injury to a child, elderly individual, or disabled individual);
- (N) Section 25.072 (repeated violation of certain court orders or conditions of bond in family violence, child abuse or neglect, sexual assault or abuse, indecent assault, stalking, or trafficking case);
- (O) Section 25.11 (continuous violence against the family);
- (P) Section 29.03 (aggravated robbery);
- (Q) Section 38.14 (taking or attempting to take weapon from peace officer, federal special investigator, employee or official of correctional facility, parole officer, community supervision and corrections department officer, or commissioned security officer);
- (R) Section 43.04 (aggravated promotion of prostitution), if the defendant is not alleged to have engaged in conduct constituting an offense under Section 43.02(a);
- (S) Section 43.05 (compelling prostitution); or
- (T) Section 43.25 (sexual performance by a child).

(c) When setting a personal bond under this chapter, on reasonable belief by the investigating or arresting law enforcement agent or magistrate of the presence of a controlled substance in the defendant's body or on the finding of drug or alcohol abuse related to the offense for which the defendant is charged, the court or a magistrate shall require as a condition of personal bond that the defendant submit to testing for alcohol or a controlled substance in the defendant's body and participate in an alcohol or drug abuse treatment or education program if such a condition will serve to reasonably assure the appearance of the defendant for trial.

(d) The state may not use the results of any test conducted under this chapter in any criminal proceeding arising out of the offense for which the defendant is charged.

(e) Costs of testing may be assessed as court costs or ordered paid directly by the defendant as a condition of bond.

(f) Repealed by Acts 2021, 87th Leg., 2nd C.S., Ch. 11 (S.B. 6), Sec. 20, eff. December 2, 2021.

(g) The court may order that a personal bond fee assessed under Section 17.42 be:

- (1) paid before the defendant is released;
- (2) paid as a condition of bond;
- (3) paid as court costs;
- (4) reduced as otherwise provided for by statute; or
- (5) waived.

The 2025 Legislature expanded the list of offenses for which a defendant may not be released on personal bond. This change, like many others from this legislative session, were made to increase public safety.

2. Art. 17.031. Release on Personal Bond

(a) Any magistrate in this state may release a defendant eligible for release on personal bond under Article 17.03 of this code on his personal bond where the complaint and warrant for arrest does not originate in the county wherein the accused is arrested if the magistrate would have had jurisdiction over the matter had the complaint arisen within the county wherein the magistrate presides. The personal bond may not be revoked by the judge of the court issuing the warrant for arrest except for good cause shown.

(b) If there is a personal bond office in the county from which the warrant for arrest was issued, the court releasing a defendant on his personal bond will forward a copy of the personal bond to the personal bond office in that county.

Article 17.031 provides a method of releasing inmates arrested on warrants from other counties. This provision may be utilized as part of a good jail population management policy.

As has been noted for many years, neither a sheriff nor any other peace officer can release a defendant on personal bond without authorization from a court or magistrate. Tex. Atty. Gen. Op. J.M.-760 (1987).

3. Art. 15.21. Release on Personal Bond if Not Timely Demanded

If the proper office of the county where the offense is alleged to have been committed does not demand an arrested person described by Article 15.19 and take charge of the arrested person before the 11th day after the date the person is committed to the jail of the county in which the person is arrested, a magistrate in the county where the person was arrested shall:

- (1) release the arrested person on personal bond without sureties or other security; and
- (2) forward the personal bond to:
 - (A) the sheriff of the county where the offense is alleged to have been committed; or
 - (B) the court that issued the warrant of arrest.

4. Art. 17.032. Release on Personal Bond of Certain Defendants with Mental Illness or Intellectual Disability

(a) In this article, “violent offense” means an offense under the following sections of the Penal Code:

- (1) Section 19.02 (murder);
- (2) Section 19.03 (capital murder);
- (3) Section 20.03 (kidnaping);
- (4) Section 20.04 (aggravated kidnaping);
- (5) Section 21.11 (indecent with a child);
- (6) Section 22.01(a)(1) (assault), if the offense involved family violence as defined by Section 71.004, Family Code ;
- (7) Section 22.011 (sexual assault);
- (8) Section 22.02 (aggravated assault);

- (9) Section 22.021 (aggravated sexual assault);
- (10) Section 22.04 (injury to a child, elderly individual, or disabled individual);
- (11) Section 29.03 (aggravated robbery);
- (12) Section 21.02 (continuous sexual abuse of young child or disabled individual); or
- (13) Section 20A.03 (continuous trafficking of persons).

(b) Notwithstanding Article 17.03(b), or a bond schedule adopted or a standing order entered by a judge, a magistrate shall release a defendant on personal bond unless good cause is shown otherwise if:

- (1) the defendant is not charged with and has not been previously convicted of a violent offense;
- (2) the defendant is examined by the service provider that contracts with the jail to provide mental health or intellectual and developmental disability services, the local mental health authority, the local intellectual and developmental disability authority, or another qualified mental health or intellectual and developmental disability expert under Article 16.22;
- (3) the applicable expert, in a written report submitted to the magistrate under Article 16.22:
 - (A) concludes that the defendant has a mental illness or is a person with an intellectual disability and is nonetheless competent to stand trial; and
 - (B) recommends mental health treatment or intellectual and developmental disability services for the defendant, as applicable;
- (4) the magistrate determines, in consultation with the local mental health authority or local intellectual and developmental disability authority, that appropriate community-based mental health or intellectual and developmental disability services for the defendant are available in accordance with Section 534.053 or 534.103, Health

and Safety Code, or through another mental health or intellectual and developmental disability services provider; and

- (5) the magistrate finds, after considering all the circumstances, a pretrial risk assessment, if applicable, and any other credible information provided by the attorney representing the state or the defendant, that release on personal bond would reasonably ensure the defendant's appearance in court as required and the safety of the community and the victim of the alleged offense.

(c) The magistrate, unless good cause is shown for not requiring treatment or services, shall require as a condition of release on personal bond under this article that the defendant submit to outpatient or inpatient mental health treatment or intellectual and developmental disability services as recommended by the service provider that contracts with the jail to provide mental health or intellectual and developmental disability services, the local mental health authority, the local intellectual and developmental disability authority, or another qualified mental health or intellectual and developmental disability expert if the defendant's:

- (1) mental illness or intellectual disability is chronic in nature; or
- (2) ability to function independently will continue to deteriorate if the defendant does not receive the recommended treatment or services.

(d) In addition to a condition of release imposed under Subsection (c), the magistrate may require the defendant to comply with other conditions that are reasonably necessary to ensure the defendant's appearance in court as required and the safety of the community and the victim of the alleged offense.

(e) In this article, a person is considered to have been convicted of an offense if:

- (1) a sentence is imposed;
- (2) the person is placed on community supervision or receives deferred adjudication; or
- (3) the court defers final disposition of the case.

In S.B. 6, the Legislature amended Article 17.03 by adding sections (b-2) and (b-3). These changes added more offenses for which personal bond is not allowed. While the Legislature did not repeal Art. 17.032, the list of "violent offenses" for which an individual is not eligible for personal bond now differs between the two articles. A list comparing the differences can be found in the Third Edition of the Bench Book of Texas Mental Health and Intellectual and Development

Disabilities Law Bench Book published by the Texas Commission on Mental Health, page 118. Under the Code Construction Act, it would seem prudent to consider that any matter listed in either Article is disqualifying for personal bond.

5. Time Period for Release for Warrantless Arrests and Caps on Bond Amounts

Article 17.033 of the Code of Criminal Procedure caps the bond amount at \$5,000 in misdemeanor cases involving warrantless arrests where a magistrate has not determined the existence of probable cause within 24 hours, and requires release on a personal bond if the accused is unable to obtain a surety bond or post a cash bond. The same section also caps the bond amount at \$10,000 in felony cases involving warrantless arrests where a magistrate has not determined the existence of probable cause within 48 hours, and requires release on a personal bond if the accused is unable to obtain a surety or post a cash bond. Article 17.033 reads as follows:

a. Art. 17.033. Release on Bond of Certain Persons Arrested Without a Warrant

(a) Except as provided by Subsection (c), a person who is arrested without a warrant and who is detained in jail must be released on bond, in an amount not to exceed \$5,000, not later than the 24th hour after the person's arrest if the person was arrested for a misdemeanor and a magistrate has not determined whether probable cause exists to believe that the person committed the offense. If the person is unable to obtain a surety for the bond or unable to deposit money in the amount of the bond, the person must be released on personal bond.³⁵

(b) Except as provided by Subsection (c), a person who is arrested without a warrant and who is detained in jail must be released on bond, in an amount not to exceed \$10,000, not later than the 48th hour after the person's arrest if the person was arrested for a felony and a magistrate has not determined whether probable cause exists to believe that the person committed the offense. If the person is unable to obtain a surety for the bond or unable to deposit money in the amount of the bond, the person must be released on personal bond.³⁶

³⁵ Regardless of whether bond has been set, a defendant must be brought before a magistrate within 24 hours of an arrest without warrant on a misdemeanor charge. Op. Tex. Att'y Gen. No. GA-0457 (2006). This 24-hour-rule is exceptionally important for complying with the Fourth Amendment requirements relating to unreasonable seizures. If an accused is held for more than 24 hours after a warrantless arrest on a misdemeanor, it presumptively violates the Fourth Amendment to the United States Constitution. *County of Riverside v. McLaughlin*, 500 U.S. 44, 55-57, 111 S.Ct. 1661, 114 L.Ed.2d 49 (1991). The Fourth Amendment requires a prompt determination of probable cause by a magistrate following a warrantless arrest, and failure to provide such a determination within 24 hours shifts the burden to the government to demonstrate a bona fide emergency or extraordinary circumstances justifying the lengthier delay. *Id.*; *United States v. Adekunle*, 2 F.3d 559, 561 (5th Cir. 1993).

³⁶ Regardless of whether bond has been set, a defendant must be brought before a magistrate within 48 hours of an arrest without warrant on a felony charge. Op. Tex. Att'y Gen. No. GA-0457 (2006). The 48-hour-rule is exceptionally important, not only for the purpose of setting a reasonable bond within a reasonable period of time, but

(c) On the filing of an application by the attorney representing the state, a magistrate may postpone the release of a person under Subsection (a) or (b) for not more than 72 hours after the person's arrest. An application filed under this subsection must state the reason a magistrate has not determined whether probable cause exists to believe that the person committed the offense for which the person was arrested.

(d) The time limits imposed by Subsections (a) and (b) do not apply to a person arrested without a warrant who is taken to a hospital, clinic, or other medical facility before being taken before a magistrate under Article 15.17. For a person described by this subsection, the time limits imposed by Subsections (a) and (b) begin to run at the time, as documented in the records of the hospital, clinic, or other medical facility, that a physician or other medical professional releases the person from the hospital, clinic, or other medical facility.

Art. 17.03, entitled "Personal Bond, at Section (b-2), specifically states that "[e]xcept as provided by Articles 15.21, 17.032, 17.033, and 17.151, a defendant may not be released on personal bond if" the defendant has been accused of certain crimes.

Relying on the exception set forth in Article 17.03(b-2), and the plain language of Article 17.033, a person arrested without a warrant who is detained in jail on a **misdemeanor offense** must be released on bond in an amount not to exceed \$5,000 not later than the 24th hour after the person's arrest if a magistrate has not determined whether probable cause exists to believe that the person committed the offense. If the person is unable to obtain a surety for the bond or unable to deposit money in the amount of the bond, the person must be released on personal bond. Obviously, if no magistrate has appeared to make a probable cause determination, the magistrate obviously has not set a bail amount either. Despite any provision or provisions to the contrary, this is a mandatory requirement, and the person under arrest for a misdemeanor must be released on bond in an amount not to exceed \$5,000. The sheriff does not appear to have any alternative.

Once again relying on the exception set forth in Article 17.03(b-2), and the plain language of Article 17.033, a person arrested without a warrant who is detained in jail on a **felony offense** must be released on bond in an amount not to exceed \$10,000 not later than the 48th hour after the person's arrest if a magistrate has not determined whether probable cause exists to believe that the person committed the offense. If the person is unable to obtain a surety for the bond or unable to deposit money in the amount of the bond, the person must be released on personal bond.

also for complying with the Fourth Amendment requirements relating to unreasonable seizures. If an accused is held for more than 48 hours after a warrantless arrest, it presumptively violates the Fourth Amendment to the United States Constitution. *County of Riverside v. McLaughlin*, 500 U.S. 44, 55-57, 111 S.Ct. 1661, 114 L.Ed.2d 49 (1991). The Fourth Amendment requires a prompt determination of probable cause by a magistrate following a warrantless arrest, and failure to provide such a determination within 48 hours shifts the burden to the government to demonstrate a bona fide emergency or extraordinary circumstances justifying the lengthier delay. *Id.*; *United States v. Adekunle*, 2 F.3d 559, 561 (5th Cir. 1993).

Obviously, if no magistrate has appeared to make a probable cause determination, the magistrate obviously has not appeared to set a bail amount either. Despite any provision or provisions to the contrary, this is a mandatory requirement, and the person under arrest for a felony must be released on bond in an amount not to exceed \$10,000. The sheriff does not appear to have any alternative.

When you combine Article 17.033 with the rule that if an accused is held for more than 48 hours after a warrantless arrest, it presumptively violates the Fourth Amendment to the United States Constitution, it certainly weighs heavily in favor of the sheriff releasing the inmate after 48 hours if the sheriff cannot get a magistrate to determine probable cause. *County of Riverside v. McLaughlin*, 500 U.S. 44, 55-57, 111 S.Ct. 1661, 114 L.Ed.2d 49 (1991). Further, considering that the Fourth Amendment requires a prompt determination of probable cause by a magistrate following a warrantless arrest, and the failure to provide such a determination within 48 hours shifts the burden to the government to demonstrate a bona fide emergency or extraordinary circumstances justifying the lengthier delay, the urgency that a sheriff faces to release the inmate cannot be denied. *Id.*; *United States v. Adekunle*, 2 F.3d 559, 561 (5th Cir. 1993).

This section directly conflicts with Article 17.22³⁷ and all the articles that speak to the procedures and requirements for setting personal bonds. Obviously, the conflict needs to be resolved as quickly as possible.

b. Art. 17.04. Requisites of a Personal Bond

(a) A personal bond is sufficient if it includes the requisites of a bail bond as set out in Article 17.08, except that no sureties are required. In addition, a personal bond shall contain:

- (1) the defendant's name, address, and place of employment;
- (2) identification information, including the defendant's:
 - (A) date and place of birth;
 - (B) height, weight, and color of hair and eyes;
 - (C) driver's license number and state of issuance, if any; and
 - (D) nearest relative's name and address, if any; and
- (3) except as provided by Subsection (b), the following oath sworn and signed by the defendant:

³⁷ Although Article 17.22 does allow the sheriff, peace officer or jailer to set a bond amount on a fine only Class C Misdemeanor, it does not allow the sheriff to set or take any other bond amount. No article has ever allowed the sheriff to release anyone on a personal bond.

“I swear that I will appear before (the court or magistrate) at (address, city, county) Texas, on the (date), at the hour of (time, a.m. or p.m.) or upon notice by the court, or pay to the court the principal sum of (amount) plus all necessary and reasonable expenses incurred in any arrest for failure to appear.”

(b) A personal bond is not required to contain the oath described by Subsection (a)(3) if:

- (1) the magistrate makes a determination under Article 16.22 that the defendant has a mental illness or is a person with an intellectual disability, including by using the results of a previous determination under that article;
- (2) the defendant is released on personal bond under Article 17.032; or
- (3) the defendant is found incompetent to stand trial in accordance with Chapter 46B.

c. Art. 17.045. Bail Bond Certificates

A bail bond certificate with respect to which a fidelity and surety company has become surety as provided in the Automobile Club Services Act, or for any truck and bus association incorporated in this state, when posted by the person whose signature appears thereon, shall be accepted as bail bond in an amount not to exceed \$200 to guarantee the appearance of such person in any court in this state when the person is arrested for violation of any motor vehicle law of this state or ordinance of any municipality in this state, except for the offense of driving while intoxicated or for any felony, and the alleged violation was committed prior to the date of expiration shown on such bail bond certificate.

d. Art. 17.05. When a Bail Bond is Given

A bail bond is entered into either before a magistrate, upon an examination of a criminal accusation, or before a judge upon an application under habeas corpus; or it is taken from the defendant by a peace officer or jailer if authorized by Article 17.20, 17.21, or 17.22.

e. Art. 17.0501. Required Training

The Department of Public Safety shall develop training courses that relate to the use of the statewide telecommunications system maintained by the department and that are directed to each magistrate, judge, sheriff, peace officer, or jailer required

to obtain criminal history record information under this chapter, as necessary to enable the person to fulfill those requirements.

G. WHO MAY ACT AS SURETY ON A “SURETY BAIL BOND”

Bail bonds, other than “cash bonds” and “personal bonds,” are generally referred to as “surety bonds.” Surety bonds may be made by “corporate sureties” or “individual sureties.” Although the term “corporate surety” is used throughout the Code of Criminal Procedure, not just any corporation qualifies to act as a surety to write bonds - the term “corporate surety” or “corporation” in Chapter 17 only applies to an insurance company licensed by the Texas Department of Insurance or a qualified 501(c)(3) Charitable Bail Organization.

1. Corporate Sureties – Insurance Companies and Charitable Bail Organizations

As stated above, the only corporations that may act as sureties are insurance companies and qualified 501(c)(3) Charitable Bail Organizations. The relevant portions of the Texas Code of Criminal Procedure reads as follows:

a. Art. 17.06. Corporation as Surety

Wherever in this Chapter, any person is required or authorized to give or execute any bail bond, such bail bond may be given or executed by such principal and any corporation authorized by law to act as surety, subject to all the provisions of this Chapter regulating and governing the giving of bail bonds by personal surety insofar as the same is applicable.

b. Art. 17.07. Corporation to File with County Clerk Power of Attorney Designating Agent

(a) Any corporation authorized by the law of this State to act as a surety, shall before executing any bail bond as authorized in the preceding Article, first file in the office of the county clerk of the county where such bail bond is given, a power of attorney designating and authorizing the named agent, agents or attorney of such corporation to execute such bail bonds and thereafter the execution of such bail bonds by such agent, agents or attorney, shall be a valid and binding obligation of such corporation.

(b) A corporation may limit the authority of an agent designated under Subsection (a) by specifying the limitation in the power of attorney that is filed with the county clerk.

In counties where no bail bond board exists, only a licensed “local recording agent” may act as the agent for an insurance company writing bonds.³⁸ Op. Tex. Att’y Gen. No. JC-0541 (2002); *see International Fid. Ins. Co. v. Sheriff of Dallas County*, 476 S.W.2d 500 (Tex. Civ. App.—Beaumont 1972, writ ref’d n.r.e.). Insurance companies for whom local recording agents are writing bonds do not have to satisfy any requirements to prove that they have sufficient security to write a bond. Op. Tex. Att’y Gen. No. JC-0541 (2002). They are exempt from the requirements of signing a sufficiency affidavit (as allowed by Article 17.13 for individual sureties) and are also exempt from any additional investigation into the sufficiency of their security (as allowed by Article 17.14 for individual sureties). *Id.* An officer taking a bond under Chapter 17 of the Code of Criminal Procedure lacks the authority to question the solvency of a corporate surety authorized to do business by the Texas Department of Insurance. *Id.*

Indeed, the sheriff, or other county official, is not authorized to set a limit on the value amount of bonds which a corporate surety may provide where the corporation has been issued a certificate of authority to do business in Texas by the State Board of Insurance pursuant to the Texas Insurance Code. Op. Tex. Att’y Gen. No. DM-254 (1993) (citing Op. Tex. Att’y Gen. No. JM-799 (1987)). There is no automatic limit on the value of the bonds a corporate bail bondsman may issue. *Id.* No county official or entity, including the sheriff in a county without a bail bond board, or the bail bond board in a county with such a board, is authorized to set a limit on the monetary amount or the number of bonds that a corporate surety may write when the corporation has been issued a certificate of authority to do business in the State of Texas by the State Board of Insurance. Op. Tex. Att’y Gen. No. JM-799 (1987); *see also* Op. Tex. Att’y Gen. No. DM-264 (1993). As a practical matter though, the corporate surety (insurance company) may limit the cumulative amount that its agent may write, and that limitation will be stated in the qualifying power of attorney on file in the county clerk’s office. Op. Tex. Att’y Gen. No. JM-799 (1987); *see also* Op. Tex. Att’y Gen. No. DM-264 (1993).

The statute relating to Charitable Bail Organizations is set forth below. The 87th Legislative session in 2022 created the statute allowing this type of entity to write bonds. There are, as yet, no Attorney General Opinions or cases relating to Charitable Bail Organizations.

c. Art. 17.071. Charitable Bail Organizations³⁹

(a) In this article:

- (1) “Charitable bail organization” means a person who accepts and uses donations from the public to deposit money with a court in the amount of a defendant’s bail bond. The term does not include:

³⁸ In counties where a bail bond board exists, there is no requirement for the agent of the insurance company to be a licensed “local recording agent.”

³⁹ Changes and additions to Article 17.071 were made by S.B. 9.

(A) a person accepting donations with respect to a defendant who is a member of the person's family, as determined under Section 71.003, Family Code; or

(B) a nonprofit corporation organized for a religious purpose.

(2) "Office" means the Office of Court Administration of the Texas Judicial System.

(b) This article does not apply to a charitable bail organization that pays a bail bond for not more than three defendants in any 180-day period.

(c) A person may not act as a charitable bail organization for the purpose of paying a defendant's bail bond in a county unless the person:

(1) is a nonprofit organization exempt from federal income taxation under Section 501(a), Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as an organization described by Section 501(c)(3) of that code; and

(2) has been issued a certificate under Subsection (d) with respect to that county.

(d) A county clerk shall issue to a charitable bail organization a certificate authorizing the organization to pay bail bonds in the county if the clerk determines the organization is:

(1) a nonprofit organization described by Subsection (c)(1); and

(2) current on all filings required by the Internal Revenue Code.

(e) A charitable bail organization shall file in the office of the county clerk of each county where the organization intends to pay bail bonds an affidavit designating the individuals authorized to pay bonds on behalf of the organization.

(f) Not later than the 10th day of each month, a charitable organization shall submit to the office and to the sheriff of each county in which the organization filed an affidavit under Subsection (e), a report that includes the following information for each defendant for whom the organization paid a bail bond in the preceding calendar month:

(1) the name of the defendant;

(2) the cause number of the case;

- (3) each charge for which the bond was paid;
- (4) the category of offense for each charge for which the bond was paid;
- (5) the amount of the bond paid;
- (6) the county in which the applicable charge is pending, if different from the county in which the bond was paid; and
- (7) any dates on which the defendant has failed to appear in court as required for the charge for which the bond was paid; and
- (8) whether a bond forfeiture has occurred in connection with the charge for which the bond was paid.

(f-1) Repealed by Acts 2025, 89th Leg., R.S., Ch. 339 (S.B. 9), Sec. 19, eff. September 1, 2025.

(g) A charitable bail organization may not pay a bail bond for a defendant at any time the organization is considered to be out of compliance with the reporting requirements of this article.

(h) If the office has reason to believe that a charitable bail organization may have paid one or more bonds in violation of this article, the office shall report that information to the sheriff of the county in which the suspected violation occurred. The sheriff of that county may suspend a charitable bail organization from paying bail bonds in the county for a period not to exceed one year if the sheriff determines the organization has paid one or more bonds in violation of this article and the organization has received a warning from the sheriff in the preceding 12-month period for another payment of bond made in violation of this article. The sheriff shall report the suspension to the office.

(i) Chapter 22 applies to a bail bond paid by a charitable bail organization.

(j) A charitable bail organization may not accept a premium or compensation for paying a bail bond for a defendant.

(k) Not later than December 1 of each year, the office shall prepare and submit, to the governor, lieutenant governor, speaker of the house of representatives, and presiding officers of the standing committees of each house of the legislature with primary jurisdiction over the judiciary, a report regarding the information submitted to the office under Subsections (f) and (h) for the preceding state fiscal year.

2. INDIVIDUAL SURETIES

In Texas, any individual,⁴⁰ except a minor and some convicted criminals, can act as surety on a bond for compensation in counties that do not have a bail bond board so long as certain educational requirements are satisfied. Indeed, even some government employees and their family members⁴¹ can write bonds as sureties for compensation in “non-bail bond board counties.” The only requirements that must be met to write bonds for compensation are the educational requirements and the individual’s ability to meet the financial standards.⁴² The sufficiency of the security offered by a surety is governed by articles 17.11 through 17.14. Op. Tex. Att’y Gen. No. LO98-105 (1998). The relevant portion of the Code of Criminal Procedure relating to age and educational requirements is set forth in Article 17.10 as follows:

⁴⁰ Prior to the amendments highlighted in previous Handbooks, only insurance companies and individuals could act as bail bondsmen. Op. Tex. Att’y Gen. No. MW- 507 (1982). Pursuant to the addition of Article 17.071, “Charitable Bail Organizations” can now write bonds.

⁴¹ The Attorney General has opined that a superintendent in charge of streets for the City of Madisonville is not precluded as a matter of law from engaging in the writing of bail bonds. Op. Tex. Att’y Gen. No. JM-598 (1986). Moreover, it is the opinion of the Attorney General that an individual whose spouse is a bail bondsman may be employed as an investigator for the criminal district attorney. Op. Tex. Att’y Gen. No. JM-776 (1987). The conflict of interest provisions also do not preclude a sheriff from performing his duties when the sheriff’s stepson and wife of his stepson are agents of a bail bond surety. Op. Tex. Att’y Gen. No. GA-0784 (2010). Similarly, a reserve deputy sheriff is not prohibited from acting as a surety on a bail bond, and the sheriff is not prohibited from accepting the bond. However, under Section 81.002 of the Local Government Code, which is the oath of office for a county judge and/or a commissioner, they are prohibited from having an interest in a contract with the county. Op. Tex. Att’y Gen. No. JC-0121 (1999); *see* Op. Tex. Att’y Gen. No. JM-598 (1986). When a county judge or commissioner acts as a surety on a bail bond, he enters into a contract making the county the beneficiary if the principal fails to perform. Op. Tex. Att’y Gen. No. JM-927 (1988). A county judge or county commissioner cannot write a bail bond without violating their oath of office. Additionally, a county judge or commissioner could also commit a penal offense if he or she participated in a vote or decision on a matter involving a business entity in which the official has a substantial interest, if it is reasonably foreseeable that an action on the matter would confer an economic benefit on the business entity. Op. Tex. Att’y Gen. No. LO-88-127 (1988); Op. Tex. Att’y Gen. No. JC-0121 (1999). If a relative of a county judge or commissioner writes bail bonds for compensation, the analysis is much more complicated, and legal counsel should be consulted to provide an opinion.

⁴² For years, officials have held a misconception that attorneys are somehow exempt from meeting the sufficiency requirements of Article 17. However, a sheriff or other official taking bond in either a bail bond board county or a non-bail bond board county may inquire into the sufficiency of security of an attorney posting bond for one of his clients, just as may be done for any other surety under Chapter 17 of the Code of Criminal Procedure. Attorneys are exempt from the licensing and security requirements of the Bail Bond Board Act if they are writing a bail bond for a client they represent, but, even in a county with a bail bond board, an attorney is subject to the security requirements of Chapter 17 of the Code of Criminal Procedure. Op. Tex. Att’y Gen. No. DM- 483 (1998); Op. Tex. Att’y Gen. No. JC-0277 (2000).

a. Art. 17.10. Disqualified Sureties

(a) A minor may not be surety on a bail bond, but the accused party may sign as principal.

(b) A person, for compensation, may not be a surety on a bail bond written in a county in which a county bail bond board regulated under Chapter 1704, Occupations Code, does not exist unless the person, within two years before the bail bond is given, completed in person at least eight hours of continuing legal education in criminal law courses or bail bond law courses that are:

(1) approved by the State Bar of Texas; and

(2) offered by an accredited institution of higher education in this state.

(c) A person, for compensation, may not act as a surety on a bail bond if the person has been finally⁴³ convicted of:

(1) a misdemeanor involving moral turpitude; or

(2) a felony.

The term “for compensation” must be specifically noted in Article 17.10(b). Attorneys that practice in this area differ on the interpretation of this section. The Flowers Davis law firm is of the opinion that Attorneys who are bonding out their clients, without receiving separate compensation for their bonding services, do not have to meet the educational requirements of Article 17.10(b).⁴⁴ There are attorneys who disagree with the opinion of Flowers Davis. It is the opinion of some of these attorneys that an Attorney posting a bond in a non-bail bond county would have to meet the educational requirements even if the attorney was not posting the bond “for compensation,” or at least not for compensation separate from their ordinary legal fees. It is also the opinion of Flowers Davis law firm that if an attorney is charging a separate fee for bonding a client out of jail other than his ordinary legal fees, then the attorney would be writing a bond “for compensation,” which would require the attorney to meet the educational requirements just like any other person bonding people out “for compensation.” **If this issue arises in your county, the best possible advice is to contact your county attorney or outside legal counsel for legal advice**

⁴³ A final conviction means a conviction from which all rights of direct appeal have been exhausted. Op. Tex. Att’y Gen. No. MW-422 (1982); see *Allen v. Texas Dept. of Public Safety*, 411 S.W.2d 644 (Tex. Civ. App.—Texarkana 1966, no writ). It was not the purpose of the legislature to authorize penalizing a person found guilty by a jury regardless of whether the verdict was later overturned. Op. Tex. Att’y Gen. No. MW-422 (1982); see *State v. Klein*, 224 S.W.2d 250 (Tex. Crim. 1949).

⁴⁴ Flowers Davis law firm is also of the opinion that family members or friends of the detained person can sign as sureties on a bond without meeting the educational requirements if they meet the financial requirements set forth in Articles 17.11 through 17.13, as long as the bond is not written “for compensation.”

specific to the situation with which you are confronted. The matter may be best resolved by seeking an attorney general’s opinion on this matter.

In 2011, Article 17.10, Code of Criminal Procedure, was amended by adding Subsection (c) to read as follows: (c) A person, for compensation, may not act as a surety on a bail bond if the person has been finally convicted of: (1) a misdemeanor involving moral turpitude; or (2) a felony. However, Article 17.10(c), Code of Criminal Procedure, as added by the 2011 Act, applies only to a person convicted of an offense committed on or after the effective date of the Act. A person convicted of an offense committed before the effective date of the Act is governed by the law in effect on the date the offense was committed, and the former law is continued in effect for that purpose. An offense is considered to have been committed before the effective date of the Act if any element of the offense occurred before September 1, 2011, which is the date the Act became effective. Except as discussed below, anyone convicted of a felony or misdemeanor involving moral turpitude that was committed on or after September 1, 2011, is disqualified from writing bonds. Anyone that was convicted of a felony or misdemeanor involving moral turpitude that was committed before September 1, 2011 can write or continue to write bonds in a non-bail bond board county. The Attorney General has opined that a court would likely conclude that a person who was convicted of a misdemeanor involving moral turpitude, but who received judicial clemency under article 42.12, section 20(a) of the Code of Criminal procedure, if otherwise qualified, is eligible to act as a bail bond surety. Op. Tex. Att’y Gen. No. GA-1087 (2014).

Only corporations specifically licensed to act as sureties can make bonds, and the only corporations that qualify are insurance companies that are duly authorized by the Texas Department of Insurance and Charitable Bail Organizations that comply with the requirements of Article 17.071. In a county without a bail bond board, a person acting as an agent for an insurance company must have a Texas Recording Agent’s License under Article 21.14 of the Texas Insurance Code to write bail bonds on behalf of a corporate surety (insurance company). Op. Tex. Att’y Gen No. MW-321 (1981). In a county with a bail bond board, the person acting as an agent for an insurance company does not have to have a Texas Recording Agent’s License. *Id.*

3. WHAT IS REQUIRED ON A BAIL BOND

On any “bail bond” tendered, including a “cash bond,” the bond must meet certain requirements to be in the proper form. Article 17.08 speaks to the requirements of the bond form as follows:

a. Art. 17.08. Requisites of a Bail Bond

A bail bond must contain the following requisites:

1. That it be made payable to “The State of Texas;”

2. That the defendant and his sureties, if any, bind themselves that the defendant will appear before the proper court or magistrate to answer the accusation against him;
3. If the defendant is charged with a felony, that it state that he is charged with a felony. If the defendant is charged with a misdemeanor, that it state that he is charged with a misdemeanor;
4. That the bond be signed by name or mark by the principal and sureties, if any, each of whom shall write thereon his mailing address;⁴⁵
5. That the bond state the time and place, when and where the accused binds himself to appear, and the court or magistrate before whom he is to appear. The bond shall also bind the defendant to appear before any court or magistrate before whom the cause may thereafter be pending at any time when, and place where, his presence may be required under this Code or by any court or magistrate, but in no event shall the sureties be bound after such time as the defendant receives an order of deferred adjudication or is acquitted, sentenced, placed on community supervision, or dismissed from the charge;
6. The bond shall also be conditioned that the principal and sureties, if any, will pay all necessary and reasonable expenses incurred by any and all sheriffs or other peace officers in re-arresting the principal in the event he fails to appear before the court or magistrate named in the bond at the time stated therein. The amount of such expense shall be in addition to the principal amount specified in the bond. The failure of any bail bond to contain the conditions specified in this paragraph shall in no manner affect the legality of any such bond, but it is intended that the sheriff or other peace officer shall look to the defendant and his sureties, if any, for expenses incurred by him, and not to the State for any fees earned by him in connection with

⁴⁵ Article 17.08(4) has been interpreted as requiring the surety to actually sign the bond personally in order to assure that they are liable on the bond and liable for the expenses. *See Ex parte Meadows*, 87 S.W.2d 254 (Tex. Crim. App. 1935); *see also* Att’y Gen. Opp. WW-889 (1960). An individual licensee cannot appoint an agent or attorney-in-fact to sign bonds for the individual licensee. Op. Tex. Att’y Gen. No. JM-1023 (1989) (citing Op. Tex. Att’y Gen. No. JM-507 (1982)). In counties with a bail bond board, the Texas Occupations Code neither authorizes nor prohibits agents or employees of an individual licensee to sign a bail bond on the licensee’s behalf; however, as with counties without a bail bond board, Article 17.08 of the Code of Criminal Procedure requires that the bail bond be signed by the “name or mark of the surety.” Op. Tex. Att’y Gen. No. MW-507 (1982).

the re-arresting of an accused who has violated the conditions of his bond.⁴⁶

It should be noted that Subsection 6 requires that the principal and surety pay the reasonable and necessary expenses incurred by law enforcement in re-arresting the principal if he fails to appear.

b. Art. 17.081. Additional Requisites of Bail Bond Given by Certain Defendants⁴⁷

In addition to the requirements of Article 17.08, a bail bond for a defendant charged with an offense under Section 20A.02, 20A.03, 43.02, 43.03, 43.031, 43.032, 43.04, 43.041, or 43.05, Penal Code, must include the address, identification number, and state of issuance as shown on a valid driver's license or identification card for the defendant and any surety, including any agent executing the bail bond on behalf of a corporation acting as surety.

The addition of Penal Code Section 43.032 to this section adds the criminal charge of Continuous Promotion of Prostitution to the list of charges for which additional information is required of the defendant and any surety.

c. Art. 17.085. Notice of Appearance Date

The clerk of a court that does not provide online Internet access to that court's criminal case records shall post in a designated public place in the courthouse notice of a prospective criminal court docket setting as soon as the court notifies the clerk of the setting.

H. A BOND LASTS FOR THE DURATION OF THE CRIMINAL PROSECUTION, UNLESS THE COURT FINDS OTHERWISE

1. Art. 17.09. Duration; Original and Subsequent Proceedings; New Bail⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Article 17.08(6) has been interpreted to mean bond conditions are no longer enforceable when the magistrate revokes the bond and the defendant is rearrested. Op. Tex. Att'y Gen. No. KP-513 (2026); cf. TEX. CODE CRIM. PROC. art. 17.40(b) ("Once the defendant is placed in custody, the revocation of the defendant's bond discharges the sureties on the bond, if any, from any future liability on the bond."). Rather, the court typically sets a new bond that may, or may not, include the same conditions. See *id.* art. 17.09, § 3; see also, e.g., *Ex parte Marcantoni*, No. 14-03-00079-CR, 2003 WL 1887883, at *3 (Tex. App.—Houston [14th Dist.] Apr. 17, 2003, no pet.)(mem. op.). Additionally, the defendant's arrest for a wholly separate offense would typically result in the revocation of the defendant's bond, see, e.g., *Ex parte Castellano*, 321 S.W.3d 760, 763 (Tex. App.—Fort Worth 2010, no pet.), and in that case, the bond conditions would no longer be enforceable.

⁴⁷ Changes and additions to Article 17.081 were made by H.B. 1778.

⁴⁸ Changes and additions to Article 17.09 were made by S.B. 9.

Sec. 1. Where a defendant, in the course of a criminal action, gives bail before any court or person authorized by law to take same, for his personal appearance before a court or magistrate, to answer a charge against him, the said bond shall be valid and binding upon the defendant and his sureties, if any, thereon, for the defendant's personal appearance before the court or magistrate designated therein, as well as before any other court to which same may be transferred, and for any and all subsequent proceedings had relative to the charge, and each such bond shall be so conditioned except as hereinafter provided.

Sec. 2. When a defendant has once given bail for his appearance in answer to a criminal charge, he shall not be required to give another bond in the course of the same criminal action except as herein provided.

Sec. 3. Provided that whenever, during the course of the action, and regardless of whether the defendant has been previously released under Article 17.151, the judge or magistrate in whose court such action is pending finds that the bond is defective, excessive or insufficient in amount, or that the sureties, if any, are not acceptable, or for any other good and sufficient cause, such judge or magistrate may, either in term-time or in vacation, order the accused to be rearrested, and require the accused to give another bond in such amount as the judge or magistrate may deem proper. When such bond is so given and approved, the defendant shall be released from custody.⁴⁹

Sec. 4. Notwithstanding any other provision of this article, the judge or magistrate in whose court a criminal action is pending may not order the accused to be rearrested or require the accused to give another bond in a higher amount because the accused:

- (1) withdraws a waiver of the right to counsel; or
- (2) requests the assistance of counsel, appointed or retained.

The 2025 Legislature amended Article 17.09 to add that a defendant may be rearrested and required to give another bond, even if the defendant was previously released due to delay under Article 17.151.

⁴⁹ In addressing whether a magistrate who issued an arrest warrant has the authority to modify a bond set by another magistrate in a different county where the accused was arrested, the Attorney General concluded that "A court would likely conclude that a magistrate who issued an arrest warrant executed in another county may, until charges are filed in the appropriate court, modify a bond set by a magistrate from the arresting county pursuant to article 17.09, section 3, of the Code of Criminal Procedure. Article 17.09 does not expressly condition the authority to modify bonds on whether new bond conditions sought are mandatory or discretionary under the law." Op. Tex. Att'y Gen. No. KP-0417 (2023).

I. BAIL BOND REDUCTIONS REQUIRED

1. Art. 17.091. Notice of Certain Bail Reductions Required⁵⁰

Before a judge or magistrate reduces the amount of bail set for a defendant charged with an offense listed in Article 42A.054 or an offense described by Article 62.001(5), or any felony offense committed while the defendant is civilly committed as a sexually violent predator under Chapter 841, Health and Safety Code, the judge or magistrate shall provide:

- (1) to the attorney representing the state, reasonable notice of the proposed bail reduction; and
- (2) on request of the attorney representing the state or the defendant or the defendant's counsel, an opportunity for a hearing concerning the proposed bail reduction.

2. Art. 17.092. Reduction in Amount or Conditions of Bond Prohibited in Certain Circumstances⁵¹

A magistrate described by Articles 2A.151(5)-(14) may not reduce the amount or conditions of bond set by the judge of a district court, including the judge of a district court in another county.

This new Article prohibits any magistrate described below from reducing the amount or conditions of bond set by a district court judge, regardless of the County in which the district judge sits.⁵²

- (1) county judge
- (2) justice of the peace
- (2) judge of a statutory county court
- (3) judge of a county criminal court
- (4) judge of a statutory probate court
- (5) mayor or recorder of a municipality
- (6) judge of a municipal court
- (7) certain associate judges appointed by district or statutory county courts
- (8) certain criminal magistrates appointed by Commissioners' Courts
- (9) criminal law hearing officers for Harris or Cameron Counties

⁵⁰ Changes and additions to Article 17.091 were made by S.B. 1610.

⁵¹ Article 17.092 was created by S.B. 9.

⁵² This list of magistrates is abbreviated to make it easier to read. For the full statutory details, see TEX. CODE OF CRIM. PRO. Art. 2A.151.

- (10) certain magistrates appointed by district or statutory county courts
- (11) magistrates appointed by the El Paso Council of Judges
- (12) magistrates appointed by the Fort Bend County Commissioners' Court
- (13) magistrates appointed by the Collin County Commissioners' Court

J. DISQUALIFIED SURETIES

1. Art. 17.10. Disqualified Sureties

This Article is discussed at length on pages 45-47.

K. HOW BOND IS TAKEN AND SUFFICIENCY DETERMINED

1. Art. 17.11. How Bail Bond is Taken and Sufficiency of Surety Determined

Sec. 1. Every court, judge, magistrate or other officer taking a bail bond shall require evidence of the sufficiency of the security offered; but in every case, one surety shall be sufficient, if it be made to appear that such surety is worth at least double the amount of the sum for which he is bound, exclusive of all property exempted by law from execution, and of debts or other encumbrances; and that he is a resident of this state, and has property therein liable to execution worth the sum for which he is bound.

Sec. 2. Provided, however, any person who has signed as a surety on a bail bond and is in default thereon shall thereafter be disqualified to sign as a surety so long as the person is in default on the bond. It shall be the duty of the clerk of the court where the surety is in default on a bail bond to notify in writing the sheriff, chief of police, or other peace officer of the default. If a bail bond is taken for an offense other than a Class C misdemeanor, the clerk of the court where the surety is in default on the bond shall send notice of the default by certified mail to the last known address of the surety.

Sec. 3. A surety is considered to be in default from the time execution may be issued on a final judgment in a bond forfeiture proceeding under the Texas Rules of Civil Procedure, unless the final judgment is superseded by the posting of a supersedeas bond.

a. Art. 17.12. Exempt Property

The property secured by the Constitution and laws from forced sale shall not, in any case, be held liable for the satisfaction of bail, either as to principal or sureties, if any.

b. Art. 17.13. Sufficiency of Sureties Ascertained

To test the sufficiency of the security offered to any bail bond, unless the court or officer taking the same is fully satisfied as to its sufficiency, the following oath shall be made in writing and subscribed by the sureties:

“I, do swear that I am worth, in my own right, at least the sum of (here insert the amount in which the surety is bound), after deducting from my property all that which is exempt by the Constitution and Laws of the State from forced sale, and after the payment of all my debts of every description, whether individual or security debts, and after satisfying all encumbrances upon my property which are known to me; that I reside in County, and have property in this State liable to execution worth said amount or more.

(Dated, and attested by the judge of the court, clerk, magistrate or sheriff.)”

Such affidavit shall be filed with the papers of the proceedings.

c. Art. 17.14. Affidavit Not Conclusive

Such affidavit shall not be conclusive as to the sufficiency of the security; and if the court or officer taking the bail bond is not fully satisfied as to the sufficiency of the security offered, further evidence shall be required before approving the same.

Sheriffs may require additional evidence of the sufficiency of the surety, including documents showing ownership interest in properties, the number and amount of bonds written in other counties and other financial records. In addition, Article 17.141 requires sureties to submit sworn financial statements if they are included on a list of approved sureties posted in the jail under Article 17.141.

Whatever additional evidence a sheriff decides to require in a particular county should apply equally to each bondsman. In other words, everyone should be treated the same, and the same information should be required of each bondsman unless a viable reason exists to require more information from a particular individual.

In considering the sufficiency of the security of a surety, many officials have suffered from the misconception that real property that is used as collateral by a bondsman must be in the county

in which the bond is posted - that is not accurate. The property may be outside the county. Op. Tex. Att’y Gen. No. DM-264 (1993).

Additionally, collateral may not be required to secure the bond in a “non-bail bond board” county for either a corporate surety or an individual surety. Op. Tex. Att’y Gen. No. DM-483 (1998). A sheriff in a non-bail bond board county cannot require a bondsman to post real or personal property as collateral for a bond. However, a sheriff may take into account the amount of other outstanding bonds, including bonds in other counties, when determining a surety’s worth; the outstanding bonds are considered “debts or other encumbrances.” *Id.* The sheriff of a county that has not established a bail bond board is not authorized to adopt bail bond licensing rules modeled on the provisions for counties with bail bond boards, counties without a bail bond board are governed by Chapter 17 of the Code of Criminal Procedure. Op. Tex. Att’y Gen. No. LO-98-105 (1998).

It should also be noted that a licensed corporate surety may have authorized agents sign bonds in its behalf, but an individual surety may not do so, according to the Texas Attorney General’s interpretation of the Code of Criminal Procedure § 17.08. Op. Tex. Att’y Gen. No. MW-507 (1982). A sheriff in a non-bail bond board county is not required to accept a bail bond signed by an individual surety’s attorney-in-fact on the surety’s behalf. Op. Tex. Att’y Gen. No. GA-0288 (2004).

Finally, it is also important to realize that a person who operates as a bail bond licensee in an individual capacity may, in addition, be licensed as an agent for a corporate surety. Op. Tex. Att’y Gen. No. LO96-019 (1996). They may operate in the same place of business, use the same telephone numbers, the same employees, and the same advertising. Op. Tex. Att’y Gen. No. LO96-019 (1996).

d. Art. 17.141. Eligible Bail Bond Sureties in Certain Counties

In a county in which a county bail bond board regulated under Chapter 1704, Occupations Code, does not exist, the sheriff may post a list of eligible bail bond sureties whose security has been determined to be sufficient. Each surety listed under this article must file annually a sworn financial statement with the sheriff.

Prior to September 1, 2005, the posting of a list of pre-approved bondsmen in a county jail was not allowed in a non-bail bond board county because it exceeded the authority of a sheriff under Chapter 17 of the Code of Criminal Procedure. Op. Tex. Att’y Gen. No. JC-0541 (2002). This prior rule has now been changed through legislation.

Article 17.141 also adds a requirement for a “sworn financial statement.” Prior to this clarification regarding an annual sworn financial statement, there was no specific statute requiring a surety to provide a financial statement. Some sheriffs have been requiring financial statements under Article 17.14, either “sworn” or audited, for some time. Audited financial statements require an audit by an accountant. “Sworn financial statements” are not generally defined by either the

Code of Criminal Procedure or by generally accepted accounting principles. However, it can be presumed that a “sworn financial statement” only requires that the surety swear to the accuracy of the statement under penalty of perjury. Of note, the Texas Attorney General has determined that the public has a legitimate interest in sworn financial statements collected and retained for this purpose; therefore, such statements may be subject to release as public information. *See* Op. Tex. Att’y Gen. No. OR2007-06923 (2007).

L. DETERMINING THE AMOUNT OF BAIL

In determining the amount of bail to be set in situations where the accused is taken before a magistrate within the specified period of time noted above, the following provisions of the Code of Criminal Procedure and Texas Constitution apply:

a. Art. 17.15. Rules for Setting Amount of Bail

(a) The amount of bail and any conditions of bail to be required in any case in which the defendant has been arrested are to be regulated by the court, judge, magistrate, or officer taking the bail in accordance with Articles 17.20, 17.21, and 17.22 and are governed by the Constitution and the following rules:

1. Bail and any conditions of bail shall be sufficient to give reasonable assurance that the undertaking will be complied with.
2. The power to require bail is not to be used to make bail an instrument of oppression.
3. The nature of the offense and the circumstances under which the offense was committed are to be considered, including whether the offense:
 - (A) is an offense involving violence as defined by Article 17.03;
or
 - (B) involves violence directed against a peace officer.
4. The ability to make bail shall be considered, and proof may be taken on this point.
5. The future safety of a victim of the alleged offense, law enforcement, and the community shall be considered.

6. The criminal history record information for the defendant, including information obtained through the statewide telecommunications system maintained by the Department of Public Safety and through the public safety report system developed under Article 17.021, shall be considered, including any acts of family violence, other pending criminal charges, and any instances in which the defendant failed to appear in court following release on bail.
7. The citizenship status of the defendant shall be considered.

(c) In this article, “family violence” has the meaning assigned by Section 71.004, Family Code.

Although the amendments to this Article have been adopted by the State of Texas, these rules have not yet been challenged in Court to determine if the amendments to Article 17.15 comport with the Eighth Amendment to the United States Constitution as well as, Article 1, § 13 of the Texas Constitution which provides, in pertinent part, as follows: “Excessive bail shall not be required, nor excessive fines imposed, nor cruel or unusual punishment inflicted.”⁵³ The magistrate setting bail must remember that setting bail is not punitive in nature. Bail is not meant to be a fine or a punishment. The main purpose of setting bail is to ensure that the accused will show up for court.

M. RELEASE BECAUSE OF DELAY

1. Art. 17.151. Release Because of Delay⁵⁴

Sec. 1. A defendant who is detained in jail pending trial of an accusation against him must be released either on personal bond or by reducing the amount of bail

⁵³ In its 2023 *Daves* opinion, the Fifth Circuit noted regarding S.B. 6 and the recent amendments to Article 17.15 that:

The overhaul accomplished by S.B. 6 specifically requires, within 48 hours of arrest, a bail decision reflecting individual consideration of the relevant Article 17.15(a) statutory factors and “impos[ition of] the least restrictive conditions” that will “reasonably ensure the defendant’s appearance in court as required and the safety of the community, law enforcement, and the victim of the alleged offense.” TEX. CODE CRIM. P. art. 17.028(a), (b). The crux of this case is now whether the new state law, if applied assiduously by Dallas County magistrates, measures up to plaintiffs’ proffered constitutional minima. S.B. 6 is heavily procedural in nature, just like the alleged claims of these plaintiffs. Thus, both the provisions of S.B. 6 and their implementation are alleged to raise constitutional issues beyond the scope of this case and the circumstances of the plaintiffs who filed it.

Daves v. Dallas Cnty., Texas, 64 F.4th 616, 635 (5th Cir. 2023).

⁵⁴ Changes and additions to Article 17.151 were made by S.B. 1610.

required, if the state is not ready for trial of the criminal action for which he is being detained within:

- (1) 90 days from the commencement of his detention if he is accused of a felony;
- (2) 30 days from the commencement of his detention if he is accused of a misdemeanor punishable by a sentence of imprisonment in jail for more than 180 days;
- (3) 15 days from the commencement of his detention if he is accused of a misdemeanor punishable by a sentence of imprisonment for 180 days or less; or
- (4) five days from the commencement of his detention if he is accused of a misdemeanor punishable by a fine only.

Sec. 2. The provisions of this article do not apply to a defendant who is:

- (1) serving a sentence of imprisonment for another offense while the defendant is serving that sentence;
- (2) being detained pending trial of another accusation against the defendant as to which the applicable period has not yet elapsed;
- (3) incompetent to stand trial, during the period of the defendant's incompetence;
- (4) being detained for a violation of the conditions of a previous release related to the safety of a victim of the alleged offense or to the safety of the community under this article; or
- (5) civilly committed as a sexually violent predator under Chapter 841, Health and Safety Code.

The mandatory "release because of delay" provisions have been held to be constitutional, although they were adopted as part of the same package as the speedy trial act, which was held to be unconstitutional. These mandatory requirements, however, can be difficult to monitor, especially in a county with a large jail population. Nevertheless, it is important to monitor these mandatory deadlines to avoid allegations of unlawful arrest and detention.

N. DENIAL OF BAIL IN CERTAIN CASES

1. Art. 17.152. Denial of Bail for Violation of Certain Court Orders or Conditions of Bond in a Family Violence Case

(a) In this article, “family violence” has the meaning assigned by Section 71.004, Family Code.

(b) Except as otherwise provided by Subsection (d), a person who commits an offense under Section 25.07, Penal Code, related to a violation of a condition of bond set in a family violence case and whose bail in the case under Section 25.07, Penal Code, or in the family violence case is revoked or forfeited for a violation of a condition of bond may be taken into custody and, pending trial or other court proceedings, denied release on bail if following a hearing a judge or magistrate determines by a preponderance of the evidence that the person violated a condition of bond related to:

- (1) the safety of the victim of the offense under Section 25.07, Penal Code, or the family violence case, as applicable; or
- (2) the safety of the community.

(c) Except as otherwise provided by Subsection (d), a person who commits an offense under Section 25.07, Penal Code, other than an offense related to a violation of a condition of bond set in a family violence case, may be taken into custody and, pending trial or other court proceedings, denied release on bail if following a hearing a judge or magistrate determines by a preponderance of the evidence that the person committed the offense.

(d) A person who commits an offense under Section 25.07(a)(3), Penal Code, may be held without bail under Subsection (b) or (c), as applicable, only if following a hearing the judge or magistrate determines by a preponderance of the evidence that the person went to or near the place described in the order or condition of bond with the intent to commit or threaten to commit:

- (1) family violence; or
- (2) an act in furtherance of an offense under Section 42.072, Penal Code.

(e) In determining whether to deny release on bail under this article, the judge or magistrate may consider:

- (1) the order or condition of bond;
- (2) the nature and circumstances of the alleged offense;

- (3) the relationship between the accused and the victim, including the history of that relationship;
- (4) any criminal history of the accused; and
- (5) any other facts or circumstances relevant to a determination of whether the accused poses an imminent threat of future family violence.

(f) A person arrested for committing an offense under Section 25.07, Penal Code, shall without unnecessary delay and after reasonable notice is given to the attorney representing the state, but not later than 48 hours after the person is arrested, be taken before a magistrate in accordance with Article 15.17. At that time, the magistrate shall conduct the hearing and make the determination required by this article.

2. Art. 17.153. Denial of Bail for Violation of Condition of Bond Where Child Alleged Victim

(a) This article applies to a defendant charged with a felony offense under any of the following provisions of the Penal Code, if committed against a child younger than 14 years of age:

- (1) Chapter 21 (Sexual Offenses);
- (2) Section 25.02 (Prohibited Sexual Conduct);
- (3) Section 43.25 (Sexual Performance by a Child);
- (4) Section 20A.02 (Trafficking of Persons), if the defendant is alleged to have:
 - (A) trafficked the child with the intent or knowledge that the child would engage in sexual conduct, as defined by Section 43.25, Penal Code; or
 - (B) benefitted from participating in a venture that involved a trafficked child engaging in sexual conduct, as defined by Section 43.25, Penal Code; or
- (5) Section 43.05(a)(2) (Compelling Prostitution).

(b) A defendant described by Subsection (a) who violates a condition of bond set under Article 17.41 and whose bail in the case is revoked for the violation may be taken into custody and denied release on bail pending trial if, following a hearing, a judge or magistrate determines by a preponderance of the evidence that the defendant violated a condition of bond related to the safety of the victim of the offense or the safety of the community. If the magistrate finds that the violation occurred, the magistrate may revoke the defendant's bond and order that the defendant be immediately returned to custody. Once the defendant is placed in custody, the revocation of the defendant's bond discharges the sureties on the bond, if any, from any future liability on the bond. A discharge under this subsection from any future liability on the bond does not discharge any surety from liability for previous forfeitures on the bond.

O. DISCHARGE OF LIABILITY OF SURETY

Bondsmen are becoming increasingly aggressive about discharging their liability on bonds by surrendering the principal (the person accused), especially in counties that are aggressive in pursuing bond forfeitures. Surrendering the principal is a good way for proactive bondsmen to get off the bond. Unfortunately, it can also be used as a collection technique by some bondsmen when their principals are past due in making payments to the bondsman.

1. Art. 17.16. Discharge of Liability; Surrender or Incarceration of Principal Before Forfeiture; Verification of Incarceration

(a) A surety may before forfeiture relieve the surety of the surety's undertaking by:

- (1) surrendering the accused into the custody of the sheriff of the county where the prosecution is pending; or
- (2) delivering to the sheriff of the county in which the prosecution is pending and to the office of the prosecuting attorney an affidavit stating that the accused is incarcerated in:
 - (A) federal custody, subject to Subsection (a-1);
 - (B) the custody of any state; or
 - (C) any county of this state.

(a-1) For purposes of Subsection (a)(2), the surety may not be relieved of the surety's undertaking if the accused is in federal custody to determine whether the accused is lawfully present in the United States.

(b) On receipt of an affidavit described by Subsection (a)(2), the sheriff of the county in which the prosecution is pending shall verify whether the accused is incarcerated as stated in the affidavit. If the sheriff verifies the statement in the affidavit, the sheriff shall notify the magistrate before which the prosecution is pending of the verification.

(c) On a verification described by this article, the sheriff shall place a detainer against the accused with the appropriate officials in the jurisdiction in which the accused is incarcerated. On receipt of notice of a verification described by this article, the magistrate before which the prosecution is pending shall direct the clerk of the court to issue a capias for the arrest of the accused, except as provided by Subsection (d).

(d) A capias for the arrest of the accused is not required if:

- (1) a warrant has been issued for the accused's arrest and remains outstanding; or
- (2) the issuance of a capias would otherwise be unnecessary for the purpose of taking the accused into custody.

(e) For the purposes of Subsection (a)(2) of this article, the bond is discharged and the surety is absolved of liability on the bond on the verification of the incarceration of the accused.

(f) An affidavit described by Subsection (a)(2) and the documentation of any verification obtained under Subsection (b) must be:

- (1) filed in the court record of the underlying criminal case in the court in which the prosecution is pending or, if the court record does not exist, in a general file maintained by the clerk of the court; and
- (2) delivered to the office of the prosecuting attorney.

(g) A surety is liable for all reasonable and necessary expenses incurred in returning the accused into the custody of the sheriff of the county in which the prosecution is pending.

There have been some reported instances where a bondsman or someone retained by a bondsman has allegedly used force against the principal to make him surrender to the sheriff of the county where the prosecution is pending. Using force in this situation may be illegal, and the bondsman may be sued by the principal and may be liable for civil damages for such actions. Additionally, the bondsman may also be guilty of assault in cases where force or unlawful coercion is used to force the principal to surrender. From the standpoint of the sheriff's office, if the

bondsman surrenders the principal to the sheriff with detectible injuries and the sheriff accepts the accused in his or her jail, the sheriff and jail staff have a duty to see that the accused gets reasonable medical attention. This section may also apply to counties that have bail bond boards.

2. Art. 17.17. When Surrender is Made During Term

If a surrender of the accused be made during a term of the court to which he has bound himself to appear, the sheriff shall take him before the court; and if he is willing to give other bail, the court shall forthwith require him to do so. If he fails or refuses to give bail, the court shall make an order that he be committed to jail until the bail is given, and this shall be a sufficient commitment without any written order to the sheriff.

3. Art. 17.18. Surrender in Vacation

When the surrender is made at any other time than during the session of the court, the sheriff may take the necessary bail bond, but if the defendant fails or refuses to give other bail, the sheriff shall take him before the nearest magistrate; and such magistrate shall issue a warrant of commitment, reciting the fact that the accused has been once admitted to bail, has been surrendered, and now fails or refuses to give other bail.

4. Art. 17.19. Surety May Obtain a Warrant⁵⁵

(a) Subject to Subsection (a-1), a surety, that wants to surrender the surety's principal and has notified the principal's attorney, if the principal is represented by an attorney, in a manner provided by Rule 21a, Texas Rules of Civil Procedure, of the surety's intention to surrender the principal, may file an affidavit of that intention before the court or magistrate before which the prosecution is pending. The affidavit must state:

- (1) the court and cause number of the case;
- (2) the name of the defendant;
- (3) the offense with which the defendant is charged;
- (4) the date of the bond;
- (5) the cause for the surrender; and

⁵⁵ Changes and additions to Article 17.19 were made by H.B. 2697.

- (6) that notice of the surety's intention to surrender the principal has been given as required by this subsection and Subsection (a-1), if applicable.

(a-1) If the offense with which the defendant is charged is classified as a felony under the Penal Code, in addition to satisfying the requirements provided by Subsection (a), a surety must, before filing the affidavit described by that subsection, notify the attorney representing the state with jurisdiction in the case of the surety's intention to surrender the principal.

(b) In a prosecution pending before a court, if the court finds that there is cause for the surety to surrender the surety's principal, the court shall issue a capias for the principal. In a prosecution pending before a magistrate, if the magistrate finds that there is cause for the surety to surrender the surety's principal, the magistrate shall issue a warrant of arrest for the principal. It is an affirmative defense to any liability on the bond that:

- (1) the court or magistrate refused to issue a capias or warrant of arrest for the principal; and
 - (2) after the refusal to issue the capias or warrant of arrest, the principal failed to appear.
- (c) If the court or magistrate before whom the prosecution is pending is not available, the surety may deliver the affidavit to any other magistrate in the county and that magistrate, on a finding of cause for the surety to surrender the surety's principal, shall issue a warrant of arrest for the principal.
- (d) An arrest warrant or capias issued under this article shall be issued to the sheriff of the county in which the case is pending, and a copy of the warrant or capias shall be issued to the surety or his agent.
- (e) An arrest warrant or capias issued under this article may be executed by a peace officer, a security officer, or a private investigator licensed in this state.

It should be noted that in 1998, the Texas Attorney General's Office issued an opinion that found for the purposes of article 17.19 of the Texas Code of Criminal Procedure, a bail bondsman who wishes to surrender his principal must do so by filing the affidavit before the court in which the prosecution is pending or the magistrate who received the complaint, or the court to which proceedings are subsequently transferred if that judge or magistrate is available. Op. Tex. Att'y Gen. No. LO98-066 (1998). However, reliance on LO98-066 for the stated proposition may be misplaced. The opinion did not consider 17.19(c) which clearly provides for the presenting of the affidavit to any other magistrate, if the court or magistrate before whom the matter is pending is unavailable.

5. Art. 32.01. Defendant in Custody and No Indictment Presented

(a) When a defendant has been detained in custody or held to bail for the defendant's appearance to answer any criminal accusation, the prosecution, unless otherwise ordered by the court, for good cause shown, supported by affidavit, shall be dismissed and the bail discharged, if indictment or information be not presented against the defendant on or before the last day of the next term of the court which is held after the defendant's commitment or admission to bail or on or before the 180th day after the date of commitment or admission to bail, whichever date is later.

(b) A surety may file a motion under Subsection (a) for the purpose of discharging the defendant's bail only.

P. WHO MAY ACCEPT OR "TAKE" BONDS

The following articles relate to whom a bail bond should be presented once bond has been set and the bail bond is ready to be posted. These articles point out that a sheriff or any peace officer that has the accused in custody may accept the bail bond for the accused.

1. Art. 17.20. Bail in Misdemeanor

(a) In cases of misdemeanor, the sheriff or other peace officer, or a jailer licensed under Chapter 1701, Occupations Code, may, whether during the term of the court or in vacation, where the officer has a defendant in custody, take the defendant's bail.

(b) Before taking bail under this article, the sheriff, peace officer, or jailer shall obtain the defendant's criminal history record information through the statewide telecommunications system maintained by the Department of Public Safety and through the public safety report system developed under Article 17.021.

(c) Notwithstanding Subsection (b), a sheriff, peace officer, or jailer may make a bail decision regarding a defendant who is charged only with a misdemeanor punishable by fine only or a defendant who receives a citation under Article 14.06(c) without considering the factor required by Article 17.15(a)(6).

(d) If the defendant is charged with or has previously been convicted of an offense involving violence as defined by Article 17.03, the sheriff, officer, or jailer may not set the amount of the defendant's bail but may take the defendant's bail in the amount set by the court.⁵⁶

⁵⁶ Under Article 17.05 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, a bail bond is entered into either before a magistrate, upon an examination of a criminal accusation, or before a judge upon an application under habeas corpus; or it is fixed and taken from the defendant by a peace officer if authorized by Article 17.20, 17.21 or 17.22. As a preliminary matter, a law enforcement officer can always release an individual on a misdemeanor traffic offense by obtaining a written

2. Art. 17.21. Bail in Felony⁵⁷

(a) In cases of felony, when the accused is in custody of the sheriff or other officer, and the court before which the prosecution is pending is in session in the county where the accused is in custody, the court shall fix the amount of bail, if it is a bailable case and determine if the accused is eligible for a personal bond; and the sheriff or other peace officer, unless it be the police of a city, or a jailer licensed under Chapter 1701, Occupations Code, is authorized to take a bail bond of the accused in the amount as fixed by the court, to be approved by such officer taking the same, and will thereupon discharge the accused from custody. The defendant and the defendant's sureties are not required to appear in court.

(b) Notwithstanding Subsection (a), before releasing on bail a defendant charged with an offense punishable as a felony, a magistrate shall ensure that:

(1) the defendant has appeared before the magistrate; and

(2) the magistrate has considered the public safety report prepared under Article 17.022 for the defendant.

3. Art. 17.22. May Take Bail in Felony

(a) In a felony case, if the court before which the case is pending is not in session in the county where the defendant is in custody, the sheriff or other peace officer, or a jailer licensed under Chapter 1701, Occupations Code, who has the defendant in custody may take the defendant's bail in the amount set by the court or magistrate, or if no amount has been set, then in any amount that the officer considers reasonable and that is in compliance with Article 17.15.

(b) Before taking bail under this article, the sheriff, peace officer, or jailer shall obtain the defendant's criminal history record information through the statewide telecommunications system maintained by the Department of Public Safety and through the public safety report system developed under Article 17.021

promise to appear, without making an arrest or having a bond set. Op. Tex. Att'y Gen. No. JM-760 (1987). As for the provisions that allow a law enforcement officer to release a defendant on bond *without authorization from a court or magistrate*, such release may occur only under the conditions specified in articles 17.20, 17.21 or 17.22. *Id.* Article 17.20 allows a sheriff or other peace officer to take a bail bond from a defendant that is in custody in any misdemeanor case not involving violence, regardless of whether or not the custody occurs "during the term of court" or while the court is "in vacation." *Id.* Despite the provisions contained in Articles 17.20, 17.21 and 17.22, it is very important to note that a law enforcement officer can never release an individual on a "*personal bond*," without prior authorization from a court or magistrate.

⁵⁷ Changes and additions to Article 17.21 were made by S.B. 9.

(c) If the defendant is charged with or has previously been convicted of an offense involving violence as defined by Article 17.03, the sheriff, officer, or jailer may not set the amount of the defendant's bail but may take the defendant's bail in the amount set by the court.

Generally speaking, the sheriff of the county usually has the inmate in custody, and magistrates are usually available within 24 to 48 hours to fix the amount of bond. On the rare occasion when no magistrate is available within 48 hours and court is not in session, the sheriff does have the power under Article 17.22 to fix and take a reasonable bond in felony cases that do not involve violence. In cases of an arrest without a warrant, an accused must be taken before a magistrate for a determination of probable cause within 48 hours or the Fourth Amendment rights of that person have presumptively been violated. *Infra.* at 2.

It is possible under Art. 17.033(c) that the state's attorney file an application to postpone release for 72 hours.

It is recommended that the sheriff refrain whenever possible from setting the amount of any bond, as he or she is not a magistrate. However, in any case involving a warrantless arrest where a magistrate has not made a finding of probable cause within 48 hours, the sheriff needs to get that person out of his or her jail within 48 hours to avoid a presumptive Fourth Amendment violation cause of action.

In practice, the best course of action is to get each accused individual to a magistrate as quickly as possible, but, in order to comply with Article 17.033, within 24 hours for all persons accused of misdemeanor offenses and within 48 hours for all persons accused of felony offenses. Otherwise, the caps and personal bond requirements of Article 17.033 will apply.

Further, any additional delay may give rise to a lawsuit alleging false arrest or detention under the Fourth Amendment. The *McLaughlin* line of cases state that the Fourth Amendment requires a prompt determination of probable cause following a warrantless arrest, and failure to provide such a determination within 48 hours shifts the burden to the government to demonstrate a *bona fide* emergency or extraordinary circumstances justifying a lengthier delay. *McLaughlin* at 55-57; *United States v. Adekunle*, 2 F.3d 559, 561 (5th Cir. 1993).

4. Art. 17.23. Sureties Severally Bound

In all bail bonds taken under any provision of this Code, the sureties shall be severally bound. Where a surrender of the principal is made by one or more of them, all the sureties shall be considered discharged.

5. Art. 17.24. General Rules Applicable

All general rules in the Chapter are applicable to bail defendant before an examining court.

6. Art. 17.25. Proceedings When Bail Is Granted

After a full examination of the testimony, the magistrate shall, if the case be one where bail may properly be granted and ought to be required, proceed to make an order that the accused execute a bail bond with sufficient security, conditioned for his appearance before the proper court.

7. Art. 17.26. Time Given to Procure Bail

Reasonable time shall be given the accused to procure security.

8. Art. 17.27. When Bail Is Not Given

If, after the allowance of a reasonable time, the security be not given, the magistrate shall make an order committing the accused to jail to be kept safely until legally discharged; and he shall issue a commitment accordingly.

9. Art. 17.28. When Ready to Give Bail

If the party be ready to give bail, the magistrate shall cause to be prepared a bond, which shall be signed by the accused and his surety or sureties, if any.

Q. RELEASING THE PERSON AFTER MAKING BOND

The important requirement for releasing the person after making bond is for the accused to “at once be set at liberty.” Due to increased jail overcrowding across the state and a shortage of funds for increased staffing, the “book- out” procedure can take a longer period of time than law enforcement would like. For potential liability purposes, it is important to show, through good documentation, that the jail staff was diligent in attempting to release inmates posting bond as quickly as reasonably possible.

1. Art. 17.29. Accused Liberated

(a) When the accused has given the required bond, either to the magistrate or the officer having him in custody, he shall at once be set at liberty.

(b) Before releasing on bail a person arrested for an offense under Section 42.072, Penal Code (Stalking), or a person arrested or held without warrant in the prevention of family violence, the law enforcement agency holding the person shall make a reasonable attempt to give personal notice of the imminent release to the victim of the alleged offense or to another person designated by the victim to

receive the notice. An attempt by an agency to give notice to the victim or the person designated by the victim at the victim's or person's last known telephone number or address, as shown on the records of the agency, constitutes a reasonable attempt to give notice under this subsection. If possible, the arresting officer shall collect the address and telephone number of the victim at the time the arrest is made and shall communicate that information to the agency holding the person.

(c) A law enforcement agency or an employee of a law enforcement agency is not liable for damages arising from complying or failing to comply with Subsection (b) of this article.

(d) In this article, "family violence" has the meaning assigned by Section 71.004, Family Code.

R. HOLDING A PERSON AFTER THE POSTING OF A BOND

Due to the increase in family violence and the desire of the Legislature to provide a "cooling off" period prior to release of the accused back into the general public, the Legislature has provided that persons accused of family violence can be held for four additional hours after bail has been posted on the direction of the head of the agency holding that person (usually the sheriff of the county). The accused may be held for up to an additional 48 hours, if authorized in writing by a magistrate upon certain findings.

1. Art. 17.291. Further Detention of Certain Persons⁵⁸

(a) In this article:

(1) "Family Violence" has the meaning assigned by Section 71.004, Family Code.

(2) "Magistrate" has the meaning assigned by Article 2A.151.

(b) Article 17.29 does not apply when a person has been arrested or held without a warrant in the prevention of family violence if there is probable cause to believe the violence will continue if the person is immediately released. The head of the agency arresting or holding such a person shall hold the person for a period of four hours after bond has been posted. This detention period may be extended for an additional period not to exceed 48 hours, but only if authorized in a writing

⁵⁸ Changes and additions to Article 17.291 were made by H.B. 2492 and H.B. 4504.

directed to the person having custody of the detained person by a magistrate who concludes that:⁵⁹

- (1) the violence would continue if the person is released; and
- (2) if the additional period exceeds 24 hours, probable cause exists to believe that the person committed the instant offense and that, during the 10-year period preceding the date of the instant offense, the person has been arrested:
 - (A) on more than one occasion for an offense involving family violence; or
 - (B) for any other offense, if a deadly weapon, as defined by Section 1.07, Penal Code, was used or exhibited during commission of the offense or during immediate flight after commission of the offense.

This provision has provided a useful tool in preventing family violence from reoccurring, but the requirements should be carefully followed to avoid claims for false arrest and imprisonment for the time spent in jail after bond has been posted.

S. ORDER FOR EMERGENCY PROTECTION

A magistrate may issue an Order for Emergency Protection in cases involving family violence or stalking. Due to increased concerns relating to these incidents, and in an attempt to keep additional criminal offenses and possible injuries from occurring, the Legislature has enacted the following articles:

1. Art. 17.292. Magistrate's Order for Emergency Protection⁶⁰

(a) At a defendant's appearance before a magistrate after arrest for an offense involving family violence or an offense under Section 20A.02, 20A.03, 22.011, 22.012, 22.021 or 42.072 Penal Code, the magistrate may issue an order for emergency protection on the magistrate's own motion or on the request of:

- (1) the victim of the offense;
- (2) the guardian of the victim;
- (3) a peace officer; or

⁵⁹ Changes to Article 17.291(b) apply only to a person who is arrested on or after the effective date of H.B. 2492, which is September 1, 2025.

⁶⁰ Changes and additions to Article 17.292 were made by S.B. 2196, S.B. 1896, and H.B. 16.

- (4) the attorney representing the state.
- (b) At a defendant's appearance before a magistrate after arrest for an offense involving family violence, the magistrate shall issue an order for emergency protection if the arrest is for an offense that also involves:
 - (1) serious bodily injury to the victim; or
 - (2) the use or exhibition of a deadly weapon during the commission of an assault.
- (c) The magistrate in the order for emergency protection may prohibit the arrested party from:
 - (1) committing:
 - (A) family violence or an assault on the person protected under the order; or
 - (B) an act in furtherance of an offense under Section 20A.02 or 42.072, Penal Code;
 - (2) communicating:
 - (A) directly with a member of the family or household or with the person protected under the order in a threatening or harassing manner;
 - (B) a threat through any person to a member of the family or household or to the person protected under the order; or
 - (C) if the magistrate finds good cause, in any manner with a person protected under the order or a member of the family or household of a person protected under the order, except through the party's attorney or a person appointed by the court;
 - (3) going to or near:
 - (A) the residence, place of employment, or business of a member of the family or household or of the person protected under the order; or

- (B) the residence, child care facility, or school where a child protected under the order resides or attends;
- (4) possessing a firearm, unless the person is a peace officer, as defined by Section 1.07, Penal Code, actively engaged in employment as a sworn, full-time paid employee of a state agency or political subdivision; or
- (5) tracking or monitoring personal property or a motor vehicle in the possession of the person protected under the order or of a member of the family or household of the person protected under the order, without the protected person's effective consent, including by:
 - (A) using a tracking application on a personal electronic device in the possession of the person or the family or household member or using a tracking device; or
 - (B) physically following the person or the family or household member or causing another to physically follow the person or member.

(c-1) In addition to the conditions described by Subsection (c), the magistrate in the order for emergency protection may impose a condition described by Article 17.49(b) in the manner provided by that article, including ordering a defendant's participation in a global positioning monitoring system or allowing participation in the system by an alleged victim or other person protected under the order.

(d) The victim of the offense need not be present when the order for emergency protection is issued.

(d-1) The magistrate shall use the standardized order for emergency protection form created by the Office of Court Administration of the Texas Judicial System under Section 72.039, Government Code, to issue an order for emergency protection under this article.

(d-2) A magistrate's failure to use the standardized order for emergency protection form as required under Subsection (d-1) does not affect the validity or enforceability of the order for emergency protection issued.

(d-3) The person making the arrest or the person having custody of the defendant shall provide to the magistrate any information regarding the defendant that will aid the magistrate in issuing an order for emergency protection under this article. To the extent the information is available, the person making the arrest or the person having custody shall provide information regarding the victim of the offense to the

magistrate to aid the magistrate in issuing the order for emergency protection. The person making the arrest or the person having custody, as applicable, shall, at a minimum, provide any information described by Section 411.042(b)(6), Government Code, available to the person and may use a form adopted by the Office of Court Administration of the Texas Judicial System under Section 72.039, Government Code, for this purpose. The failure to provide the necessary information to the magistrate does not negate the magistrate's authority or duty to issue an order for emergency protection under this article.⁶¹

(e) In the order for emergency protection the magistrate shall specifically describe the prohibited locations and the minimum distances, if any, that the party must maintain, unless the magistrate determines for the safety of the person or persons protected by the order that specific descriptions of the locations should be omitted.

(f) To the extent that a condition imposed by an order for emergency protection issued under this article conflicts with an existing court order granting possession of or access to a child, the condition imposed under this article prevails for the duration of the order for emergency protection.

(f-1) To the extent that a condition imposed by an order issued under this article conflicts with a condition imposed by an order subsequently issued under Chapter 85, Subtitle B, Title 4, Family Code (Family Code 85.001 et seq.), or under Title 1 or Title 5, Family Code, the condition imposed by the order issued under the Family Code prevails.

(f-2) To the extent that a condition imposed by an order issued under this article conflicts with a condition imposed by an order subsequently issued under Chapter 83, Subtitle B, Title 4, Family Code (Family Code 83.001 et. seq.), the condition imposed by the order issued under this article prevails unless the court issuing the order under Chapter 83, Family Code:

- (1) is informed of the existence of the order issued under this article; and
- (2) makes a finding in the order issued under Chapter 83, Family Code, that the court is superseding the order issued under this article.

(g) An order for emergency protection issued under this article must contain the following statements printed in bold-face type or in capital letters:

⁶¹ Newly created Article 17.292(d-3) applies only to a person who is arrested on or after the effective date of S.B. 1896, which is September 1, 2025.

“A VIOLATION OF THIS ORDER BY COMMISSION OF AN ACT PROHIBITED BY THE ORDER MAY BE PUNISHABLE BY A FINE OF AS MUCH AS \$4,000 OR BY CONFINEMENT IN JAIL FOR AS LONG AS ONE YEAR OR BY BOTH. AN ACT THAT RESULTS IN A SEPARATE OFFENSE MAY BE PROSECUTED AS A SEPARATE MISDEMEANOR OR FELONY OFFENSE, AS APPLICABLE, IN ADDITION TO A VIOLATION OF THIS ORDER. IF THE ACT IS PROSECUTED AS A SEPARATE FELONY OFFENSE, IT IS PUNISHABLE BY CONFINEMENT IN PRISON FOR AT LEAST TWO YEARS. THE POSSESSION OF A FIREARM BY A PERSON, OTHER THAN A PEACE OFFICER, AS DEFINED BY SECTION 1.07, PENAL CODE, ACTIVELY ENGAGED IN EMPLOYMENT AS A SWORN, FULL-TIME PAID EMPLOYEE OF A STATE AGENCY OR POLITICAL SUBDIVISION, WHO IS SUBJECT TO THIS ORDER MAY BE PROSECUTED AS A SEPARATE OFFENSE PUNISHABLE BY CONFINEMENT OR IMPRISONMENT.”

“NO PERSON, INCLUDING A PERSON WHO IS PROTECTED BY THIS ORDER, MAY GIVE PERMISSION TO ANYONE TO IGNORE OR VIOLATE ANY PROVISION OF THIS ORDER. DURING THE TIME IN WHICH THIS ORDER IS VALID, EVERY PROVISION OF THIS ORDER IS IN FULL FORCE AND EFFECT UNLESS A COURT CHANGES THE ORDER.”

(h) As soon as possible but not later than the next business day after the date the magistrate issues an order for emergency protection under this article, the magistrate shall send a copy of the order to the chief of police in the municipality where the member of the family or household or individual protected by the order resides, if the person resides in a municipality, or to the sheriff of the county where the person resides, if the person does not reside in a municipality. If the victim of the offense is not present when the order is issued, the magistrate issuing the order shall order an appropriate peace officer to make a good faith effort to notify, within 24 hours, the victim that the order has been issued by calling the victim’s residence and place of employment. The clerk of the court shall send a copy of the order to the victim at the victim’s last known address as soon as possible but not later than the next business day after the date the order is issued.

(h-1) A magistrate or clerk of the court may delay sending a copy of the order under Subsection (h) only if the magistrate or clerk lacks information necessary to ensure service and enforcement.

(i) If an order for emergency protection issued under this article prohibits a person from going to or near a child care facility or school, the magistrate shall send a copy of the order to the child care facility or school.

(i-1) The copy of the order and any related information may be sent under Subsection (h) or (i) electronically or in another manner that can be accessed by the recipient.

(j) An order for emergency protection issued under this article is effective on issuance, and the defendant shall be served a copy of the order by the magistrate or the magistrate's designee in person or electronically. The magistrate shall make a separate record of the service in written or electronic format. An order for emergency protection issued under Subsection (a) or (b)(1) of this article remains in effect up to the 91st day but not less than 61 days after the date of issuance. An order for emergency protection issued under Subsection (b)(2) of this article remains in effect up to the 121st day but not less than 91 days after the date of issuance. After notice to each affected party and a hearing, the issuing court may modify all or part of an order issued under this article if the court finds that:⁶²

- (1) the order as originally issued is unworkable;
- (2) the modification will not place the victim of the offense at greater risk than did the original order; and
- (3) the modification will not in any way endanger a person protected under the order.

(k) To ensure that an officer responding to a call is aware of the existence and terms of an order for emergency protection issued under this article, not later than the third business day after the date of receipt of the copy of the order by the applicable law enforcement agency with jurisdiction over the municipality or county in which the victim resides, the law enforcement agency shall enter the information required under Section 411.042(b)(6), Government Code, into the statewide law enforcement information system maintained by the Department of Public Safety.

(k-1) A law enforcement agency may delay entering the information required under Subsection (k) only if the agency lacks information necessary to ensure service and enforcement.

⁶² The changes to Article 17.292(j) apply only to an order for emergency protection issued on or after the effective date of S.B. 2196, which is September 1, 2025.

(l) In the order for emergency protection, the magistrate shall suspend a license to carry a handgun issued under Subchapter H, Chapter 411, Government Code, that is held by the defendant.

(m) In this article:

(1) “Family,” “family violence,” and “household” have the meanings assigned by Chapter 71, Family Code.

(2) “Firearm” has the meaning assigned by Chapter 46, Penal Code.

(3) “Business day” means the day other than a Saturday, Sunday, or a state or national holiday.

(n) On request, all or part of an order for emergency protection issued under this article may be modified by the court that assumed jurisdiction over the offense giving rise to the issuance of the order. The standards under Subsection (j) are applicable to a court modifying all or part of an order under this subsection.⁶³

The Attorney General concluded that Article 17.292 permits, but does not require, the district attorney to represent the State before a municipal court judge who is acting as a magistrate and hearing a motion to vacate and suspend an emergency protective order issued under article 17.292. Op. Tex. Att’y Gen. No. KP-0385 (2021).

2. Art. 17.293. Delivery of Order for Emergency Protection to Other Persons

The magistrate or the clerk of the magistrate’s court issuing an order for emergency protection under Article 17.292 that suspends a license to carry a handgun shall immediately send a copy of the order to the appropriate division of the Department of Public Safety at its Austin headquarters. On receipt of the order suspending the license, the department shall:

(1) record the suspension of the license in the records of the department;

(2) report the suspension to local law enforcement agencies, as appropriate; and

(3) demand surrender of the suspended license from the license holder.

3. Art. 17.294. Confidentiality of Certain Information in Order for Emergency Protection

⁶³ The changes to Article 17.292(n) apply only to a magistrate’s order for emergency protection entered on or after the effective date of H.B. 16, which is December 4, 2025.

On request by a person protected by an order for emergency protection issued under Article 17.292, or if determined necessary by the magistrate, the court issuing the order may protect the person's mailing address by rendering an order:

- (1) requiring the person protected under the order to:
 - (A) disclose the person's mailing address to the court;
 - (B) designate another person to receive on behalf of the person any notice or documents filed with the court related to the order; and
 - (C) disclose the designated person's mailing address to the court;
- (2) requiring the court clerk to:
 - (A) strike the mailing address of the person protected by the order from the public records of the court, if applicable; and
 - (B) maintain a confidential record of the mailing address for use only by:
 - (i) the court; or
 - (ii) a law enforcement agency for purposes of entering the information required by Section 411.042(b)(6), Government Code, into the statewide law enforcement information system maintained by the Department of Public Safety; and
- (3) prohibiting the release of the information to the defendant.

4. Art. 17.30. Shall Certify Proceedings

The magistrate, before whom an examination has taken place upon a criminal accusation, shall certify to all the proceedings had before him, as well as where he discharges, holds to bail or commits, and transmit them, sealed up, to the court before which the defendant may be tried, writing his name across the seals of the envelope. The voluntary statement of the defendant, the testimony, bail bonds, and every other proceeding in the case, shall be thus delivered to the clerk of the proper court, without delay.

5. Art. 17.31. Duty of Clerks Who Receive Such Proceedings

If the proceedings be delivered to a district clerk, he shall keep them safely and deliver the same to the next grand jury. If the proceedings are delivered to a county clerk, he shall without delay deliver them to the district or county attorney of his county.

6. Art. 17.32. In Case of No Arrest

Upon failure from any cause to arrest the accused the magistrate shall file with the proper clerk the complaint, warrant of arrest, and a list of the witnesses.

T. REVIEW OF BAIL UPON REQUEST OF DEFENDANT

An accused may request a review of his bond by a magistrate at any time during his confinement.

1. Art. 17.33. Request Setting of Bail

The accused may at any time after being confined request a magistrate to review the written statements of the witnesses for the State as well as all other evidence available at that time in determining the amount of bail. This setting of the amount of bail does not waive the defendant's right to an examining trial as provided in Article 16.01.

U. BONDS FOR WITNESSES

Although this is a little-used process, a magistrate may require bail for witnesses important to a criminal case. The following articles of the Texas Code of Criminal Procedure apply in such situations:

1. Art. 17.34. Witnesses to Give Bond

Witnesses for the State or defendant may be required by the magistrate, upon the examination of any criminal accusation before him, to give bail for their appearance to testify before the proper court. A personal bond may be taken of a witness by the court before whom the case is pending.

2. Art. 17.35. Security of Witness

The amount of security to be required of a witness is to be regulated by his pecuniary condition, character and the nature of the offense with respect to which he is a witness.

3. Art. 17.36. Effect of Witness Bond

The bond given by a witness for his appearance has the same effect as a bond of the accused and may be forfeited and recovered upon in the same manner.

4. Art. 17.37. Witness May be Committed

A witness required to give bail who fails or refuses to do so shall be committed to jail as in other cases of a failure to give bail when required, but shall be released from custody upon giving such bail.

5. Art. 17.38. Rules Applicable to all Cases of Bail

The rules in this Chapter respecting bail are applicable to all such undertakings when entered into in the course of a criminal action, whether before or after an indictment, in every case where authority is given to any court, judge, magistrate, or other officer, to require bail of a person accused of an offense, or of a witness in a criminal action.

V. RECORDS OF BAIL

Magistrates or officers setting or taking bail are required to keep the following records in a “well-bound book.” Since many magistrates and officers do not keep records in such a format, some bail bondsmen who are looking to file a lawsuit against a county will file Open Meetings Act and Public Information Act requests for the book. Because these records are often kept in a computer data bank and are hard to access in this format, the time and effort to retrieve these records may cause a problem for the responding official. Legislation may need to be considered to amend this section to allow such records to be kept in a computer-generated format instead of a “well-bound book.” In the meantime, the following statute may be helpful in defending against not maintaining a “well-bound book:”

AUTHORIZATION. Any local government record data may be stored electronically in addition to or instead of source documents in paper or other media, subject to the requirements of this chapter and rules adopted under it.

TEX. LOCAL GOV'T CODE § 205.002.

1. Art. 17.39. Records of Bail

A magistrate or other officer who sets the amount of bail or who takes bail shall record in a well-bound book the name of the person whose appearance the bail secures, the amount of bail, the date bail is set, the magistrate or officer who sets bail, the offense or other cause for which the appearance is secured, the magistrate or other officer who takes bail, the date the person is released, and the name of the bondsman, if any.

W. ADDITIONAL CONDITIONS OF BOND IMPOSED BY COURT

In certain types of cases enumerated below, the State has allowed additional terms of bail that may be set by a magistrate to limit the likelihood of the commission of additional crimes while an accused is on bail. Those additional conditions are:

1. Art. 17.40. Conditions Related to Victim or Community Safety

(a) To secure a defendant's attendance at trial, a magistrate may impose any reasonable condition of bond related to the safety of a victim of the alleged offense or to the safety of the community.

(b) At a hearing limited to determining whether the defendant violated a condition of bond imposed under Subsection (a), the magistrate may revoke the defendant's bond only if the magistrate finds by a preponderance of the evidence that the violation occurred. If the magistrate finds that the violation occurred, the magistrate shall revoke the defendant's bond and order that the defendant be immediately returned to custody. Once the defendant is placed in custody, the revocation of the defendant's bond discharges the sureties on the bond, if any, from any future liability on the bond. A discharge under this subsection from any future liability on the bond does not discharge any surety from liability for previous forfeitures on the bond.

2. Art. 17.41. Condition Where Child Alleged Victim

(a) This article applies to a defendant charged with an offense under any of the following provisions of the Penal Code, if committed against a child younger than 18 years of age:

- (1) Chapter 20A (Trafficking of Persons), 21 (Sexual Offenses), 22 (Assaultive Offenses), or 43 (Public Indecency); or
- (2) Section 25.02 (Prohibited Sexual Conduct).

(b) Subject to Subsections (c) and (d), a magistrate shall require as a condition of bond for a defendant charged with an offense described by Subsection (a) that the defendant not:

- (1) directly communicate with the alleged victim of the offense; or
- (2) go near a residence, school, or other location, as specifically described in the bond, frequented by the alleged victim.

(c) A magistrate who imposes a condition of bond under this article may grant the defendant supervised access to the alleged victim.

(d) To the extent that a condition imposed under this article conflicts with an existing court order granting possession of or access to a child, the condition imposed under this article prevails for a period specified by the magistrate, not to exceed 90 days.

3. Art. 17.411. Conditions for Civilly Committed Sexually Violent Predators⁶⁴

(a) In this article, “civil commitment facility” has the meaning assigned by Section 1.07, Penal Code.

(b) This article applies only to a defendant who was civilly committed as a sexually violent predator under Chapter 841, Health and Safety Code, at the time of the alleged offense.

(c) A magistrate may impose any reasonable condition of bond related to the safety of a victim of the alleged offense, to the safety of the community, or to the safety of staff, contractors, or volunteers at a civil commitment facility.

(d) A magistrate shall impose as a condition of bond that the defendant:

- (1) not commit a new offense while released on bond; and
- (2) comply with the defendant’s civil commitment order for purposes of ensuring a safe environment at the civil commitment facility.

(e) At a hearing limited to determining whether the defendant violated a condition of bond imposed under this article, the magistrate shall revoke the defendant’s bond and order that the defendant be immediately returned to custody if the magistrate finds by a preponderance of the evidence that the violation occurred. Once the defendant is placed in custody, the revocation of the defendant’s

⁶⁴ Article 17.411 was created by S.B. 1610, and applies only to a person who is arrested on or after the effective date of S.B. 1610, which is September 1, 2025.

bond discharges the sureties on the bond, if any, from any future liability on the bond. A discharge under this subsection from any future liability on the bond does not discharge any surety from liability for previous forfeitures on the bond.

S.B. 1610 requires DPS to input information in the computerized criminal history system, as required by Article 66.102(j) of the Code of Criminal Procedure, “as soon as practicable after [September 1, 2025]” for any person who was civilly committed under Chapter 841, Health and Safety Code, before September 1, 2025.

X. PERSONAL BOND OFFICE

1. Art. 17.42. Personal Bond Office⁶⁵

Sec. 1. Any county, or any judicial district with jurisdiction in more than one county, with the approval of the commissioners court of each county in the district, may establish a personal bond office to gather and review information about an accused that may have a bearing on whether he will comply with the conditions of a personal bond and report its findings to the court before which the case is pending.

Sec. 2. (a) The commissioners court of a county that establishes the office or the district and county judges of a judicial district that establishes the office may employ a director of the office.

(b) The director may employ the staff authorized by the commissioners court of the county or the commissioners court of each county in the judicial district.

Sec. 3. If a judicial district establishes an office, each county in the district shall pay its pro rata share of the costs of administering the office according to its population.

Sec. 4. (a) Except as otherwise provided by this subsection, if a court releases an accused on personal bond on the recommendation of a personal bond office, the court shall assess a personal bond reimbursement fee of \$20 or three percent of the amount of the bail fixed for the accused, whichever is greater. The court may waive

⁶⁵ Changes and additions to Article 17.42 were made by H.B. 4504 and S.B. 1020.

the fee or assess a lesser fee if good cause is shown. A court that requires a defendant to give a personal bond under Article 45A.107 may not assess a personal bond fee under this subsection.

- (b) Reimbursement fees collected under this article may be used solely to defray expenses of the personal bond office, including defraying the expenses of extradition.
- (c) Reimbursement fees collected under this article shall be deposited in the county treasury, or if the office serves more than one county, the fees shall be apportioned to each county in the district according to each county's pro rata share of the costs of the office.

Sec. 5. (a) A personal bond pretrial release office established under this article shall:

- (1) prepare a record containing information about any accused person identified by case number only who, after review by the office, is released by a court on personal bond before sentencing in a pending case;
 - (2) update the record on a monthly basis;
 - (3) file a copy of the record with the district or county clerk, as applicable based on court jurisdiction over the categories of offenses addressed in the records, in any county served by the office; and
 - (4) submit a copy of the record to the attorney representing the state and the accused person's attorney and, as applicable based on whether the accused person violated a condition of release on bond in the preceding month, an update to that record.
- (b) In preparing a record under Subsection (a), the office shall include in the record a statement of:
- (1) the offense with which the person is charged;
 - (2) the dates of any court appearances scheduled in the matter that were previously unattended by the person;

- (3) whether a warrant has been issued for the person's arrest for failure to appear in accordance with the terms of the person's release;
 - (4) whether the person has failed to comply with conditions of release on personal bond, including failing to comply by tampering with an electronic monitoring device; and
 - (5) the presiding judge or magistrate who authorized the personal bond.
- (c) This section does not apply to a personal bond pretrial release office that on January 1, 1995, was operated by a community corrections and supervision department.

Sec. 6. (a) Not later than April 1 of each year, a personal bond office established under this article shall submit to the commissioners court or district and county judges that established the office an annual report containing information about the operations of the office during the preceding year.

- (b) In preparing a record under Subsection (a), the office shall include in the report a statement of:
- (1) the office's operating budget;
 - (2) the number of positions maintained for office staff;
 - (3) the number of accused persons who, after review by the office, were released by a court on personal bond before sentencing in a pending case; and
 - (4) the number of persons described by Subdivision (3):
 - (A) who failed to attend a scheduled court appearance;
 - (B) for whom a warrant was issued for the arrest of those persons for failure to appear in accordance with the terms of their release; or
 - (C) who, while released on personal bond, were arrested for any other offense in the same county in which the persons were released on bond.

- (c) This section does not apply to a personal bond pretrial release office that on January 1, 1995, was operated by a community corrections and supervision department.

A personal bond office can have a positive impact on jail population. A cost and benefit analysis should be conducted to determine if a personal bond office reduces jail overcrowding enough to justify its creation and the initial and continuing funding.

Y. POST-TRIAL

The post-trial bond provision listed below applies specifically to forensic DNA testing that has been requested by a person convicted of an offense. If the motion for testing is granted, and the court enters findings favorable to the convicted person, then the court may set a new bail, within the court's discretion. If the court chooses to set bail, the same requirements listed above still apply to setting and taking the bail. Section 17.48 states as follows:

1. Art. 17.48. Post-Trial Actions

A convicting court on entering a finding favorable to a convicted person under Article 64.04, after a hearing at which the attorney representing the state and the counsel for the defendant are entitled to appear, may release the convicted person on bail under this chapter pending the conclusion of court proceedings or proceedings under Section 11, Article IV, Texas Constitution, and Article 48.01.

In light of the numerous motions that have been filed in the last several years due to advances of DNA testing, this provision for post-trial bail has become more and more important.

Z. BOND CONDITIONS FOR SPECIFIC OFFENSES

1. Art. 17.43. Home Curfew and Electronic Monitoring as Condition

(a) A magistrate may require as a condition of release on personal bond that the defendant submit to home curfew and electronic monitoring under the supervision of an agency designated by the magistrate.

(b) Cost of monitoring may be assessed as reimbursement fees or ordered paid directly by the defendant as a condition of bond.

In certain segments of the potential jail population, home curfew and monitoring have been found to be successful.

2. Art. 17.431. Notification by Personal Bond Office Regarding Electronic Monitoring Device Violation⁶⁶

Immediately after a personal bond office established under Article 17.42 determines there is reasonable cause to believe that a defendant supervised by the office has violated a condition of release on bond related to an electronic monitoring device, including a global positioning monitoring system as defined by Article 17.49, the personal bond office shall notify the court or magistrate having jurisdiction over the case.

3. Art. 17.44. Home Confinement, Electronic Monitoring, & Drug Testing as Condition

(a) A magistrate may require as a condition of release on bond that the defendant submit to:

- (1) home confinement and electronic monitoring under the supervision of an agency designated by the magistrate; or
- (2) testing on a weekly basis for the presence of a controlled substance in the defendant's body.

(b) In this article, "controlled substance" has the meaning assigned by Section 481.002, Health and Safety Code.

(c) The magistrate may revoke the bond and order the defendant arrested if the defendant:

- (1) violates a condition of home confinement and electronic monitoring;
- (2) refuses to submit to a test for controlled substances or submits to a test for controlled substances and the test indicates the presence of a controlled substance in the defendant's body; or
- (3) fails to pay the reimbursement fee for costs of monitoring or testing for controlled substances, if payment is ordered under Subsection (e) as a condition of bond and the magistrate determines that the Defendant is not indigent and is financially able to make the payments as ordered.

⁶⁶ Article 17.431 was created by S.B. 1020 and applies only to a violation of a condition of release on bond or a violation of a condition of community supervision, as applicable, that occurs on or after the effective date of S.B. 1020, which is September 1, 2025.

(d) The community justice assistance division of the Texas Department of Criminal Justice may provide grants to counties to implement electronic monitoring programs authorized by this article.

(e) The cost of electronic monitoring or testing for controlled substances under this article may be assessed as a reimbursement fee or ordered paid directly by the defendant as a condition of bond.

4. Art. 17.441. Conditions Requiring Motor Vehicle Ignition Interlock

The State, recognizing the dangers from repeat DWI offenders, has provided magistrates with an additional tool to limit repeat offenses while defendants are on bail pending trial. Article 17.441 reads as follows:

(a) Except as provided by Subsection (b), a magistrate shall require on release that a defendant charged with a subsequent offense under Sections 49.04, 49.05, 49.06, or 49.061, Penal Code, or an offense under Section 49.045, 49.07 or 49.08 of that code:

- (1) have installed on the motor vehicle owned by the defendant or on the vehicle most regularly driven by the defendant, a device that uses a deep-lung breath analysis mechanism to make impractical the operation of a motor vehicle if ethyl alcohol is detected in the breath of the operator; and
- (2) not operate any motor vehicle unless the vehicle is equipped with that device.

(b) The magistrate may not require the installation of the device if the magistrate finds that to require the device would not be in the best interest of justice.

(c) If the defendant is required to have the device installed, the magistrate shall require that the defendant have the device installed on the appropriate motor vehicle, at the defendant's expense, before the 30th day after the date the defendant is released on bond.

(d) The magistrate may designate an appropriate agency to verify the installation of the device and to monitor the device. If the magistrate designates an agency under this subsection, in each month during which the agency verifies the installation of the device or provides a monitoring service the defendant shall pay a reimbursement fee to the designated agency in the amount set by the magistrate. The defendant shall pay the initial reimbursement fee at the time the agency verifies the installation of the device. In each subsequent month during which the defendant is required to pay a reimbursement fee the defendant shall pay the fee on the first

occasion in that month that the agency provides a monitoring service. The magistrate shall set the fee in an amount not to exceed \$10 as determined by the county auditor, or by the commissioners court of the county if the county does not have a county auditor, to be sufficient to cover the cost incurred by the designated agency in conducting the verification or providing the monitoring service, as applicable in that county.

5. Art. 17.442. Notification by Agency Supervising Defendant Regarding Electronic Monitoring Device Violation⁶⁷

Immediately after the agency designated by the magistrate to supervise a defendant's release on bond, other than a personal bond, determines there is reasonable cause to believe that the defendant has violated a condition of release on bond related to an electronic monitoring device, including a global positioning monitoring system as defined by Article 17.49, the agency shall notify the court or magistrate having jurisdiction over the case.

6. Art. 17.45. Conditions Requiring AIDS and HIV Instruction

The State, realizing that the spread of this disease might be lessened by educating a segment of the population at risk for the disease (i.e. those defendants charged with prostitution), has provided magistrates with the following tool:

A magistrate may require as a condition of bond that a defendant charged with an offense under Section 43.02 or 43.021, Penal Code, receive counseling or education, or both, relating to acquired immune deficiency syndrome or human immunodeficiency virus.

7. Art. 17.46. Conditions for a Defendant Charged with Stalking

In recent years, stalking has become a more recognized offense which can lead to more violent crimes, and for that reason, the following condition was established:

(a) A magistrate may require as a condition of release on bond that a defendant charged with an offense under Section 42.072, Penal Code, may not:

- (1) communicate directly or indirectly with the victim; or
- (2) go to or near the residence, place of employment, or business of the victim or to or near a school, day-care facility, or similar facility where a dependent child of the victim is in attendance.

⁶⁷ Article 17.442 was created by S.B. 1020 and applies only to a violation of a condition of release on bond or a violation of a condition of community supervision, as applicable, that occurs on or after the effective date of S.B. 1020, which is September 1, 2025.

(b) If the magistrate requires the prohibition contained in Subsection (a)(2) of this article as a condition of release on bond, the magistrate shall specifically describe the prohibited locations and the minimum distances, if any, that the defendant must maintain from the locations.

8. Art. 17.465. Conditions for Defendant Charged with Certain Trafficking or Prostitution Related Offenses Involving Adult Victims⁶⁸

(a) This article does not apply with respect to a defendant to whom Article 17.41 applies.

(b) A magistrate shall require as a condition of release on bond that a defendant charged with an offense under Section 20A.02, 20A.03, 43.03, 43.031, 43.032, 43.04, 43.041, or 43.05, Penal Code, committed against a person 18 years of age or older may not:

- (1) communicate directly or indirectly with the victim; or
- (2) go to or near:
 - (A) the residence, place of employment, or business of the victim; or
 - (B) if applicable, a school, day-care facility, or similar facility where a dependent child of the victim is in attendance.

(c) The magistrate shall specifically describe the prohibited locations under Subsection (b)(2) and the minimum distances, if any, that the defendant must maintain from the locations.

(d) At a hearing limited to determining whether the defendant violated a condition of bond imposed under Subsection (b), the magistrate may revoke the defendant's bond only if the magistrate finds by a preponderance of the evidence that the violation occurred. If the magistrate finds that the violation occurred, the magistrate shall revoke the defendant's bond and order that the defendant be immediately returned to custody. Once the defendant is placed in custody, the revocation of the defendant's bond discharges the sureties on the bond, if any, from any future liability on the bond. A discharge under this subsection from any future liability on the bond does not discharge any surety from liability for previous forfeitures on the bond.

⁶⁸ Changes and additions to Article 17.465 were made by H.B. 1778.

9. Art. 17.47. Conditions Requiring Submission of Specimen

In cases involving an arrest of a defendant after a prior conviction for one or more of the offenses described in Section 411.1471(a) of the Texas Government Code (which lists offenses such as sexual assault, public lewdness and indecent exposure), the state has seen fit to prescribe testing to establish a DNA data base for repeat offenders of such offenses. Article 17.47 reads as follows:

(a) A magistrate may require as a condition of release on bail or bond of a defendant that the defendant provide to a local law enforcement agency one or more specimens for the purpose of creating a DNA record under Subsection G, Chapter 411, Government Code.

(b) A magistrate shall require as a condition of release on bail or bond of a defendant described by Section 411.1471(a), Government Code, that the defendant provide to a law enforcement agency one or more specimens for the purpose of creating a DNA record under Subchapter G, Chapter 411, Government Code.

10. Art. 17.49. Conditions for Defendant Charged with Offense Involving Family Violence

(a) In this article:

(1) “Family violence” has the meaning assigned by Section 71.004, Family Code.

(2) “Global positioning monitoring system” means a system that electronically determines and reports the location of an individual through the use of a transmitter or similar device carried or worn by the individual that transmits latitude and longitude data to a monitoring entity through global positioning satellite technology. The term does not include a system that contains or operates global positioning system technology, radio frequency identification technology, or any other similar technology that is implanted in or otherwise invades or violates the individual’s body.

(b) A magistrate may require as a condition of release on bond that a defendant charged with an offense involving family violence:

(1) refrain from going to or near a residence, school, place of employment, or other location, as specifically described in the bond, frequented by an alleged victim of the offense;

- (2) carry or wear a global positioning monitoring system device and, except as provided by Subsection (h), pay a reimbursement fee for the costs associated with operating that system in relation to the defendant; or
 - (3) except as provided by Subsection (h), if the alleged victim of the offense consents after receiving the information described by Subsection (d), pay a reimbursement fee for the costs associated with providing the victim with an electronic receptor device that:
 - (A) is capable of receiving the global positioning monitoring system information from the device carried or worn by the defendant; and
 - (B) notifies the victim if the defendant is at or near a location that the defendant has been ordered to refrain from going to or near under Subdivision (1).
 - (4) refrain from tracking or monitoring personal property or a motor vehicle in the possession of the alleged victim of the offense, without the victim's effective consent, including by:
 - (A) using a tracking application on a personal electronic device in the possession of the victim or using a tracking device; or
 - (B) physically following the victim or causing another to physically follow the victim.
- (c) Before imposing a condition described by Subsection (b)(1), a magistrate must afford an alleged victim an opportunity to provide the magistrate with a list of areas from which the victim would like the defendant excluded and shall consider the victim's request, if any, in determining the locations the defendant will be ordered to refrain from going to or near. If the magistrate imposes a condition described by Subsection (b)(1), the magistrate shall specifically describe the locations that the defendant has been ordered to refrain from going to or near and the minimum distances, if any, that the defendant must maintain from those locations.
- (d) Before imposing a condition described by Subsection (b)(3), a magistrate must provide to an alleged victim information regarding:
- (1) the victim's right to participate in a global positioning monitoring system or to refuse to participate in that system and the procedure

for requesting that the magistrate terminate the victim's participation;

- (2) the manner in which the global positioning monitoring system technology functions and the risks and limitations of that technology, and the extent to which the system will track and record the victim's location and movements;
- (3) any locations that the defendant is ordered to refrain from going to or near and the minimum distances, if any, that the defendant must maintain from those locations;
- (4) any sanctions that the court may impose on the defendant for violating a condition of bond imposed under this article;
- (5) the procedure that the victim is to follow, and support services available to assist the victim, if the defendant violates a condition of bond or if the global positioning monitoring system equipment fails;
- (6) community services available to assist the victim in obtaining shelter, counseling, education, child care, legal representation, and other assistance available to address the consequences of family violence; and
- (7) the fact that the victim's communications with the court concerning the global positioning monitoring system and any restrictions to be imposed on the defendant's movements are not confidential.

(e) In addition to the information described by Subsection (d), a magistrate shall provide to an alleged victim who participates in a global positioning monitoring system under this article the name and telephone number of an appropriate person employed by a local law enforcement agency whom the victim may call to request immediate assistance if the defendant violates a condition of bond imposed under this article.

(f) In determining whether to order a defendant's participation in a global positioning monitoring system under this article, the magistrate shall consider the likelihood that the defendant's participation will deter the defendant from seeking to kill, physically injure, stalk, or otherwise threaten the alleged victim before trial.

(g) An alleged victim may request that the magistrate terminate the victim's participation in a global positioning monitoring system at any time. The magistrate may not impose sanctions on the victim for requesting termination of the victim's

participation in or refusing to participate in a global positioning monitoring system under this article.

(h) If the magistrate determines that a defendant is indigent, the magistrate may, based on a sliding scale established by local rule, require the defendant to pay a reimbursement fee under Subsection (b)(2) or (3) in an amount that is less than the full amount of the costs associated with operating the global positioning monitoring system in relation to the defendant or providing the victim with an electronic receptor device.

(i) If an indigent defendant pays to an entity that operates a global positioning monitoring system the partial amount ordered by a magistrate under Subsection (h), the entity shall accept the partial amount as payment in full. The county in which the magistrate who enters an order under Subsection (h) is located is not responsible for payment of any costs associated with operating the global positioning monitoring system in relation to an indigent defendant.

(j) A magistrate that imposes a condition described by Subsection (b)(1) or (2) shall order the entity that operates the global positioning monitoring system to notify the court and the appropriate local law enforcement agency if a defendant violates a condition of bond imposed under this article.

(k) A magistrate that imposes a condition described by Subsection (b) may only allow or require the defendant to execute or be released under a type of bond that is authorized by this chapter.

(l) This article does not limit the authority of a magistrate to impose any other reasonable conditions of bond or enter any orders of protection under other applicable statutes.

AA. NOTICE AND REPORTING OF BOND CONDITIONS

1. Art. 17.50. Entry into Texas Crime Information Center of Certain Information in Cases Involving Violent Offenses or Stalking; Duties of Magistrates, Sheriffs, and Department of Public Safety⁶⁹

(a) In this article:

(1) “Business day” means a day other than a Saturday, Sunday, or state or national holiday.

⁶⁹ Changes and additions to Article 17.50 were made by H.B. 1620.

(2) “Database” means the statewide law enforcement information system maintained by the Department of Public Safety, also known as the Texas Crime Information Center.

(3) “Violent offense” means:

(A) an offense under the following sections of the Penal Code:

- (i) Section 19.02 (murder);
- (ii) Section 19.03 (capital murder);
- (iii) Section 20.03 (kidnapping);
- (iv) Section 20.04 (aggravated kidnapping);
- (v) Section 21.11 (indecentcy with a child);
- (vi) Section 22.011 (sexual assault);
- (vii) Section 22.02 (aggravated assault);
- (viii) Section 22.021 (aggravated sexual assault);
- (ix) Section 22.04 (injury to a child, elderly individual, or disabled individual);
- (x) Section 29.03 (aggravated robbery);
- (xi) Section 21.02 (continuous sexual abuse of young child or disabled individual); or
- (xii) Section 20A.03 (continuous trafficking of persons); or

(B) any offense involving family violence, as defined by Section 71.004, Family Code.

(b) As soon as practicable but not later than the next day after the date a magistrate issues an order imposing a condition of bond on a defendant under this chapter for a violent offense or an offense under Section 42.072, Penal Code, the magistrate shall notify the sheriff of the condition and provide to the sheriff the following information:

- (1) the information listed in Section 411.042(b)(6), Government Code, as that information relates to an order described by this subsection;
- (2) the name and address of any named person the condition of bond is intended to protect, and if different and applicable, the name and address of the victim of the alleged offense;
- (3) the date the order releasing the defendant on bond was issued; and
- (4) the court that issued the order releasing the defendant on bond.

(c) As soon as practicable but not later than the next day after the date a magistrate, in a case described by Subsection (b), revokes a bond that contains a condition, modifies the terms of or removes a condition of bond, or disposes of the underlying criminal charges, the magistrate shall notify the sheriff and provide the sheriff with information that is sufficient to enable the sheriff to modify or remove the appropriate record in the database.

(d) As soon as practicable but not later than the next business day after the date the sheriff receives the information:

- (1) described by Subsection (b), the sheriff shall:
 - (A) enter the information into the database; and
 - (B) make a good faith effort to notify by telephone any named person the condition of bond is intended to protect, and if different and applicable, the victim of the alleged offense that the defendant to whom the order is directed has been released on bond; and
- (2) described by Subsection (c), the sheriff shall modify or remove the appropriate record in the database.

(e) The clerk of a court that issues an order described by Subsection (b) shall send a copy of the order to any named person the condition of bond is intended to protect, and if different and applicable, the victim of the alleged offense at the person's last known address not later than the next business day after the date the court issues the order.

(f) The Department of Public Safety shall:

- (1) modify the database to enable the database to accept and maintain detailed information on active conditions of bond regarding the requirements and status of a condition of bond imposed by a

magistrate for a violent offense or an offense under section 42.072, Penal Code, including information described by Subsections (b) and (c); and

- (2) develop and adopt a form for use by magistrates and sheriffs to facilitate the data collection and data entry required by this article.

(g) This article does not create liability for any errors or omissions of a sheriff caused by inaccurate information provided under this article to the sheriff by a magistrate.

2. Art. 17.51. Notice of Conditions

(a) As soon as practicable but not later than the next business day after the date a magistrate issues an order imposing a condition of release on bond for a defendant or modifying or removing a condition previously imposed, the clerk of the court shall send a copy of the order to:

- (1) the appropriate attorney representing the state; and
- (2) the sheriff of the county where the defendant resides.

(b) A clerk of the court may delay sending a copy of the order under Subsection (a) only if the clerk lacks information necessary to ensure service and enforcement.

(c) If an order described by Subsection (a) prohibits a defendant from going to or near a child care facility or school, the clerk of the court shall send a copy of the order to the child care facility or school.

(d) The copy of the order and any related information may be sent electronically or in another manner that can be accessed by the recipient.

(e) The magistrate or the magistrate's designee shall provide written notice to the defendant of:

- (1) the conditions of release on bond; and
- (2) the penalties for violating a condition of release.

(f) The magistrate shall make a separate record of the notice provided to the defendant under Subsection (e).

(g) The Office of Court Administration of the Texas Judicial System shall promulgate a form for use by a magistrate or a magistrate's designee in providing

notice to the defendant under Subsection (e). The form must include the relevant statutory language from the provisions of this chapter under which a condition of release on bond may be imposed on a defendant.

3. Art. 17.52. Reporting of Conditions

A chief of police or sheriff who receives a copy of an order described by Article 17.51(a), or the chief's or sheriff's designee, shall, as soon as practicable but not later than the 10th day after the date the copy is received, enter information relating to the condition of release into the appropriate database of the statewide law enforcement information system maintained by the Department of Public Safety or modify or remove information, as appropriate.

BB. MONETARY BONDS: REFUNDS AND APPLICATION OF FUNDS TO OUTSTANDING COSTS, FINES AND FEES

1. Art. 17.53. Procedures and Forms Related to Monetary Bond

The Office of Court Administration of the Texas Judicial System shall develop statewide procedures and prescribe forms to be used by a court to facilitate:

- (1) the refund of any cash funds paid toward a monetary bond, with an emphasis on refunding those funds to the person in whose name the receipt described by Article 17.02 was issued; and
- (2) the application of those cash funds to the defendant's outstanding court costs, fines, and fees.

II. BAIL BOND BOARD COUNTIES

In counties with a population over 110,000, bail bond boards are automatically created. Counties with a population under 110,000 may choose to create a bail bond board. Counties with a bail bond board are generally governed by Sections 1704.001 through 1704.306 of the Texas Occupations Code. Counties without bail bond boards are generally governed by Chapter 17 of the Texas Code of Criminal Procedure.⁷⁰ There are some benefits and advantages that counties

⁷⁰ The term "generally" is used in this sentence because some provisions of Chapter 17 of the Texas Code of Criminal Procedure do apply in counties with bail bond boards. As an example, under Section 1704.163 of the Texas Occupations Code, attorneys that actually represent an accused in a county with a bail bond board are exempt from the requirements of the Chapter if they sign as surety on the accused's bond. However, those individuals are still subject to

with bail bond boards have that other counties do not possess. As we discuss each applicable section of the Texas Occupations Code, we will try to identify the advantages and disadvantages, if any, of each specific section. The primary intent of enacting the original “Bail Bondsman Act” in 1973, as well as all of its subsequent amendments, was to preserve the constitutional right to bail and to provide practical procedures governing the giving or making of a bail bond to guarantee the appearance of the accused in court. Op. Tex. Att’y Gen. No. JM-271 (1984); *see Robinson v. Hill*, 507 S.W.2d 521 (Tex. 1974).

In a county with a bail bond board, only a bondsman licensed in the county of an arrest can present a bond for a person, including a person who is being held on an out-of-county capias or warrant. Op. Tex. Att’y Gen. No. JM-271 (1984); *Gant v. State*, 649 S.W.2d 30 (Tex. Crim. App. 1983), cert. denied, 104 S.Ct. 122 (1983). An attorney that is not licensed in the county of arrest cannot post a bail bond for that person, if the county of arrest is a bail bond board county. Op. Tex. Att’y Gen. No. JM-271 (1984). A bail bondsman licensed in the county where the out-of-county capias or warrant was issued cannot post the bail bond, if the county of arrest is a bail bond board county. *Id.* Only a bondsman licensed in the county of arrest can post a bail bond, if the county of arrest is a county with a bail bond board. *Id.*

A. DEFINITIONS UNDER THE ACT

The first section defines important terms used throughout the applicable sections of the Texas Occupations Code, and it is important to understand the meaning of each definition.

1. § 1704.001. Definitions

In this chapter:

- (1) “Bail bond” means a cash deposit, or similar deposit or written undertaking, or a bond or other security, given to guarantee the appearance of a defendant in a criminal case.
- (2) “Bail bond surety” means a person who:
 - (A) executes a bail bond as a surety or co-surety for another person; or
 - (B) for compensation deposits cash to ensure the appearance in court of a person accused of a crime.
- (3) “Board” means a county bail bond board.

the financial requirements of Chapter 17 of the Texas Code of Criminal Procedure, including the provision allowing the sheriff to inquire into the sufficiency of the attorney’s security.

- (4) “Bonding business” or “bail bond business” means the solicitation, negotiation, or execution of a bail bond by a bail bond surety.
- (4-a) “Final judgment” means a judgment that disposes of all issues and parties in a case.
- (5) “Person” means an individual or corporation.

B. COUNTIES TO WHICH CHAPTER 1704 APPLIES

This Chapter, which creates bail bond boards, only applies to a limited number of counties -- those counties with a population over 110,000, or less than 110,000 when a bail bond board has been specifically created as discussed below. Sections 1704.002 through 1704.052 specifically deal with these issues and state as follows:

This chapter applies only in a county with a population of:

- (1) 110,000 or more; or
- (2) less than 110,000 in which a board is created.

1. § 1704.051. Mandatory Creation of Board

A board is created in each county with a population of 110,000 or more.

2. § 1704.052. Discretionary Creation of Board

A board may be created in a county with a population of less than 110,000 if a majority of the persons who would serve as members of the board under Section 1704.053, or who would designate the persons who would serve as members of the board, determine to create a board, **AND** the Commissioners’ Court approves the creation of the Board by a majority vote.⁷¹

It is important to note that once a discretionary bail bond board is created, a bail bond board is not authorized to dissolve itself. Dissolution authority, if desired, must be sought from the Legislature. Op. Tex. Att’y Gen. No. GA-0663 (2008).

Additionally, neither a county bail bond board or a commissioner’s court can impose a fee on bonding companies to pay for the cost of employing a bail bond administrator. Op. Tex. Att’y Gen. No. GA-0735 (2009).

⁷¹ *(emphasis added)*.

C. WHO SERVES ON THE BOARD AND HOW THEY ARE ELECTED OR APPOINTED

Section 1704.053 specifically lists the membership of the board and specifies how board members are either elected or appointed to the board. This membership is meant to represent all those actively involved in the bonding process. Section 1704.053 states as follows:

1. § 1704.053. Board Composition

A board consists of:

- (1) the sheriff or a designee from the sheriff's office who must be the sheriff's administrator or a deputy sheriff of the rank of at least sergeant;
- (2) a district judge of the county having jurisdiction over criminal matters and designated by the presiding judge of the administrative judicial district or a designee of the district judge who is approved by the presiding judge;
- (3) the county judge, a member of the commissioners court designated by the county judge, or a designee approved by the commissioners court;
- (4) a judge of a county court or county court at law in the county having jurisdiction over criminal matters and designated by the commissioners court or a designee of the judge who is approved by the commissioners court;
- (5) the district attorney or an assistant district attorney designated by the district attorney;
- (6) a licensed bail bond surety or agent for a corporate surety in the county elected under Section 1704.0535, or a bail bond surety or agent for a corporate surety licensed in the county who is designated by the elected surety or agent;
- (7) a justice of the peace;⁷²
- (8) the district clerk or the clerk's designee;

⁷² The justice of the peace member of the bail bond board should be selected from among and by the eligible justices of the peace of the county by any reasonable method, members appointed serve at the pleasure of the appointing authority and neither the commissioners' court nor the bail bond board may remove members for failure to regularly attend meetings of the board. Op. Tex. Att'y Gen. No. JC-0496 (2002).

- (9) the county clerk or the clerk's designee, if the county clerk has responsibility over criminal matters;
- (10) if appointed by the board, a presiding judge of a municipal court in the county;
- (11) if the county's principal municipality designates a presiding judge in the municipal court system, the presiding judge or a municipal judge from the system designated by the presiding judge;
- (12) the county treasurer or the treasurer's designee or, if appointed by the commissioners court in a county that does not have a county treasurer, the person designated by the county commissioners court to perform the duties of the county treasurer; and
- (13) a criminal defense attorney practicing in the county and elected by other attorneys whose principal places of business are located in the county and who are not legally prohibited from representing criminal defendants or the designee of the criminal defense attorney.

2. § 1704.0535. Election of Certain Bail Bond Board Members

(a) The board shall annually conduct a secret ballot election to elect the members of the board who serve as the representative of licensed bail bond sureties and the representative of the criminal defense attorneys by electing:

- (1) a licensed bail bond surety or agent for a corporate surety board member; and⁷³
- (2) a criminal defense attorney who is practicing in the county.

(b) Each individual licensed in the county as a bail bond surety or agent for a corporate surety is entitled to cast one vote for each license held to elect the board member who is the surety or agent for a corporate surety.

(c) Each attorney who has a principal place of business located in the county and who is not legally prohibited from representing criminal defendants in the

⁷³ In an election of the bail bondsmen's representative to the bail bond board, a corporate surety is entitled to cast only one vote. Op. Tex. Att'y Gen. No. DM-224 (1993). A county bail bond board may not permit an alternate licensed bail bond surety to serve on the board when the licensed bail bond surety representative is unable to attend. Op. Tex. Att'y Gen. No. JC-0428 (2001). Neither the board nor the county may replace that member, and only the bondsmen may vote to replace that member.

county is entitled to cast one vote to elect the board member who is the criminal defense attorney.

(d) Each elected justice of the peace in the county who is not legally prohibited from voting in an election for the purpose is entitled to cast one vote to elect the board member who is a justice of the peace.

D. ELECTION OF PRESIDING OFFICER

1. § 1704.054. Presiding Officer

- (a) A board shall initially elect one of its members as presiding officer.
- (b) The presiding officer shall preside over board meetings.
- (c) The presiding officer may vote on any board matter.

E. MEETINGS AND WHAT CONSTITUTES A QUORUM

1. § 1704.055. Meetings

- (a) A board shall hold its initial meeting not later than the 60th day after the date the board is created.
- (b) Except as provided by Subsection (c), a board shall meet:
 - (1) at least once a month; and
 - (2) at other times at the call of the presiding officer.
- (c) A board in a county with a population of less than 150,000 shall meet:
 - (1) at least four times each year during the months of January, April, July, and October at the call of the presiding officer; and
 - (2) at other times at the call of the presiding officer.

2. § 1704.056. Quorum; Majority Vote

- (a) Four members of a board constitute a quorum.

(b) A board may take action only on a majority vote of the board members present.

F. OBLIGATIONS AND DUTIES OF THE BOARD

1. § 1704.101. Administrative Authority⁷⁴

A board shall:

- (1) exercise powers incidental or necessary to the administration of this chapter;
- (2) deposit fees collected under this chapter in the general fund of the county or in a separate county fund established for this purpose;
- (3) supervise and regulate each phase of the bonding business in the county;
- (4) adopt and post rules necessary to implement this chapter;⁷⁵
- (5) conduct hearings and investigations and make determinations relating to the issuance, denial, or renewal of licenses;
- (6) issue licenses to qualified applicants;
- (7) deny licenses to unqualified applicants;
- (8) employ persons necessary to assist in board functions; and
- (9) conduct board business, including maintaining records and minutes.

It must be remembered by board members that the function of a bail bond board is to administer the statute, not to amend it. Op. Tex. Att’y Gen. No. JM-1012 (1989). The rule-making power of the board is limited to the making and setting of bail bonds. *Id.* It is well established that bail bond boards lack the authority to impose different or additional licensing requirements when the requirements are expressly set out by statute. Op. Tex. Att’y Gen. No. LO-93-21 (1993). A bail bond board has only those powers as are expressly conferred upon it by statute, together with those powers necessarily implied from powers or duties expressly provided. *Id.* In the absence of

⁷⁴ The regulatory authority of a county bail bond board is limited to those powers enumerated in this article. Op. Tex. Att’y Gen. No. JM-1057 (1989).

⁷⁵ The board should be very careful when adopting local rules. A large percentage of lawsuits against bail bond boards relate to claims for injunctive and declaratory relief relating to local rules. The best advice is to only enact local rules that are absolutely necessary. The bail bond board is to administer the article, not amend it. *Bexar County Bail Bond Board v. Deckard*, 604 S.W.2d 314 (Tex. App.—Dallas 1999, no writ).

statutory language indicating a legislative intent, the board should enact only such rules as are authorized by, and consistent with, statutory authorities, and a bail bond board may not impose additional burdens, conditions or restrictions inconsistent with the statutory provisions. *Id.* Stated differently, Chapter 1704 authorizes a county bail bond board to “exercise powers incidental or necessary to the administration” of the chapter in order to “supervise and regulate each phase of the bonding business in the county” and to “adopt and post rules necessary to implement the chapter.” Op. Tex. Att’y Gen. No. GA-0011 (2003); *see Garcia-Marroquin v. Nueces County Bail Bond Bd.*, 1 S.W.3d 366, 372 (Tex. App.—Corpus Christi 1999, no pet.).

2. § 1704.102. Enforcement Authority

(a) A board shall:

- (1) enforce this chapter in the county;
- (2) conduct hearings and investigations and make determinations relating to license suspension and revocation;
- (3) suspend or revoke a license for a violation of this chapter or a rule adopted by the board under this chapter; and
- (4) require a record and transcription of each board proceeding.

(b) A board may:

- (1) compel the appearance before the board of an applicant or license holder; and
- (2) during a hearing conducted by the board, administer oaths, examine witnesses, and compel the production of pertinent records and testimony by a license holder or applicant.

3. § 1704.103. Disbursements from County Fund

(a) Fees deposited in the general fund of a county or in a separate county fund under Section 1704.101(2) may be used only to administer and enforce this chapter, including reimbursement for:

- (1) reasonable expenses incurred by the board in enforcing this chapter; and
- (2) actual expenses incurred by a board member in serving on the board.

(b) For purposes of this section, serving on a board is an additional duty of a board member's office. A board member may not receive compensation for serving on a board.

4. § 1704.104. Posting of Board Rule or Action

A board shall post a rule adopted or an action taken by the board in an appropriate place in the county courthouse for the 10 days preceding the date the rule or action takes effect.

5. § 1704.105. Licensed Bail Bond Surety List

(a) A board shall post in each court having criminal jurisdiction in the county, and shall provide to each local official responsible for the detention of prisoners in the county, a current list of each licensed bail bond surety and each licensed agent of a corporate surety in the county.⁷⁶

(b) A list of each licensed bail bond surety and each licensed agent of a corporate surety in a county must be displayed at each location where prisoners are examined, processed, or confined.

6. § 1704.107. Notification of License Suspension or Revocation

A board shall immediately notify each court and each local official responsible for the detention of prisoners in the county of:

- (1) the suspension or revocation of a license issued under this chapter; and
- (2) the revocation of the authority of a license holder's agent.

7. § 1704.108. Notification of Default by Corporation

A board shall promptly notify the Texas Department of Insurance if a corporation fails to pay a judgment of forfeiture as provided by Section 1704.204(a).

G. SOLICITATION AND ADVERTISEMENTS BY SURETIES

1. § 1704.109. Solicitation and Advertisement

⁷⁶ This Article does not authorize a bail bond board to limit the number of bail bond licensees in a county. Op. Tex. Att'y Gen. No. JM-206 (1984).

(a) A board by rule may regulate solicitations or advertisements by or on behalf of bail bond sureties to protect:

- (1) the public from:
 - (A) harassment;
 - (B) fraud;
 - (C) misrepresentation; or
 - (D) threats to public safety; or
- (2) the safety of law enforcement officers.

(b) A bail bond surety, an agent of a corporate surety, or an employee of the surety or agent may not make, cause to be made, or benefit from unsolicited contact:

- (1) **Section (b)(1) has been declared unconstitutional and is no longer applicable. See *Pruett v. Harris County Bail Bond Bd.*, 499 F.3d 403 (5th Cir. 2007).** Through any means, including in person, by telephone, by electronic methods, or in writing, to solicit bonding business related to an individual with an outstanding arrest warrant that has not been executed, unless the bail bond surety or agent for a corporate surety has an existing bail bond on the individual; or
- (2) in person or by telephone to solicit bonding business:
 - (A) that occurs between the hours of 9 p.m. and 9 a.m.; or
 - (B) **Section (2)(B) has been declared unconstitutional and is no longer applicable. See *Pruett v. Harris County Bail Bond Bd.*, 499 F.3d 403 (5th Cir. 2007), cert. denied, 128 S. Ct. 1290 (2008).** Within 24 hours after:
 - (i) the execution of an arrest warrant on the individual;
or
 - (ii) an arrest without a warrant on the individual.

(c) This section does not apply to a solicitation or unsolicited contact related to a Class C misdemeanor.

H. LICENSE REQUIRED TO WRITE A BOND

1. § 1704.151. License Required

Except as provided by Section 1704.163, a person may not act as a bail bond surety or as an agent for a corporate surety in the county unless the person holds a license issued under this chapter.⁷⁷

No one and no entity may ever act as a bail bondsman in a county with a bail bond board except those listed in Chapter 17 and those entities defined as “persons” licensed under the Bail Bond Act and “persons licensed to practice law” under the Bail Bond Act. Op. Tex. Att’y Gen. No. JM-1023 (1989) (citing Op. Tex. Att’y Gen. No. JM-507 (1982)). A “person” is only defined as an “individual” or a “corporation” under the Bail Bond Act. *Id.* The use of the term “corporation” is very confusing, because the term “corporation” only means an insurance company or a Charitable Bond Organization as set out in Article 17.071 of the Code of Criminal Procedure. *See Id.* After the amendments to the governing statutes in 1981, the definition of “person” no longer includes “other business entities, and associations of persons.” *Id.* Consequently, only an “individual” or a “corporation” can currently be licensed to write bonds in the Bail Bond Board County, and there are only two types of corporations allowed. *See Id.* In a county with a bail bond board, an individual who acts as a bail bond surety, or an individual who acts as an agent for a corporate surety, may operate under an assumed name, but may not use more than one assumed name. Op. Tex. Att’y Gen. No. GA-0135 (2004). A corporate surety, like an individual bail bond surety, may not use more than one assumed name, but the corporate surety may operate through various individual agents, each of whom may use a distinct assumed name. *Id.* The above referenced Attorney General Opinion updates a prior Attorney General Opinion, Op. Tex. Att’y Gen. No. LO-98-068 (1998), which found that a corporate bail bond licensee was not authorized to operate under an assumed name *unless expressly allowed to do so by the Insurance Code or Department of Insurance regulations*. Subsequent to that opinion, the Commissioner of the Department of Insurance issued Commissioner’s Bulletin No. B-0079-98, which authorized the use of assumed names. So long as the powers of attorney on file with the county clerk’s offices in each county fully discloses the person acting as agent and his or her assumed name, and so long as any posted listing of the person under his assumed name also notes that he or she is an agent for the corporate surety, the agent can act under an assumed name. Op. Tex. Att’y Gen. No. GA-0135 (2004). Similarly, it is the opinion of Flowers Davis, PLLC that there would be no prohibition against such use of assumed names for a Charitable Bail Organization that complies with all the requirements of Art. 17.071 of the Code of Criminal Procedure.

Article 17.08 of the Code of Criminal Procedure also applies in counties with a Bail Bond Board, and it states that a surety must sign or mark the bond personally. Op. Tex. Att’y Gen. No. GA-0288 (2004). It requires that the bond be personally signed or marked by the surety rather than by a surety’s attorney-in-fact. *Id.* For a Corporate Surety, a designated agent filed of record in the county clerk’s office would have to personally sign the bond. A sheriff is not required to accept a

⁷⁷ Only corporations and individuals may be licensed to act as bail bondsmen, according to this Article. Op. Tex. Att’y Gen. No. MW-507 (1982).

bail bond signed by a person other than the individual surety or a designated corporate agent. *Id.* Moreover, requiring a surety or designated corporate agent to sign a bond personally would be authorized by, and consistent with, statutory authority. *Id.*; see *Tietz v. State*, 744 S.W.2d 353, 354 (Tex. App.—Austin 1988, no writ).

I. PERSONS OR ENTITIES ELIGIBLE TO APPLY FOR LICENSE

1. § 1704.152. Eligibility⁷⁸

(a) To be eligible for a license under this chapter, an individual, including an agent designated by a corporation in an application, must:

- (1) be a resident of this state and a citizen of the United States;
- (2) be at least 18 years of age;
- (3) possess the financial resources required to comply with Section 1704.160, unless the individual is acting only as agent for a corporation holding a license under this chapter; and
- (4) submit documentary evidence that, in the two years preceding the date a license application is filed, the individual:
 - (A) has been continuously employed by a person licensed under this chapter for at least one year and for not less than 30 hours per week, excluding annual leave, and has performed duties that encompass all phases of the bonding business; and
 - (B) completed in person at least eight hours of continuing legal education in criminal law courses or bail bond law courses that are approved by the State Bar of Texas and that are offered by an accredited institution of higher education in the state.

(b) To be eligible for a license under this chapter, a corporation must be:

- (1) chartered or admitted to do business in this state; and

⁷⁸ County bail-bond boards lack the authority to impose different or additional requirements for obtaining a bail bondsman's license. Op. Tex. Att'y Gen. No. DM-264 (1993). Courts have stricken county bail bond board regulations that add licensing requirements or bases for license revocation and suspension not set forth in the Bail Bond Board Act. *Dallas County Bail Bond Board v. Stein*, 771 S.W.2d 577, 580-81 (Tex. App.—Dallas 1989, writ denied).

- (2) qualified to write fidelity, guaranty, and surety bonds under the Insurance Code.
- (c) Subsection (a)(4) does not apply to the issuance of an original license:
 - (1) in a county before the first anniversary of the date a board is created in the county; or
 - (2) to an individual who applies to operate the bail bond business of a license holder who has died if the individual is related to the decedent within the first degree by consanguinity or is the decedent's surviving spouse.

2. § 1704.153. Ineligibility Because of Criminal Conviction

A person is not eligible for a license under this chapter if, after August 27, 1973, the person commits and is finally convicted of a misdemeanor involving moral turpitude or a felony.

Until 2001, a county bail bond board could not prohibit a bail bond business from employing a person who had been finally convicted of a felony or a crime involving moral turpitude. Op. Tex. Att'y Gen. No. JM-1012 (1989). In 2001, the Seventy-seventh Legislature established by statute the rule that "a person could not accept or receive from a license holder money, property, or any other thing of value as payment for employment with a bonding business if, within the preceding 10 years, the person has been convicted of a misdemeanor involving moral turpitude or a felony." *Id.* To avoid constitutional challenges, the 2001 change in the law only applies to a person employed in the bonding business after the effective date of the Act, which was September 1, 2001. *Id.*

J. THE APPLICATION PROCESS AND HEARINGS ON APPLICATIONS

A person who operates as a bail bond licensee in an individual capacity may, in addition, be licensed as an agent for a corporate surety. Op. Tex. Att'y Gen. No. LO96-019 (1996). They may operate in the same place of business, use the same telephone numbers, the same employees, and the same advertising. *Id.* However, a bail bond board is not authorized to grant more than one license to any individual surety, so an individual may not operate under more than one assumed name as if the person had more than one license. *Id.* In somewhat different terms, a person may operate as both an individual bondsman and as an agent of a licensed corporate surety, and that person may operate as both an individual bondsman and a licensed corporate surety from the same place of business, use the same phone numbers, have the same employees and utilize the same advertising. *Id.*

If the person is only operating as a designated agent for an insurance company, the person does not have to complete a personal financial statement, nor does the board have the authority to consider the designated agent's solvency in evaluating the corporate surety's application. *Id.*

Under the Texas Occupations Code, the application of an individual for a bail bond license in a county with a bail bond board *shall* include "the name under which the business shall be conducted." Op. Tex. Att'y Gen. No. JM-1023 (1989)(citing Op. Tex. Att'y Gen. No. JM-507 (1982)). An individual can use an assumed name by filing an assumed name certificate with the county clerk in any specific county, and the individual can conduct the business under that name. *Id.* However, there is no provision that allows an individual to operate under more than one name. *Id.* The governing statutes do not allow or authorize a county to grant more than one bail bond license to any individual; consequently, an individual licensed in a county can only have one license in a county and cannot operate that business under more than one assumed name. *Id.*; see Op. Tex. Att'y Gen. No. LO-96-044 (1996). For corporate sureties (insurance companies), a bail bond board can issue multiple licenses to agents of corporate sureties, and each person acting as a corporate surety, whether he or she is securing bonds individually or as an agent of a corporate surety or both, can operate only under one assumed name. Op. Tex. Att'y Gen. No. DM-224 (1993). In other words, as with any insurance company writing auto or home policies, the insurance company (corporate surety) can have more than one agent in a city or county depending on their contracts with their agents.

1. § 1704.154. Application Requirements

- (a) To be licensed under this chapter, a person must apply for a license by filing a sworn application with the board.
- (b) The application must:
 - (1) be in a form and contain the information prescribed by the board;
 - (2) state:
 - (A) the applicant's name, age, and address;
 - (B) if the applicant is a corporation, whether the applicant is:
 - (i) chartered or admitted to do business in this state; and
 - (ii) qualified to write fidelity, guaranty, and surety bonds under the Insurance Code;

- (C) the name under which the bail bond business will be conducted, including a bail bond business that is conducted by an agent of a corporation;
 - (D) each place, including the street address and municipality, at which the business will be conducted; and
 - (E) the amount of cash or the cash value of a certificate of deposit or cashier's check that the applicant intends to deposit with the county treasurer if the applicant's application is approved or, if the applicant is an individual intending to execute nonexempt real property in trust to the board, the value of the real property;
- (3) if the applicant is an individual, be accompanied by a list, as required by Section 1704.155, of nonexempt real property owned by the applicant that the applicant intends to execute in trust to the board if the applicant's application is approved; and
- (4) be accompanied by:
- (A) the applicant's complete, sworn financial statement;
 - (B) the applicant's declaration that the applicant will comply with this chapter and the rules adopted by the board;
 - (C) three letters of recommendation, each from a person who:
 - (i) is reputable; and
 - (ii) has known the applicant or, if the applicant is a corporation, the agent designated by the corporation in the application for at least three years;
 - (D) a \$500 filing fee;
 - (E) a photograph of the applicant or, if the applicant is a corporation, of the agent designated by the corporation in the application;
 - (F) a set of fingerprints of the applicant or, if the applicant is a corporation, of the agent designated by the corporation in the application taken by a law enforcement officer designated by the board;

- (G) if the applicant is or has been licensed under this chapter in another county:
 - (i) a list of each county in which the applicant holds a license; and
 - (ii) a statement by the applicant, as of the date of the application, of any final judgments that have been unpaid for more than 30 days and that arose directly or indirectly from a bail bond executed by the applicant as a surety or as an agent for a surety; and
 - (H) if the applicant is a corporation, a statement by the designated agent, as of the date of the application, of any final judgments that have been unpaid for more than 30 days and that arose directly or indirectly from any bond executed by the agent as a surety or as an agent for a surety.
- (c) A letter of recommendation submitted under Subsection (b)(4)(C) must:
 - (1) state that the applicant or, if the applicant is a corporation, the agent designated by the corporation in the application has a reputation for honesty, truthfulness, fair dealing, and competency; and
 - (2) recommend that the board issue the license.
- (d) Until payment of the final judgment, an unpaid final judgment disclosed under Subsection (b)(4)(G)(ii) or (b)(4)(H) bars licensure for the applicant unless the applicant has deposited with the court cash or a supersedeas bond in the amount of the final judgment pending:
 - (1) a ruling on a timely filed motion for a new trial; or
 - (2) an appeal.
- (e) A corporation must file a separate corporate application for each agent the corporation designates in the county.

2. § 1704.155. Real Property List

A list of nonexempt real property required under Section 1704.154(b)(3) must, for each parcel listed, include:

- (1) a legal description of the property that would be sufficient to convey the property by general warranty deed;
- (2) a current statement from each taxing unit authorized to impose taxes on the property showing that there is no outstanding tax lien against the property;
- (3) at the option of the applicant, either the property's:
 - (A) net value according to a current appraisal made by a real estate appraiser who is a member in good standing of a nationally recognized professional appraiser society or trade organization that has an established code of ethics, educational program, and professional certification program; or
 - (B) value according to a statement from the county from the county's most recent certified tax appraisal roll;
- (4) a statement by the applicant that, while the property remains in trust, the applicant:
 - (A) agrees to pay the taxes on the property;
 - (B) will not further encumber the property unless the applicant notifies the board of the applicant's intent to encumber the property and the board permits the encumbrance; and
 - (C) agrees to maintain insurance on any improvements on the property against damage or destruction in the full amount of the value claimed for the improvements;
- (5) a statement of whether the applicant is married; and
- (6) if the applicant is married, a sworn statement from the applicant's spouse agreeing to transfer to the board, as a part of the trust, any right, title, or interest that the spouse may have in the property.

3. § 1704.156. Reappraisal of Real Property

(a) An appraisal district may not reappraise real property solely because the property owner is a license holder or an applicant for a license under this chapter.

(b) An appraisal district is not prohibited from reappraising real property in connection with the appraisal of real property in the same general area or if the reappraisal is requested by the board, a license holder, or an applicant for a license.

4. § 1704.157. Preliminary Determinations

Before a hearing on an application, a board or a board's authorized representative shall determine whether the applicant:

- (1) possesses the financial resources to comply with Section 1704.160;
and
- (2) satisfies the other requirements of this chapter.

5. § 1704.158. Hearing on Application

(a) After making the determinations required by Section 1704.157, a board shall conduct a hearing on the application.

(b) During the hearing:

- (1) the board may submit to the applicant or the applicant's agent any questions relevant to the board's decision on the application; and
- (2) the applicant may present oral and documentary evidence.

6. § 1704.159. Decision on Application; Board Order

(a) After the hearing under Section 1704.158, the board shall enter an order conditionally approving the application unless the board determines that a ground exists to deny the application. If the board determines that a ground exists to deny the application, the board shall enter an order denying the application.

(b) An order issued under Subsection (a) conditionally approving an application becomes final on the date the applicant complies with the security requirements of Section 1704.160.

(c) A board shall give written notice to an applicant of the board's decision on the application.

K. SECURITY REQUIREMENTS FOLLOWING CONDITIONAL APPROVAL OF LICENSE

1. § 1704.160. Security Requirements

(a) On receipt of notice under Section 1704.159 that an application has been conditionally approved, the applicant, not later than the 90th day after the date of receipt of the notice, must:

(1) if the applicant is an individual:

(A) subject to Subsection (b), deposit with the county treasurer a cashier's check, certificate of deposit, or cash in the amount stated on the application under Section 1704.154(b)(2)(E);⁷⁹
or

(B) subject to Subsections (c)-(f), execute in trust to the board each deed to the property listed on the application under Section 1704.154(b)(3); or

(2) if the applicant is a corporation, subject to Subsection (b), deposit with the county treasurer a cashier's check, certificate of deposit, or cash in the amount stated on the application under Section 1704.154(b)(2)(E).

(b) A deposit made under Subsection (a)(1)(A) or (a)(2) may not be less than \$50,000. A corporation must make a separate deposit for each license granted to it in a county. A deposit made to a county with a population of less than 250,000 shall be placed in a fund known as a bail security fund.

(c) At the option of the applicant, the property executed in trust under Subsection (a)(1)(B) must be valued in the amount indicated by:⁸⁰

⁷⁹ An individual applicant as well as a corporate applicant may submit letters of credit as "cash equivalents." Op. Tex. Att'y Gen. No. JM-1245 (1990). To qualify as "cash equivalents," letters of credit must be irrevocable, must limit inquiry into the underlying transactions between the county and the bondsman, must provide for payments of drafts or demands for payment thereunder on sight or within a relatively brief period of time after presentation of all required documents, and must not make payment contingent on the consent of, or other action by, the bondsman or other party. *Id.* However, a county cannot insist on a letter of credit for an unlimited time, as this would impose an additional requirement on those seeking a license when the statute already expressly sets forth the explicit requirements. *Id.* Additionally, as a practical matter, no responsible financial institution would issue an irrevocable letter of credit for an unlimited time. *Id.*

⁸⁰ In a county with a bail bond board, a county cannot require that the real property used as collateral be located in that county. Op. Tex. Att'y Gen. No. DM-264 (1993).

- (1) an appraisal by a real estate appraiser who is a member in good standing of a nationally recognized professional appraiser society or trade organization that has an established code of ethics, educational program, and professional certification program; or
 - (2) the county's most recent certified tax appraisal roll.⁸¹
- (d) The total value of the property executed in trust under Subsection (a)(1)(B) may not be less than \$50,000.⁸²
- (e) A trust created under Subsection (a)(1)(B) is subject to the condition that the property executed in trust may, after notice is provided and under the conditions required by the Code of Criminal Procedure, be sold to satisfy a final judgment on a forfeiture on a bail bond executed by the applicant.
- (f) If an applicant is married, the applicant's spouse must execute each deed of trust under Subsection (a)(1)(B) that involves community property.
- (g) A board shall file each deed of trust in the records of each county in which the property is located.⁸³ The applicant shall pay the filing fee.
- (h) The certificate of authority to do business in this state issued under Section 861.102, Insurance Code, to an applicant that is a corporation is conclusive evidence of:
- (1) the sufficiency of the applicant's security; and
 - (2) the applicant's solvency and credits.
- (i) A license holder must maintain the amount of security required by this section during the time the person holds the license.

L. LICENSE FORM

1. § 1704.161. License Form

⁸¹ A bail bond board county may not require title opinions or title insurance on property used as security. Op. Tex. Att'y Gen. No. LO97-102 (1997).

⁸² A bail bond board may not accept from a bondsman applicant a certificate of deposit for \$20,000 and a deed to real property valued at \$30,000 in order to meet the \$50,000 security deposit requirement under Op. Tex. Att'y Gen. No. JM-875 (1988).

⁸³ Property that is used as collateral by a bondsman does not have to be in the county in which the bond is posted. Op. Tex. Att'y Gen. No. DM-264 (1993).

(a) Each license issued under this chapter must show on its face the license expiration date and the license number.

(b) The same license number must appear on each subsequent renewal license.

M. LICENSE EXPIRATION AND RENEWAL

In situations where individuals or insurance companies seek to renew their license, the board should carefully review the renewal application to ensure that the surety has complied with each section of the requirements. If a license is renewed without meeting the statutory requirements, other bondsmen may file suit against the board seeking declaratory relief that the application was not timely filed, or did not meet the statutory requirements, and seek injunctive relief and attorney fees.

The bonding business is very competitive. A bondsman may carefully review their competitor's renewal application looking for an infirmity in the application so that they can force their competitor to file for a new application – in which case the financial requirements would be more stringent. A person who holds a license issued prior to September 1, 1999 may write bonds that equal up to ten times the value of security posted. Licensees licensed after September 1, 1999 have more limitations imposed on their ability to write bonds.

1. § 1704.162. License Expiration and Renewal

(a) A license issued or renewed under this chapter expires on the second anniversary after the date the license is issued or is to expire, as appropriate, if the license:

- (1) has been issued for less than eight consecutive years; or
- (2) has been suspended.

(b) To renew a license, a license holder must file with the board an application for renewal not later than the 31st day before the license expiration date.

(c) An application for renewal must comply with the requirements for an original license application under Section 1704.154, including the \$500 filing fee requirement.

(d) A board shall approve an application for renewal if:

- (1) the applicant's current license is not suspended or revoked;
- (2) the application complies with the requirements of this chapter; and

- (3) the board does not determine that a ground exists to deny the application.
- (e) A person who applies to renew a license that has been held by the person for at least eight consecutive years without having been suspended or revoked under this chapter and who complies with the requirements of this chapter may renew the license for a period of 36 months from the date of expiration if the board:
 - (1) knows of no legal reason why the license should not be renewed; and
 - (2) determines that the applicant has submitted an annual financial report to each county bail bond board before the anniversary date of the issuance of the applicant's license.
- (f) A license renewed under Subsection (e) may be renewed subsequently each 36 months in a similar manner.
- (g) The board may disapprove an application only by entering an order.
- (h) Notwithstanding the expiration date of a license issued under this chapter, if a board to which Section 1704.055(c) applies tables a license holder's application for renewal or otherwise does not take action to approve or deny the application, the applicant's current license continues in effect until the next meeting of the board.

Section 1704.162(h), Occupations Code, as added by this Act, applies only to an application for renewal of a license filed with a county bail bond board on or after the effective date of this Act. An application filed before that date is governed by the law in effect at the time the application was filed, and the former law is continued in effect for that purpose. Section 1704.162(h) takes effect September 1, 2015.

N. ATTORNEYS ARE EXEMPT FROM THIS CHAPTER AND MAY POST BOND FOR AN ACCUSED THAT THEY REPRESENT

Attorneys are exempt from the requirements of this chapter for bonds that they write for individuals they represent in a particular criminal case. An attorney who is actually representing a person in their criminal case may act as surety on that person's bond without having to comply with the provisions of the Texas Occupations Code. Op. Tex. Att'y Gen. No. JM-901 (1988); *see also* Op. Tex. Att'y Gen. No. DM-483 (1998). However, that does not mean that the sheriff does not have the power to make sure that the attorney has sufficient surety to post bond for the person he or she actually represents. Op. Tex. Att'y Gen. No. DM-483 (1998). As with anyone else in any other occupation, an attorney may not have the financial resources to pay for a bond forfeiture. Consequently, a sheriff has the authority in that situation to inquire into the sufficiency of the

surety as set out under Articles 17.11, 17.13 and 17.14 of the Code of Criminal Procedure. *Id.* That authority is very broad, and, as with anyone else, it includes the ability of the sheriff to inquire as to the number and amounts of bonds written in other counties. *Id.* In a bail bond board county, a Texas lawyer who does not actually represent a person may execute or act as a surety on a bail bond for a person who is not his or her actual client in the same manner as any other bondsman in a county with a bail bond board – he or she must be licensed as a bail bondsman under the Texas Occupations Code and meet all requirements thereunder. Op. Tex. Att’y Gen. No. JM-901 (1988). However, the sheriff in a county must still inquire into the sufficiency of the attorney’s security to write a bond in compliance with Chapter 17 of the Code of Criminal Procedure.

1. § 1704.163. Attorney Exemption

(a) Except as provided by this section, a person not licensed under this chapter may execute a bail bond or act as a surety for another person in any county in this state if the person:

- (1) is licensed to practice law in this state; and
- (2) at the time the bond is executed or the person acts as a surety, files a notice of appearance as counsel of record in the criminal case for which the bond was executed or surety provided or submits proof that the person has previously filed with the court in which the criminal case is pending the notice of appearance as counsel of record.

(b) A person executing a bail bond or acting as a surety under this section may not engage in conduct involved with that practice that would subject a bail bond surety to license suspension or revocation. If the board determines that a person has violated this subsection, the board may suspend or revoke the person’s authorization to post a bond under this section or may bar the person from executing a bail bond or acting as a surety under this section until the person has remedied the violation.

(c) A person executing a bail bond or acting as a surety under this section is not relieved of liability on the bond solely because the person is later replaced as attorney of record in the criminal case.

A sheriff or other official taking bond in either a bail bond board county or a non-bail bond board county may inquire into the sufficiency of security of an attorney posting bond for one of his clients, just as must be done for any other surety under Chapter 17 of the Texas Code of Criminal Procedure. Attorneys are exempt from the Bail Bond Board Act, but an attorney is still subject to the financial requirements of Chapter 17. Op. Tex. Att’y Gen. No. DM-483 (1998); Op. Tex. Att’y Gen. No. JC- 0277 (2000).

The Texas Attorney General has concluded that the Bail Bond Board Act does not prohibit an attorney merely advertising in the bail bond section of the yellow pages of the phone book, as long as he advertises that he or she is permitted by law to execute bail bonds for persons that he or she represents in criminal cases, and that conduct does not violate the advertisement restrictions of the Bail Bond Board Act. Op. Tex. Att’y Gen. No. JC-0008 (1999).

The Bail Bond Board Act permits an attorney to act as a surety for clients that he represents in a criminal case without being licensed by the bail bond board. If the board determines that the attorney violated this provision by executing bonds for individuals that he or she did not represent, then the bail bond board can revoke or suspend that attorney’s ability to write bonds. Op. Tex. Att’y Gen. No. GA-0197 (2004).

The Attorney General has concluded that a commissioners court would likely be prohibited from entering into a third-party contract for collection services on forfeited attorney surety bail bonds, and instead, forfeited attorney surety bonds would be collected by district and county attorneys, clerks of district and county courts, sheriffs, constables, and justices of the peace pursuant to Texas Code of Criminal Procedure article 103.003(a). Op. Tex. Att’y Gen. No. JS-0001 (2023).

O. ACCEPTANCE OF BAIL BONDS

A sheriff must accept bonds from licensed sureties unless the license has been revoked or suspended.

1. § 1704.201. Acceptance of License Holder Bail Bonds

A sheriff shall accept or approve a bail bond executed by a license holder in the county in which the license holder is licensed if:

- (1) the bond is for a county or district case;
- (2) the bond is executed in accordance with this chapter and the rules adopted by the board; and
- (3) a bail bond is required as a condition of release of the defendant for whom the bond is executed.

In a bail bond board county, the sheriff may not accept a bail bond from a bondsman *not licensed in that county*. Op. Tex. Att’y Gen. No. DM-59 (1991). This would also apply to a family member of a principal who wants to post a bond using real property as collateral - in other words, a family member, if he or she is not licensed as a bondsman in that county or is not an attorney, could not post a property bond for the accused.

The predecessor to § 1704.201 has been interpreted to require the sheriff in the county of arrest to accept and approve bail bonds offered by a bail bondsman licensed in the county of arrest to obtain release of an accused who is being held on an out-of-county capias or warrant. Op. Tex. Att’y Gen. No. JM-271 (1985). The interpretation should be the same under this recodified section.

It should also be noted that a sheriff in a bail bond board county may not unilaterally refuse the bond of a bondsman licensed in that county on the basis that the bondsman is in default on a bond in another county. Op. Tex. Att’y Gen. No. JC-0019 (1999). Additionally, the sheriff cannot question the solvency of a licensed bail bondsman in the county. The sheriff can, however, inquire into the solvency of an attorney posting an “attorney bond” for someone that he allegedly represents in the pending criminal action, since he is exempt from this Chapter under Section 1704.163.

P. RECORD KEEPING REQUIREMENTS OF LICENSEES

Licensees are required to maintain records for at least four years so that the bail bond board can better regulate and oversee the writing of bonds in their county. The record keeping requirements provide a safeguard for the members of the public who utilize the services of bail bondsmen.

1. § 1704.202. Record Requirements

(a) A license holder shall maintain:

- (1) a record of each bail bond executed by the license holder; and
- (2) a separate set of records for each county in which the license holder is licensed.

(b) The records required to be maintained under this section must include for each bail bond executed and enforced:

- (1) the style and number of the case and the court in which the bond is executed;
- (2) the name of the defendant released on bond;
- (3) the amount of bail set in the case;
- (4) the amount and type of security held by the license holder; and
- (5) a statement of:
 - (A) whether the security held by the license holder is:

- (i) for the payment of a bail bond fee; or
 - (ii) to assure the principal's appearance in court; and
- (B) the conditions under which the security will be returned.
- (c) Repealed by Acts 2003, 78th Leg., ch. 942, § 28.
- (d) The records required under this section shall be:
 - (1) made available for inspection and copying at the board's expense on demand by the board or an authorized representative of the board;
 - (2) maintained at the license holder's office location in the county; and
 - (3) maintained for not less than four years after the conclusion of the case for which the bond was given.

Q. BAIL BOND LIMIT FORMULA AND ADDITIONAL SECURITY POSTING⁸⁴

The limits that an individual surety has are determined by a formula. A person who holds a license issued prior to September 1, 1999 may write bonds that equal up to ten times the value of security posted. Licensees licensed after September 1, 1999 have more limitations imposed on their ability to write bonds as set out below in Subsection (f).

1. § 1704.203. Bail Bond Limit; Additional Security

- (a) Except as provided by Subsection (d), a license holder who holds a license originally issued before September 1, 1999, may not execute, and a person may not accept from the license holder, a bail bond that, in the aggregate with other bail bonds executed by the license holder in that county, results in a total amount that exceeds 10 times the value of the security deposited or executed by the license holder under Section 1704.160.
- (b) A county officer or an employee designated by the board shall maintain for each license holder the total amount of the license holder's current liability on bail bonds.
- (c) A license holder may not execute a bail bond if the amount of the license holder's current total liability on judgments nisi in that county equals or exceeds

⁸⁴ A county does not have the authority to raise or lower the bail bond ratio set by the Bail Bond Board Act. Op. Tex. Att'y Gen. No. LO93-021 (1993).

twice the amount of security deposited or executed by the license holder under Section 1704.160.

(d) A license holder, at any time, may increase the limits prescribed by this section by depositing or executing additional security.

(e) This section does not apply to a license holder that is a corporation.

(f) A bail bond surety who holds a license originally issued on or after September 1, 1999, and who:

- (1) has been licensed for fewer than two years or has had a license under this chapter suspended or revoked may not execute, and a person may not accept from the license holder, bail bonds that in the aggregate exceed 10 times the value of property held as security under Section 1704.160(a)(1)(A) plus five times the value of property held in trust under Section 1704.160(a)(1)(B);
- (2) has been licensed for at least two years and fewer than four years may not execute, and a person may not accept from the license holder, bail bonds that in the aggregate exceed 10 times the value of property held as security under Section 1704.160(a)(1)(A) plus six times the value of property held in trust under Section 1704.160(a)(1)(B);
- (3) has been licensed for at least four years and fewer than six years may not execute, and a person may not accept from the license holder, bail bonds that in the aggregate exceed 10 times the value of property held as security under Section 1704.160(a)(1)(A) plus eight times the value of property held in trust under Section 1704.160(a)(1)(B); or
- (4) has been licensed for at least six years may not execute, and a person may not accept from the license holder, bail bonds that in the aggregate exceed 10 times the value of property held as security under Section 1704.160(a)(1)(A) plus 10 times the value of property held in trust under Section 1704.160(a)(1)(B).

(g) If a bail bond surety is subject to Subsection (f)(1) because the person has had a license under this chapter suspended or revoked and is also subject to Subsection (f)(2), (3), or (4), the prohibition imposed by Subsection (f)(1) controls.

R. DUTY OF LICENSEE TO PAY FINAL JUDGMENT ON FORFEITURE

1. § 1704.204. Payment of Final Judgment

(a) A person shall pay a final judgment on a forfeiture of a bail bond executed by the person not later than the 31st day after the date of the final judgment unless a timely motion for a new trial has been filed. If a timely motion for a new trial or a notice of appeal has been filed, the person shall:

- (1) pay the judgment not later than the 31st day after the date the motion is overruled, if the motion is overruled; or
- (2) deposit with the court cash or a supersedeas bond in the amount of the final judgment, if an appeal is filed.

(b) If a license holder fails to pay a final judgment as required by Subsection (a), the judgment shall be paid from the security deposited or executed by the license holder under Section 1704.160.

S. STATE AND LICENSEE MAY SETTLE BAIL BOND FORFEITURE CASES

1. § 1704.205. Bail Bond Settlement

Before a final judgment on a forfeiture of a bail bond:

- (1) the prosecuting attorney may recommend to the court a settlement in an amount less than the amount stated in the bond; or
- (2) the court may, on its own motion, approve a settlement.

T. REPLACEMENT OF SECURITY BY LICENSE HOLDER FOLLOWING JUDGMENT ON FORFEITURE

1. § 1704.206. Replacement of Security

If a final judgment on a forfeiture of a bail bond is paid from the security deposited or executed by a license holder under Section 1704.160, the license holder shall deposit or execute additional security in an amount sufficient to comply with that section.

U. SURRENDER OF PRINCIPAL

In the opinion of Flowers Davis, PLLC, the provision for surrender in this Chapter is better thought out than the similar provision in Chapter 17 of the Texas Code of Criminal Procedure (Art. 17.19). In non-bail bond board counties, Texas Code of Criminal Procedure Articles 17.16, 17.17,

17.18 and 17.19 govern surrenders. Chapter 1704 of the Texas Occupations Code (the Bail Bond Board Act) contains specific provisions for the contest of any surrender and the reimbursement of fees if the surrender was not reasonable. In this respect the surrender provisions in the Occupations Code better protect the rights of the accused, and it guards against unreasonable surrender being used as a collection tool by bondsmen. It should be noted, however, that there are no specific provisions under the Texas Occupations Code for counties with a bail bond board for surrendering an accused by specifically preparing an affidavit relating to the accused's incarceration in another venue or surrendering an accused to a sheriff in person. Consequently, there is a very good argument that the particular surrender provision in Chapter 17 of the Texas Code of Criminal Procedure (Art. 17.16) would apply in non-bail bond board counties as well as counties with a bail bond board. Until the application of Article 17.16 to counties with a bail bond board has been decided by a court of competent jurisdiction, an attorney general's opinion has been issued on this matter or the legislature clarifies this issue, Flowers Davis, PLLC recommends that sheriffs across the State comply with the provisions contained in Article 17.16 in both counties with bail bond boards and counties without bail bond boards.⁸⁵

1. § 1704.207. Surrender of Principal; Contest

(a) A person executing a bail bond may surrender the principal for whom the bond is executed by:

- (1) if the principal is represented by an attorney, notifying the principal's attorney of the person's intention to surrender the principal in a manner provided by Rule 21a, Texas Rules of Civil Procedure; and
- (2) filing an affidavit with the court or magistrate before which the prosecution is pending that states:
 - (A) the person's intention to surrender the principal;
 - (B) the court and cause number of the case;
 - (C) the name of the defendant;
 - (D) the offense with which the defendant is charged;
 - (E) the date of the bond;
 - (F) the reason for the intended surrender; and

⁸⁵ Flowers Davis, PLLC wishes to express its appreciation to the County Attorney of Wise County for bringing this matter to our attention.

(G) that notice of the person's intention to surrender the principal has been provided as required by this subsection.

(b) If a principal is surrendered under Subsection (a) and the principal or an attorney representing the state or an accused in the case determines that a reason for the surrender was without reasonable cause, the person may contest the surrender in the court that authorized the surrender.⁸⁶

(c) If the court finds that a contested surrender was without reasonable cause, the court may require the person who executed the bond to refund to the principal all or part of the fees paid for execution of the bond. The court shall identify the fees paid to induce the person to execute the bond regardless of whether the fees are described as fees for execution of the bond.⁸⁷

V. BONDSMAN RELIEVED OF LIABILITY UPON DISMISSAL, ACQUITTAL OR CONVICTION

Upon dismissal, acquittal or conviction of the principal, the surety is relieved of liability and may not be required to remain on any bond if the criminal defendant appeals.

1. § 1704.208. Bond Liability

(a) A person executing a bail bond is relieved of liability on the bond on the date of disposition of the case for which the bond is executed.

(b) For purposes of this section, disposition of a case occurs on the date the case is dismissed or the principal is acquitted or convicted.

2. § 1704.209. Bond Discharged on Appeal

(a) A bail bond shall be discharged if:

- (1) the principal appeals the case for which the bond is executed; and
- (2) the person who executed the bond does not agree to continue during the appeal as surety.

⁸⁶ Unlike this provision, TEXAS CODE OF CRIMINAL PROCEDURE Articles 17.16 thru 17.19 do not contain a provision for contesting a surrender. In a recent opinion, the Attorney General concluded that sections 1704.207 of the Occupations Code and 17.19 of the Code of Criminal Procedure have been determined by the Texas Court of Criminal Appeals to contain no authority for the trial judge to refuse the surety's affidavit to surrender a principal. Instead, the mechanism by which to challenge a surety's reasonable cause is a principal's contest under subsection 1704.207(b). Op. Tex. Att'y Gen. No. KP-0392 (2021).

⁸⁷ Unlike this provision, Texas Code of Criminal Procedure Articles 17.16 thru 17.19 do not contain a provision for refunding fees if a surrender was not for reasonable cause.

- (b) A court may not require a person who executes a bail bond to continue as surety while the principal appeals the case for which the bond is executed unless the person agrees to continue during the appeal as surety.
- (c) This section does not prohibit a principal from obtaining an appeal bond under the Code of Criminal Procedure.
- (d) This section prevails over any provision contained in the bail bond.

W. LICENSE HOLDER MAY WITHDRAW SECURITY

1. § 1704.210. Withdrawal of Security

- (a) A license holder may withdraw the security deposited or executed under Section 1704.160, and the security shall be returned to the license holder or the license holder's heirs or assigns, if the person requesting the withdrawal is:
 - (1) a license holder in good standing and the amount of the security remaining after the withdrawal is:
 - (A) at least the minimum amount required by Section 1704.160; and
 - (B) an amount sufficient to maintain the ratios required by Section 1704.203; or
 - (2) a former license holder who has ceased to engage in the bonding business, or a former license holder's heir or assign, and the amount of the security remaining after the withdrawal is sufficient to:
 - (A) pay any outstanding judgments; and
 - (B) secure any unexpired obligation on a bail bond executed by the former license holder.

- (b) The board may adopt rules to limit the number of times in a year security may be returned to a license holder under this section.

X. AGENTS OF CORPORATE SURETIES

A corporate surety can have more than one agent in a county. This section requires the filing of a corporate power of attorney with the county clerk designating a person as an agent for a corporate surety. An agent must be designated in the corporation's application. The agent does not have to be a local recording agent under Article 21.14 of the Texas Insurance Code. A corporate surety may limit the amount of bonds that an agent can write by specifying the limitation in the power of attorney on file with the county clerk.

1. § 1704.211. Corporate Power of Attorney

- (a) A corporation shall, before executing any bail bond, file with the county clerk of the county in which the corporation intends to execute the bond a power of attorney designating an agent of the corporation authorized to execute bail bonds on behalf of the corporation.
- (b) An agent designated by a power of attorney under Subsection (a) for a corporation holding a license under this chapter must be designated by the corporation in the corporation's application for a license.
- (c) An agent designated by a power of attorney under Subsection (a) is not required under this chapter to obtain a general property and casualty license under Chapter 4051, Insurance Code.⁸⁸
- (d) A corporation may limit the authority of an agent designated under Subsection (a) by specifying the limitation in the power of attorney that is filed with the county clerk and the board.

A corporate surety may appoint as agents various individual licensees, each of whom may use a direct assumed name. Op. Tex. Att'y Gen. No. GA-0135 (2004). However, the power of attorney must fully disclose the person acting as agent and his assumed name, so long as any posted listing of the person under his assumed name also notes that he is agent for the corporate surety. *Id.* A licensed corporate surety is not prohibited from designating a separate business entity as its agent for executing bail bonds; however, the corporate surety must obtain a separate license on behalf of each individual who ultimately acts as the surety's agent by executing the bail bonds. Op. Tex. Att'y Gen. No. MW-507 (1982). A county bail bond board may exercise its

⁸⁸ This section exempts, under certain circumstances, a licensee under this article from the requirements of holding a general property and casualty license. Notwithstanding licensing with a local bail bond board, an insurance company is required to comply with the applicable provisions of the Texas Insurance Code in order to act as a surety or co-surety on bonds. Op. Tex. Att'y Gen. No. MW-321 (1981).

administrative and regulatory powers to prevent an individual licensee from using more than one assumed name. Op. Tex. Att’y Gen. No. GA-0135 (2004).

A corporation must make a separate deposit of financial security “for each license granted it in a county.” *Harris County Bail Bond Board v. Blackwood*, 41 S.W.3d 123, 124 (Tex. 2001). Unless the qualifying affidavit limits the amount an agent can write, there is no limit on the value of the bonds a corporate bail bondsman may issue. Op. Tex. Att’y Gen. No. DM-0264 (1993). Moreover, a bail bond board is not authorized to set a limit on the dollar amount of bonds which a corporate surety may provide where the corporation has been issued a certificate of authority to do business in Texas by the State Board of Insurance. Op. Tex. Att’y Gen. No. JM-799 (1987).

Y. DEFAULT BY CORPORATE SURETY

A corporation may not act as a surety in a county where it is in default on five or more bonds.

1. § 1704.212. Effect of Default by Corporation; Notice Required

(a) A corporation may not act as a bail bond surety in a county in which the corporation is in default on five or more bail bonds.

(b) If a corporation defaults on a bail bond, the clerk of the court in which the corporation executed the bond shall deliver a written notice of the default to:

- (1) the sheriff;
- (2) the chief of police; or
- (3) another appropriate peace officer.

(c) For purposes of this section:

- (1) a corporation is considered in default on a bail bond beginning on the 11th day after the date the trial court enters a final judgment on the scire facias and ending on the date the judgment is satisfied, set aside, or superseded; and
- (2) a corporation is not considered in default on a bail bond if, pending appeal, the corporation deposits cash or a supersedeas bond in the amount of the final judgment with the court in which the bond is executed.

(d) A deposit made under Subsection (c)(2) shall be applied to the payment of a final judgment in the case.

Z. BOARD INVESTIGATION FOLLOWING COMPLAINT OR ON ITS OWN MOTION

The investigation into any complaint is an important part of the process prior to hearing the complaint. The board may want to adopt a local rule that sets forth the exact procedure that an investigation will follow and who from the board will head the investigation. The board may want to establish an investigative committee to look into the complaint, or ask the sheriff or the county attorney or district attorney to investigate and report back to the board. If the investigation reveals that there is probable cause to believe that a violation of the statute has occurred, then notice can be provided to the person or entity being investigated and a hearing can be set. If suspension or revocation is a possible action following a hearing on a complaint, then the board must comply with the notice provisions of Section 1704.254.

1. § 1704.251. Investigation

(a) A board, on its own motion, may investigate an action of or a record maintained by a license holder that relates to a complaint that the license holder has violated this chapter.

(b) A board shall investigate an action of or a record maintained by a license holder if:

- (1) the board receives a sworn complaint providing reasonable cause to believe that a violation of this chapter has occurred; or
- (2) a court requests an investigation.

AA. DISCRETIONARY LICENSE SUSPENSION OR REVOCATION

A violation of the following 16 subsections can result in a revocation or suspension following notice and a hearing. The revocation of a bail bondsman's license by a county bail bond board is judicial in nature. Op. Tex. Att'y Gen. No. MW-422 (1982); *Travis County Bail Bond Board v. Smith*, 531 S.W.2d 236 (Tex. Civ. App.—Waco 1975, no writ). The revocation or suspension of a bail bondsman's license may involve the loss of a property right protected under the due process clause of the state and federal constitutions, unlike the failure or refusal of the board to grant a license. Op. Tex. Att'y Gen. No. MW-422 (1982). Consequently, all procedures should be carefully followed and due process concerns should be considered in conducting any hearing and any suspension or revocation.

1. § 1704.252. Discretionary License Suspension or Revocation: Grounds

After notice and hearing, a board may revoke or suspend a license if the license holder:

- (1) violates this chapter or a rule adopted by the board under this chapter;
- (2) fraudulently obtains a license under this chapter;
- (3) makes a false statement or misrepresentation:
 - (A) in an application for an original or renewal license; or
 - (B) during a hearing conducted by the board;
- (4) refuses to answer a question submitted by the board during a hearing relating to the license holder's license, conduct, or qualifications;
- (5) is finally convicted under the laws of this state, another state, or the United States of an offense that:
 - (A) is a misdemeanor involving moral turpitude or a felony; and
 - (B) is committed after August 27, 1973;
- (6) is found by a court to be bankrupt or is insolvent;
- (7) is found by a court to be mentally incompetent;
- (8) fails to pay a judgment in accordance with Section 1704.204;
- (9) pays commissions or fees to or divides commissions or fees with, or offers to pay commissions or fees to or divide commissions or fees with, a person or business entity not licensed under this chapter;
- (10) solicits bonding business in a building in which prisoners are processed or confined;⁸⁹
- (11) recommends to a client the employment of a particular attorney or law firm in a criminal case;
- (12) falsifies or fails to maintain a record required under this chapter;

⁸⁹ A bail bond surety who is convicted of soliciting clients inside an area prohibited by section 1704.304(c) of the Occupations Code has not committed a crime of "moral turpitude" for purposes of the Occupations Code. Op. Tex. Att'y Gen. No. GA-0299 (2005).

- (13) fails to promptly permit the board, or a representative or an agent of the board, of the county in which the license holder is licensed to inspect a record required under this chapter;
- (14) acts as a bail bond surety under a suspended or expired license;
- (15) fails two or more times to maintain the amount of security required by Section 1704.160; or
- (16) misrepresents to an official or an employee of the official the amount for which the license holder may execute a bail bond for purposes of obtaining the release of a person on bond.

BB. MANDATORY SUSPENSION – FAILURE TO MAINTAIN REQUIRED SECURITY OR PAY JUDGMENT

Mandatory license suspension must occur if the license holder fails to maintain the amount of security required by Section 1704.160. *See* Section 1704.160(i). No notice or hearing is required in that situation. The suspension is immediately lifted and the license reinstated if the license holder deposits the required amount of security. The failure to pay a final judgment results in the automatic suspension of a license, with no requirement for notice or a hearing. The license is reinstated when the judgment is paid.

1. § 1704.253. Mandatory License Suspension or Revocation: Grounds

(a) A board shall immediately suspend a license if the license holder fails to maintain the amount of security required by Section 1704.160. A board is not required to provide notice or a hearing before suspending a license under this subsection. A license suspended under this subsection shall be immediately reinstated if the license holder deposits or executes the amount of security required by Section 1704.160.

(b) After notice and hearing as provided by Section 1704.254, a board shall revoke a license if:

- (1) the license holder fails to pay a judgment in accordance with Section 1704.204; and
- (2) the amount of security maintained by the license holder under Section 1704.160 is insufficient to pay the judgment.

2. § 1704.2535. Failure to Pay Final Judgment by Bail Bond Surety

- (a) The board or its authorized representative shall immediately notify the sheriff if a bail bond surety fails to pay a final judgment of forfeiture as provided by Section 1704.204(a).
- (b) After receiving notification, the sheriff may not accept any bonds from the bail bond surety until the surety pays the judgment.
- (c) The bail bond surety's privilege to post bonds is reinstated when the bail bond surety pays the judgment.
- (d) A board is not required to provide notice or a hearing before making the notification required by this section.

CC. NOTICE AND HEARING PROCEDURES TO REVOKE OR SUSPEND LICENSE

1. § 1704.254. Notice and Hearing

- (a) Notice of a hearing to suspend or revoke a license under this chapter must:
 - (1) be sent by certified mail to the last known address of the license holder not later than the 11th day before the date of the hearing;
 - (2) state each alleged violation of this chapter; and
 - (3) include a copy of any written complaint on which the hearing will be based.
- (b) The hearing is limited to each alleged violation stated in the notice.
- (c) During the hearing, the license holder:
 - (1) is entitled to an opportunity to be heard; and
 - (2) may present and cross-examine witnesses.
- (d) The hearing must be recorded. A license holder may obtain a copy of the record on request and payment of the reasonable costs of transcription.

The notice requirements must be adhered to prior to any hearing to afford due process to the individual or corporate surety. The hearing must be limited to the alleged violation stated in the notice, and the licensee must be afforded the opportunity to be heard and present evidence. The exact procedures to use in the hearing itself may be a valid topic for a local rule, so long as nothing in this section is in any manner abridged and the licensees' rights are protected. If suspension or revocation results following a hearing on a complaint, then the board must comply with the notice provisions of Sections 1704.104 and 1704.107.

DD. APPEAL OF A BOARD ORDER DENYING A LICENSE OR RENEWAL OR SUSPENDING OR REVOKING A LICENSE

Appeal of an order of the board denying a license, denying renewal of a license, suspending a license, or revoking a license must occur not later than the 30th day after notice of the board action is received. The action can only be filed against the board and not against any individual board member. The notice must specify the reasons for the action in the Section 1704.254 hearing, and the reasons for board action on appeal cannot be different from those specified in the notice. Board action on denial of a license, denial of renewal, suspension or revocation becomes final on the 31st day following the action if it is not appealed.

1. § 1704.255. Appeal; Venue

- (a) An applicant or a license holder may appeal an order of a board denying an application for a license or renewal of a license, or suspending or revoking a license, by filing a petition in a district court in the county not later than the 30th day after the date the person receives notice of the denial, suspension, or revocation.
- (b) An appeal filed under this section is an action against the board. An applicant or a license holder may not bring the action against an individual board member.
- (c) The board may not assert a reason on appeal for an action by the board that differs from the reasons specified in the board's notice of hearing under Section 1704.254.

2. § 1704.256. Standard of Judicial Review

Judicial review of an appeal filed under Section 1704.255 is by trial de novo in the same manner as an appeal from a justice court to a county court.

3. § 1704.257. Effect of Board Order

- (a) A board order denying an application for a license or renewal of a license, or suspending or revoking a license, becomes final on the 31st day after the date

the applicant or license holder receives notice of the order unless the applicant or license holder files an appeal under Section 1704.255.

(b) A board order appealed under Section 1704.255 has full force and effect pending determination of the appeal.

Generally speaking, actions denying a license or renewal or suspending or revoking a license may be appealed to state district court, along with a request for injunctive relief, and attorney fees and costs. *See Garcia-Marroquin v. Nueces County Bail Bond Bd.*, 1 S.W.3d 366 (Tex. App.— Corpus Christi 1999, no writ). It is generally necessary for a bondsman or potential bondsman to first exhaust administrative remedies, otherwise the District Court has no jurisdiction. *Id.* A bondsman is generally required to attend a hearing and await a final order from the board revoking or suspending the license. *Id.* However, exhaustion of administrative remedies is not required where the action seeks a declaratory judgment concerning the validity or applicability of an agency rule. *Id.*

Depending on the factual situation in the case, the litigation costs can be high in this type of litigation. These declaratory judgment actions and *de novo* appeals are often laced with allegations of favoritism, discrimination or unequal treatment. Some bail bondsmen are litigious and well funded, so caution must be exercised by the board in following the procedures in a meticulous manner.⁹⁰

EE. RETURN BY BONDSMAN OF SECURITY OF THE PRINCIPAL

On occasion, a bail bond surety will hold something of value of the principal (the person who was bonded out of jail) to ensure payment of the bond fee or appearance in court. A bondsman may receive a fee of ten or even twenty percent of the full bond amount as payment for posting the bond. The amount of the fee can be very steep if the bond is high. For instance, if a \$50,000 bond is set, the bond fee could be between \$5,000 and \$10,000. Many people do not have that much money in cash, so the bondsman may set up installment payments and require that he or she be allowed to “hold” an item or several items of value as security for payment of the installments. Section 1704.301 controls the return of such security.

1. § 1704.301. Return of Security

A bail bond surety may not hold security for the payment of a bail bond fee or to assure the principal’s appearance in court for more than 30 days after the date on which the owner of the security:

- (1) requests return of the security in writing; and

⁹⁰ This statement is not meant as a criticism of the bail bond industry as a whole. As with any profession or occupation, some of the people in the profession or occupation are more litigious than others.

- (2) submits to the bail bond surety written evidence of the conclusion of:
 - (A) the payment agreement; or
 - (B) all of the criminal cases for which the security was given.

This section requires the return of the property within 30 days after the principal provides a written request for the return of the property and written proof that the installment agreement was satisfied, or that the criminal cases have been concluded.

FF. BAIL BONDSMEN PROHIBITIONS AND OFFENSES

The Texas Occupations Code makes several acts criminal in nature. These acts include payment of referrals to people in the criminal justice system, unlawful advertising, unlawful solicitation of bond business, failure to issue receipts and keep records and falsification of documents.

1. § 1704.302. Prohibited Referrals of or Employments with Bonding Business; Offense

- (a) A person in the bonding business may not directly or indirectly give, donate, lend, or contribute, or promise to give, donate, lend, or contribute, money or property to an attorney, police officer, sheriff, deputy, constable, jailer, or employee of a law enforcement agency for the referral of bonding business.
- (b) A person may not accept or receive from a license holder money, property, or any other thing of value as payment for the referral of bonding business unless the records of the board show that the person is an agent or employee of the license holder.
- (c) A person may not accept or receive from a license holder money, property, or any other thing of value as payment for employment with a bonding business if, within the preceding 10 years, the person has been convicted of a misdemeanor involving moral turpitude or of a felony.⁹¹

⁹¹ Section 1704.302(c) of the Texas Occupations Code, as amended effective September 1, 2001, prohibits the employment of a convicted felon by a bail bond business unless the person was employed by the business before the section's effective date. Op. Tex. Att'y Gen. No. JC-0534 (2002). However, a convicted felon's continued employment by a family-owned bail bond business has been found permissible by the Attorney General despite the amendment of Section 1704.302 (c) of the Occupations Code. Op. Tex. Att'y Gen. No. JC-0534 (2002). He or she does not forfeit that status solely because the business in which he is employed changes hands within the family due to a death in the family. *Id.*

- (d) A person commits an offense if the person violates this section. An offense under this section is a Class A misdemeanor.

It is important to note that Subsections (a) and (b) contain the language “for the referral of bonding business.” This provides a potential “out” for any individual violating these subsections since they can claim that any remuneration was for some other purpose or reason than for the referral of bonds. The best practice for all county officials and employees is to avoid any contact or conduct between these parties that could be perceived as improper. For example, sheriff’s deputies should not accept lunch, dinner, tickets to the rodeo, etc. from a bondsman.

2. § 1704.303. Bail Bond Surety Activity; Offense

- (a) A person required to be licensed under this chapter may not execute a bail bond unless the person holds a license issued under this chapter.

(b) A person may not advertise as a bail bond surety in a county unless the person holds a license issued under this chapter by a bail bond board in that county. A person does not violate this subsection if the person places an advertisement that appears in more than one county and:

- (1) the advertisement clearly indicates the county or counties in which the person holds a license issued under this chapter; and
- (2) any local telephone number in the advertisement is a local number only for a county in which the person holds a license issued under this chapter.

- (c) A person commits an offense if the person violates this section. An offense under this section is a Class B misdemeanor.

3. § 1704.304. Prohibited Recommendations or Solicitations; Offense

(a) A bail bond surety or an agent of a bail bond surety may not recommend or suggest to a person for whom the bail bond surety executes a bond the employment of an attorney or law firm in connection with a criminal offense.⁹²

(b) The following persons may not recommend a particular bail bond surety to another person:

- (1) a police officer, sheriff, or deputy;

⁹² The statute regulating bail bond sureties prohibits: 1) a bail bond surety from recommending an attorney or law firm to the surety’s client; and 2) law enforcement, correctional and judicial employees from recommending a bail bond surety. Op. Tex. Att’y Gen. No. GA-0089 (2003). This includes a list of recommended attorneys or bondsmen - excepting the official posting of licensed bondsmen in jails under Chapter 17 of the Code of Criminal Procedure. *Id.*

- (2) a constable, jailer, or employee of a law enforcement agency;
 - (3) a judge or employee of a court;
 - (4) another public official; or
 - (5) an employee of a related agency.
- (c) A bail bond surety or an agent of a bail bond surety may not solicit bonding business in a police station, jail, prison, detention facility, or other place of detainment for persons in the custody of law enforcement.
- (d) A person may not place a device in a place of detention, confinement, or imprisonment that dispenses a bail bond in exchange for a fee.
- (e) A person commits an offense if the person violates this section. An offense under this section is a Class B misdemeanor.⁹³

Once again, any appearance of impropriety should be avoided. It is interesting to note that a bondsman may not refer a client to an attorney. Upon information and belief, the Flowers Davis law firm believes that this provision has been ignored or abused in the past by some bondsmen and some attorneys.

As set forth in this section, the bail bond board statute prohibits: (1) a bail bond surety from recommending an attorney or law firm to the surety's client; and (2) various public officials and employees of the jail or court system from recommending a particular bail bond surety to another person. Op. Tex. Att'y Gen. No. GA-0089 (2003). This provision *also prohibits any affected person from providing a list of attorneys, law firms or bail bond sureties*. Op. Tex. Att'y Gen. No. GA-0135 (2004). This same provision prohibits the collection by a bail bondsman from a person for whom the bondsman executes a bond, a legal fee for an attorney and/or remittal of such fee to the attorney. The section is sufficiently broad to cover the collection and remittal of such a fee. Op. Tex. Att'y Gen. No. JC-0528 (2002). However, it must be noted that sheriff's offices must post a list in the jail of licensed bondsmen in counties with a bail bond board and may post a list in the jail of bondsmen in counties without a bail bond board, pursuant to Article 17.141 of the Texas Code of Criminal Procedure. The practice of posting such a list is not considered "solicitation."

4. § 1704.305. Bail Bond Receipt and Inspection; Offense

⁹³ A bail bond surety who is convicted of soliciting clients inside an area prohibited by Section 1704.304(c) of the Occupations Code does not commit a crime of "moral turpitude" for purposes of section 1704.302(c) of the Occupations Code. Op. Tex. Att'y Gen. No. GA-0299 (2004).

(a) A bail bond surety or an agent of a bail bond surety may not receive money or other consideration or thing of value from a person for whom the bail bond surety executes a bond unless the bail bond surety or agent issues a receipt to the person as provided by Subsection (b).

(b) The receipt must state:

- (1) the name of the person who pays the money or transfers the consideration or thing of value;
- (2) the amount of money paid or the estimated amount of value transferred;
- (3) if the person transfers consideration or a thing of value, a brief description of the consideration or thing of value;
- (4) the style and number of the case and the court in which the bond is executed; and
- (5) the name of the person receiving the money, consideration, or thing of value.

(c) A bail bond surety or an agent of a bail bond surety shall retain a duplicate copy of a receipt issued under Subsection (a). The copy of the receipt shall be made available for inspection by:

- (1) a representative of the board in any county in which the bail bond surety is licensed; and
- (2) an appointed representative of a court in which the bail bond surety agrees to execute bail bonds.

(e) A person commits an offense if the person violates this section. An offense under this section is a Class B misdemeanor.

This provision was adopted to ensure that documentation exists to show that installment agreements have either been paid or not and to document the financial dealings in what is otherwise often a cash-based business. This rule protects the accused and the bondsman.

5. § 1704.306. Records; Offense

(a) A person commits an offense if the person falsifies a record required to be maintained under this chapter.

- (b) An offense under this section is a Class B misdemeanor.

The penalty for falsifying documents that are required to be maintained for government inspection is only a Class B misdemeanor. This is an area where legislative action might be proper to increase this specific penalty to a Class A misdemeanor, consistent with the other listed offenses under these sections of the Texas Occupations Code.

GG. DISBURSEMENTS FROM COUNTY FUND

1. § 1704.103. Disbursements from County Fund

(a) Fees deposited in the general fund of a county or in a separate county fund under Section 1704.101(2) may be used only to administer and enforce this chapter, including reimbursement for:

- (1) reasonable expenses incurred by the board in enforcing this chapter; and
- (2) actual expenses incurred by a board member in serving on the board.

(b) For purposes of this section, serving on a board is an additional duty of a board member's office. A board member may not receive compensation for serving on a board.

HH. OFFICE LOCATION

1. § 1704.213. Office Location

(a) A license holder shall maintain an office in the county in which the license holder holds a license.

(b) Not later than the seventh day after the date a license holder opens a new office or moves an office to a new location, the license holder shall notify the board of the location of the office.

III. FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

A. NON-BAIL BOND BOARD COUNTIES

1. Can an insurance company write a bail bond in a county when the sheriff has never even heard of the insurance company or the agent presenting the bond?

Yes. An insurance company licensed by the Texas Department of Insurance to do business in the State of Texas can write bail bonds through a licensed recording agent in your county. *See* pp. 41-42; TEX. CODE CRIM. PRO. art. 17.06; 17.07. The only requirements are that the company file a power of attorney with the county clerk that authorizes the local recording agent to sign bonds on behalf of the company. *Id.* The bond must be executed by the licensed recording agent for the insurance company and be in the proper form. *Id.*; TEX. CODE CRIM. PRO. ANN. art. 17.08.

2. What does a sheriff need to make sure is contained in a bail bond submitted by a bondsman?

Article 17.08 of the Texas Code of Criminal Procedure sets out a laundry list of items that a bail bond is supposed to contain. *See* pp. 47-49; TEX. CODE CRIM. PRO. ANN. art. 17.08.

3. Can the sheriff post a list of eligible bondsmen in a non-bail bond board county?

Yes. *See* p. 54; TEX. CODE CRIM. PRO. ANN. art. 17.141. The Texas Legislature amended the Code of Criminal Procedure to allow the posting of such a list effective September 1, 2005. The legislature amended the statute specifically to address a prior Texas Attorney General Opinion that held that lists could not be posted by the sheriff, because the statute did not specifically authorize such a list. It should be noted that the sheriff in a non-bail bond board county may post a list of sureties whose security he has determined to be sufficient. The language is not mandatory.

4. Are there any other requirements for a person writing a bond in a non-bail bond board county other than the financial requirements for individual sureties and the licensing requirement for insurance companies?

Yes. Effective September 1, 2005, a person may not write a bail bond, for compensation, in a county unless, within two years before the bail bond is given, the individual has completed, in person, at least eight hours of continuing education in criminal law courses or bail bond law courses that meet the requirements of article 17.10 of the Code of Criminal Procedure. *See* pp. 45-47.

5. What can the sheriff do to make sure that an individual surety is actually worth enough money to write the bond?

Articles 17.11 through 17.141 of the Texas Code of Criminal Procedure govern the manner in which sheriffs may determine whether the surety has sufficient security to write a bond. Under article 17.11, it must appear that the surety is worth at least double the amount of the sum for which he or she is bound, exclusive of exempt property (such as homestead), debts, and other encumbrances. Article 17.13 specifically sets forth an oath that the surety can be required to take to swear that they are worth at least the sum of the amount for which the surety is bound. Article

17.14 allows the sheriff to require further evidence if he or she is not fully satisfied as to the sufficiency of the security of the surety.

Additionally, article 17.141, of the Code of Criminal Procedure effective September 1, 2005, requires that each person on a list of eligible bond sureties posted by the sheriff provide a “sworn financial statement.” The term “sworn financial statement” appears to mean that the surety must provide a statement of his or her finances and swear, under penalty of perjury, that the statement is true and correct. Of course, an audited financial statement signed by an accountant would be the best proof of actual financial worth. However, such audited financial statements can be costly and time consuming to obtain. Consequently, the legislation only requires a “sworn financial statement.” Of note, the Texas Attorney General has determined that the public has a legitimate interest in sworn financial statements collected and retained for this purpose; therefore, such statements may be subject to release as public information. *See* Tex. Att’y Gen. Op. OR2007-06923 (2007). The sheriff may also request a list of the bonds written by an individual surety in other counties in making an assessment of the sufficiency of the security of the surety.

6. Is there any mechanism that would help the sheriff in releasing people with emotional or mental disabilities from his or her jail?

Yes. Article 17.032 provides procedures for releasing certain mentally ill defendants from jail on personal bonds. In recent years, due primarily to State budget restraints, counties have been forced to house an increasing number of mentally ill pre-trial detainees. Article 17.032 provides some relief from that burden in certain types of cases. *See* pp. 34-36.

7. Is there anything that the county can do to facilitate inmate releases and reduce overcrowding?

Yes. As previously discussed, article 17.032 provides a mechanism for releasing certain mentally ill offenders. Additionally, article 17.42 establishes the statutory authority for a county or judicial district to create a “personal bond office” that investigates and gathers information bearing on whether an inmate will comply with the conditions of a personal bond and then reports that information to the appropriate court. *See* pp. 81-83.

8. When does a person who has been arrested pursuant to a warrantless arrest have to be released if no bond is set?

Article 17.033 of the Texas Code of Criminal Procedure states that a person who is arrested without a warrant and who is detained in jail must be released on bond, in an amount not to exceed \$5,000.00, not later than the 24th hour after the person’s arrest if the person was arrested for a misdemeanor and a magistrate has not determined whether probable cause exists to believe that the person committed the offense. Additionally, if the person is unable to obtain a surety for the bond or unable to deposit money in the amount of the bond, the person must be released on a personal bond. A person who is arrested without a warrant and who is detained in jail must be released on bond in an amount not to exceed \$10,000, not later than the 48th hour after the person’s

arrest if the person was arrested for a felony and a magistrate has not determined whether probable cause exists to believe that the person committed the offense. If the person is unable to obtain a surety for the bond or unable to deposit money in the amount of the bond, the person must be released on a personal bond. While Section (c) of article 17.003 allows the filing of an application by the attorney representing the State to postpone the release of a person for up to 72 hours after the person's arrest, constitutional standards only allow such an extension of time where exceptional reasons are present. Additionally, from a liability standpoint, anyone arrested without a warrant who has not been taken before a magistrate for a determination of probable cause within 48 hours and is still in jail has suffered a presumptive violation of his or her Fourth Amendment rights as a matter of law. For that reason, it is exceptionally important that every person arrested without a warrant be taken to a magistrate as quickly as possible following arrest. *Infra*.

9. How should the amount of bail be determined?

It must be remembered that setting bail is not punitive in nature, nor is bail meant to be a fine or a punishment. The purpose of bail is to make sure that the person shows up for court—that's it, and that's all.. Generally, magistrates or officers taking bail should abide by the following rules: 1) the bail should be sufficiently high to give reasonable assurance that the undertaking will be complied with; 2) the power to require bail is not to be so used to make it an instrument of oppression; 3) the nature of the offense and the circumstances under which the offense was committed should be considered; 4) the ability to make bail is to be considered and proof can be taken on this point; and 5) the future safety of the victim of the alleged offense and the safety of the community in general should be considered. In addition, the new Public Safety Report must be considered before determining the amount of bail.

10. Besides an individual surety, who may execute or sign a bond?

Articles 17.06 and 17.07 of the Texas Code of Criminal Procedure speak to a "corporation" acting as a surety. However, the only corporation that can act as a surety is an insurance company lawfully licensed to do business in the State of Texas, specifically authorized by the Texas Department of Insurance. A licensed local recording agent for the insurance company may execute a bond.

11. What is the difference between a surety bond, a personal bond, and a cash bond?

Surety Bonds - Surety bonds are bonds that are signed by the principal (*i.e.* the criminal defendant) and one or more sureties. If the surety signing on the bond for the principal is an individual, he or she must satisfy the sheriff, in a non-bail bond board county, that he or she is worth at least twice the amount of money that the surety would owe in the event the bond was

forfeited. Additionally, in a non-bail bond board county, an insurance company, acting through a local recording agent, can execute as a surety on a surety bond.

Cash Bonds - Cash bonds are bonds which can be posted, in cash, for the total amount of the bond on behalf of the defendant.⁹⁴

Personal Bonds - A personal bond is a bond set by a magistrate, in the magistrate's discretion, that releases a defendant on his personal bond without sureties or other security. Personal bonds are discussed *infra.* at 18-23; TEX. CODE CRIM. PRO. ANN. arts. 17.03, 17.031, 17.032, and 17.04.

12. Once a bond is set on an individual, what happens if the charge is reduced or an additional or subsequent charge is brought against the criminal defendant?

Generally, when a defendant has once given bail for his appearance to a criminal charge, he is not required to give another bond in the same criminal action. This applies to the court in which the case was originally filed, any court to which the case is transferred, as well as any subsequent proceedings relevant to the charge in any court. However, if during the course of the action, the judge finds that the bond is defective, excessive, or insufficient in amount, or that the sureties, if any, are not acceptable, or for any other good and sufficient cause, the judge or magistrate may order the accused to be rearrested and require the accused to give another bond in such amount as the judge or magistrate may deem proper. If the criminal defendant is subsequently charged with a different and more serious criminal offense and the previous charge is dismissed, a different bond will have to be posted for that offense. If the criminal defendant is subsequently charged with a lesser included offense or with a lesser offense in the same cause number, a new bond would not need to be posted, although the Court could be asked to reduce the bond. If a new lesser charge is filed and the original charge is dismissed, a new bond must be set and posted.

13. Can a bondsman show up at a sheriff's office and provide the sheriff with an affidavit stating that the principal on one of his bonds is incarcerated somewhere else and request to get off of the bond?

Yes. Before a forfeiture occurs, a surety may relieve himself of his liability by delivering an affidavit to the sheriff stating that the accused is incarcerated in federal custody, the custody of any state, or the custody of any county in the State of Texas. The bond is discharged and the surety is absolved of liability of the bond on the sheriff's verification of the incarceration of the accused. TEX. CODE CRIM. PRO. ANN. art. 17.16, *infra.* at 152-51. Once the sheriff has verified the incarceration of the accused, it is advisable for the sheriff to transmit a copy of the affidavit and a notation of the sheriff's verification to the judge and to the district and/or county clerk (depending on the court in which the case is filed) for filing in the court's file.

⁹⁴ It should be noted that a cash bond posted on behalf of the defendant can also be retrieved by the defendant if he is acquitted of the offense, without the permission or knowledge of any third-party who may have posted the cash bond.

14. In a non-bail bond board county, can a bondsman bring a criminal defendant into the sheriff's office, give him back to the sheriff, and get off of the individual's bond?

Yes. A surety may, before forfeiture, relieve himself of his liability by surrendering the accused into the custody of the sheriff in the county where the prosecution is pending. TEX. CODE CRIM. PRO. ANN. art. 17.16, *infra.* at 152-51.

15. In a non-bail bond board county, what does a sheriff do once a bondsman has surrendered a criminal defendant?

If the accused is surrendered during a term of court, the sheriff takes the criminal defendant before the court, and if the criminal defendant is willing and able to give another bond, then the defendant goes free after posting the bond. If the criminal defendant fails or refuses to give bail, the court must order that he or she be committed to jail until the bail is given. If the surrender is made at any other time than during the session of the court, the sheriff may take the necessary bail bond. If the defendant fails or refuses to give another bond, the sheriff must take him before the nearest magistrate, and that magistrate must issue a warrant of commitment. TEX. CODE CRIM. PRO. ANN. arts. 17.17, 17.18.

16. In a non-bail bond board county, is there any other way for a bail bondsman to get off a bond, other than surrendering a criminal defendant?

Yes. Any surety who wants to surrender his principal (i.e. the criminal defendant) can file an affidavit before the court or magistrate before whom the prosecution is pending, after notifying the criminal defendant's attorney, pursuant to Rule 21a of the Texas Rules of Civil Procedure. The affidavit to the court must state: 1) the court and cause number of the case; 2) the name of the defendant; 3) the offense with which the defendant is charged; 4) the date of the bond; 5) the cause for the surrender; and 6) that notice of the surety's intention to surrender the principal has been given to counsel for the criminal defendant as required. TEX. CODE CRIM. PRO. ANN. art. 17.19. If the court finds that there is cause for the surety to surrender his principal, the court shall issue a warrant of arrest or *capias* for the principal. However, it should be noted that it is an affirmative defense for any liability against the bondsman if the court or magistrate refuses to issue a warrant of arrest or *capias* for the principal and the principal then fails to appear in court.

17. How quickly does a person have to be released after posting bond?

The person is "at once to be set at liberty." TEX. CODE CRIM. PRO. ANN. art. 17.29. In practice, the person bonding out should be released as quickly as reasonably possible.

18. When, if ever, can a person be intentionally kept in jail after bond has been posted?

Due to an increase in family violence and the desire of the State to provide a “cooling off” period in family violence type cases, the legislature has determined that persons accused of family violence can be held for four additional hours after bail has been posted on the direction of the agency holding that person (usually the sheriff of the county). It would be very helpful, although not required, to place notes in the inmate’s file to document the specific reasons that the additional four hours of detention was directed by the agency. The accused may be held for an additional 48 hours, if authorized in writing by a magistrate, based upon certain findings by said magistrate. TEX. CODE CRIM. PRO. ANN. art. 17.291.

19. Can bonds be required for material witnesses in criminal cases?

Yes, subject to the regular bonding requirements. Witnesses for the State or defendant may be required by the magistrate, upon the examination of any criminal accusation before him, to give bail for their appearance to testify before the proper court. The amount of security required of a witness is regulated by his pecuniary condition, character, and the nature of the offense to which he is a witness. A witness required to give bail who fails or refuses to do so shall be committed to jail as in any other case of failure to give bail when required. Upon giving such bail, the witness must be released.

20. Can a bail bondsman request, under the Open Meetings and Public Information Acts, that the sheriff provide him with records of who has set bail, the person for whom each bail was set, the amount of the bail, the date the bail was set, the magistrate or officer who set the bail, and the offense or other cause for which the appearance is secured?

Yes. Article 17.39 of the Texas Code of Criminal Procedure requires that a magistrate or other officer who sets the amount of bail or who takes bail shall record “in a well-bound book” the name of the person whose appearance the bail secures, the amount of the bail, the date the bail is set, the magistrate or officer who set bail, the offense or other cause for which the appearance is secured, the magistrate or other officer who takes bail, the date the person is released, and the name of the bondsman, if any. Obviously, this law was first established prior to the widespread use of computers. If such a “well-bound book” exists, the magistrate or sheriff has to provide a copy. If no such record exists, all the sheriff has to do is inform the bail bondsman that nothing of that nature exists. If such information is contained in computer generated files, the sheriff or magistrate must provide copies of the computer-generated files that are responsive to the request. Obviously, the statute needs to be changed to amend Article 17.39 so that computer information is specifically allowed. In the meantime, the following statute may be helpful in defending against not maintaining a “well-bound book:”

AUTHORIZATION. Any local government record data may be stored electronically in addition to or instead of source documents in paper or other media, subject to the requirements of this chapter and rules adopted under it.

TEX. LOCAL GOV’T CODE § 205.002.

21. In a non-bail bond board county, can a sheriff consider the contingent liability of a bail bondsman who has written bonds in other counties based on the same security?

Yes. The sheriff can consider the contingent liabilities associated with bonds written in other counties when considering the sufficiency of the security of the surety. However, it is strongly advised that the sheriff contact counsel to discuss the issue before the sheriff makes any decisions regarding not allowing a surety to write bonds or limiting a surety in the amount of bonds that he can write. In other words, it is better to be proactive and talk your way through it with an attorney than to make a decision that may result in litigation without consulting with counsel.

22. In a non-bail bond board county, can a convicted felon write bonds?

YES AND NO. Yes, if the person was convicted of a felony offense (or misdemeanor involving moral turpitude such as theft) committed before September 1, 2011. No, if the person was convicted of an offense that was committed on or after September 1, 2011. However, the 2011 amendment to article 17.10 specifically stated that the amendment “applies only to a person convicted of an offense committed on or after the effective date of the Act.” The effective date of the Act was September 1, 2011. The 2011 amendment went on to state that:

A person convicted of an offense committed before the effective date of this Act is governed by the law in effect on the date the offense was committed, and the former law is continued in effect for that purpose. An offense is considered to have been committed before the effective date of the Act if any element of the offense occurred before September 1, 2011.

23. Can the sheriff inquire into the sufficiency of an attorney’s security to write a bond if the attorney is posting a bond on behalf of an individual that they represent?

Yes, an attorney, just like anyone else, has to have sufficient security to sign a bond as a surety. Their finances can be inquired into just as any other surety.

24. Do attorneys have to comply with the education requirement under article 17.10(b) of the Texas Code of Criminal Procedure?

Attorneys who practice in this area of the law disagree. In the opinion of Flowers Davis law firm, the answer is no, unless the attorney is bonding people out for compensation rather than as part of his regular legal services. If an attorney is engaging in the bonding business for compensation, and not representing the defendant in the criminal case, then he would have to obtain the required education just like any other person engaging in the bonding business. Other attorneys are of the opinion that attorneys posting bond in non-bail bond board counties must meet the educational requirements. The best advice is to seek legal counsel if this becomes an issue in your county. Obtaining an attorney general’s opinion is always a possibility.

B. BAIL BOND BOARD COUNTIES

1. Does the Bail Bond Board Act now apply to counties with populations of over 50,000?

No. During the 79th Regular Session of the Texas Legislature, Senate Bill 624 proposed to make the Texas Occupations Code Section 1704.001, *et. seq.* applicable to counties with a population of over 50,000. However, the Senate Bill was amended on the floor to delete those specific provisions.

2. What counties must have a bail bond board?

Counties with a population of over 110,000 are deemed to have bail bond boards.

3. Can a county with a population of under 110,000 choose to create a bail bond board?

Yes. Pursuant to Section 1704.052 of the Texas Occupations Code, a county may create a bail bond board, if it has a population of less than 110,000, the Commissioners' Court approves the creation of the board and if a majority of the persons who would serve as members of the board under Section 1704.053, or who would designate persons who would serve as members of the board, determine to create such a board and a majority of the Commissioners' Court votes to approve the creation of a bail bond board.

4. How is a bail bond board surety representative elected?

The bail bond board must annually conduct a secret ballot election to elect a member of the board who serves as a representative of the licensed bail bond sureties. This member must be a licensed bail bond surety or agent for a corporate surety board member. Each individual licensed in the county who is a bail bond surety or agent for a corporate surety is entitled to cast one vote for each license held. Consequently, if a person has an individual license and is also a licensed agent for an insurance company, that person would be entitled to two votes. TEX. OCC. CODE ANN. § 1704.0535.

5. How do we elect the presiding officer?

Section 1704.054 of the Texas Occupations Code specifically states that the board must initially elect one of its members as the presiding officer to preside over board meetings. The presiding officer may vote on any board matter.

6. How often must a board meet?

A board must hold its initial meeting not later than the 60th day after the board is created. Thereafter, a board must meet at least once per month and at any other time or times that the presiding officer calls a meeting, except in a county with a population of less than 50,000. In a county with a population of less than 50,000, the Board must meet four (4) times a year - in the months of January, April, July and October.

7. What constitutes a “quorum” of the bail bond board?

Four members of the bail bond board constitute a quorum. A board may take action only on a majority vote of the board members present.

8. What authority does a bail bond board actually have?

Sections 1704.101 and 1704.102 of the TEXAS OCCUPATIONS CODE specifically set out the administrative authority and enforcement authority, respectively, of a bail bond board. Essentially, the board has the authority to supervise and regulate each phase of the bonding business in the county, and to adopt and post rules necessary to implement the Bail Bond Board Act. The board can conduct hearings and investigations regarding the issuance, denial or renewal of licenses. In terms of enforcement authority, the board is required to enforce the Bail Bond Board Act in the county, conduct hearings and investigations relating to license suspensions and revocations, suspend or revoke licenses for violations of the Act, and require a record and transcription of each board proceeding. Additionally, the bail bond board may compel the appearance before the board of an applicant or license holder and administer oaths, examine witnesses, and compel the production of pertinent records and testimony by a license holder or applicant.

9. Must a bail bond board post a board rule or board action?

Pursuant to Section 1704.104 of the TEXAS OCCUPATIONS CODE, a board must post a rule adopted by the board or an action taken by the board in an appropriate place in the county courthouse for 10 days preceding the day the rule or action takes effect. For instance, if a licensee’s license is revoked, the action must be posted for 10 days prior to the action becoming effective.

10. Does the board have to post a list of licensed bail bond sureties?

Yes. The board must post a list in each court having criminal jurisdiction in the county and must provide each local official responsible for the detention of prisoners a current list of each licensed bail bond surety and each licensed agent of a corporate surety in the county.

11. If a corporate surety or individual surety has a judgment against him or is in default in another county, can the sheriff immediately cut the bondsman off from writing bonds?

No. In a bail bond board county where each surety is licensed, the licensing in that county stands on its own. A surety cannot be cut off based on issues, defaults, or even judgments in other

counties. Of course, the bail bond board can consider that fact when considering the renewal application of the individual or company. Bottom line, the sheriff cannot question the solvency of a licensed bail bondsman in a bail bond board county.

12. Can a family member post a property bond for another family member in a bail bond board county if that person is not licensed and the posting would be a one-time occurrence?

No. Under Section 1704.151 of the Texas Occupations Code, every person who writes a bond in a bail bond board county must hold a license. Even if it is a one-time occurrence by a family member to obtain the release of a close relative, the family member may not post a bond for their relative. This is an issue that should be addressed by legislation in the next session. The fact that there is no exception for a close family member posting a property bond for a relative may inhibit the ability of some people to post bond.

13. What are the requirements for a person to act as a bondsman in a bail bond board county?

All individual sureties and agents designated by insurance companies must be at least 18 years of age, a resident of the State of Texas, and a citizen of the United States. The individual must comply with the financial requirements of Section 1704.160 of the TEXAS OCCUPATIONS CODE or be acting as agent for an insurance company. The individual must submit documentary evidence that in the 2 years preceding the date on which their license application is filed, the individual has been continuously employed by a person licensed under Section 1704 of the TEXAS OCCUPATIONS CODE for at least 1 year and not less than 30 hours per week, excluding annual leave, and has performed duties that encompass all phases of the bonding business. Additionally, a person must have completed, in person, at least eight hours of continuing legal education in criminal law or bail bond law courses that are approved by the State Bar of Texas and that are offered by an accredited institution of higher education in the State of Texas. However, the work and education requirements do not apply in a county before the first anniversary of the date a board is created in that county or to an individual who applies to operate the bail bond business of a license holder who has died, if the individual is related to the decedent within the first degree of consanguinity or is the decedent's surviving spouse. While these requirement may limit the creation of new bonding businesses in some countries, the education and experience requirements are valid and helpful requirements.

14. In a bail bond board county, can a convicted felon write bonds?

Not as a general rule. A person is not eligible for a license if the person has committed and has been finally convicted of a misdemeanor involving moral turpitude or a felony after August 27, 1973. Misdemeanors involving moral turpitude are convictions involving dishonesty, such as theft. Section 1704.302(c) of the TEXAS OCCUPATIONS CODE as amended effective September 1, 2001, also prohibits the employment of a convicted felon by a bail bond business unless the person was employed by the business before the section's effective date. Op. Tex. Att'y Gen. No. JC-

0534 (2002). However, a convicted felon's continued employment by a family-owned bail bond business has been found permissible by the Attorney General despite the amendment of section 1704.302 (c) of the Occupations Code. Op. Tex. Att'y Gen. No. JC-0534 (2002). He or she does not forfeit that status solely because the business in which he is employed changes hands within the family due to a death in the family. Op. Tex. Att'y Gen. No. JC-0534 (2002).

15. What happens if an individual or insurance company licensed under Section 1704, et seq., of the Texas Occupations Code, does not file its application for renewal at least 31 days before the license expiration date?

In that situation, the person simply cannot file an application to renew the license. He or she would have to file a completely new application. The effect of having to file a completely new application is that the bondsman would not be "grandfathered-in" under the prior financial and property provisions of the TEXAS OCCUPATIONS CODE. In essence, more stringent financial requirements might apply to individuals who have to file a new application as opposed to a renewal application. Additionally, it is also important to note that the renewal application must meet the same requirements as a new application. Any infirmities or omissions in the application may result in denial.

16. Can an attorney write a bond in a bail bond board county, when that person is not otherwise licensed as a bondsman?

Yes, if he actually represents the accused. Section 1704.163 of the TEXAS OCCUPATIONS CODE requires that the attorney be licensed to practice law in the State of Texas and appear as counsel of record for the accused in the pending criminal case. An attorney executing a bail bond is not relieved of liability on the bond solely because the attorney is later replaced as counsel of record in the related criminal case. In the opinion of the Flowers Davis law firm, the attorney also does not have to meet the educational requirements of Chapter 17 of the CODE OF CRIMINAL PROCEDURE.

17. In a bail bond board county, can the sheriff inquire into the sufficiency of an attorney's security to write a bond?

Yes, if that attorney is not also a licensed bondsman in that county.

18. Can the sheriff accept a bail bond from an individual or insurance company licensed in another county?

No. The sheriff in a bail bond board county may not accept a bond from a bail bondsman who is not licensed in that particular county. In other words, even if a person is being held on a warrant from another county, a bail bondsman licensed in the county in which the individual is being held must write the bond. The fact that a bondsman is licensed in one bail bond board county does not allow that bondsman to write bonds in another bail bond board county.

19. Is the surrender of the principal the same as it is in non-bail bond board counties?

The general provision for the surrender of a principal is somewhat different in bail bond board counties than in non-bail bond board counties. In a bail bond board county, a person executing a bail bond may surrender the principal by: 1) notifying the principal's attorney (if the principal is represented by an attorney) of the bondsman's intention to surrender the principal; and 2) filing an affidavit with the court or magistrate with which prosecution is pending stating the bondsman's intention to surrender the principal, the court and cause number of the case, the name of the defendant, the offense that the defendant is charged with, the date of the bond, the reason for the intended surrender, and that the notice of the bondsman's intention to surrender the principal has been provided to counsel for the principal. Additionally, if the principal is surrendered, and the principal or an attorney representing the State or an accused in the case determines that a reason for the surrender was without reasonable cause, the person may contest the surrender in the court that authorized the surrender. If the court finds that the contested surrender was without reasonable cause, the court may require the bondsman to refund to the principal all or part of the fees paid for execution of the bond. There are no specific provisions under the Texas Occupations Code for counties with a bail bond board for surrendering an accused by specifically preparing an affidavit relating to the accused's incarceration in another venue or surrendering an accused to a sheriff in person. Consequently, there is a very good argument that the particular surrender provision in Chapter 17 of the TEXAS CODE OF CRIMINAL PROCEDURE (Art. 17.16) would apply in non-bail bond board counties as well as counties with a bail bond board. Until the application of Article 17.16 to counties with a bail bond board has been decided by a court of competent jurisdiction, an attorney general's opinion has been issued on this matter or the legislature clarifies this issue, Flowers Davis, PLLC recommends that sheriffs across the State comply with the provisions contained in Article 17.16 in both counties with bail bond boards and counties without bail bond boards.

20. Does the agent for a corporate surety (i.e., an insurance company) have to be a licensed insurance agent?

No. Unlike non-bail bond board counties, an agent for an insurance company in a bail bond board county does not have to be a licensed local recording agent.

21. What is the complaint process in a bail bond board county?

Section 1704.251 of the TEXAS OCCUPATIONS CODE relates to board investigations on its own motion or following a sworn complaint. A board, on its own motion, may investigate an action of or a record maintained by a license holder which pertains to a complaint that the license holder has violated some provision of the Bail Bond Board Act or a valid local rule adopted by the bail bond board. Additionally, a board must investigate an action of, or a record maintained by, a license holder if the board receives a sworn complaint providing reasonable cause to believe that a violation has occurred or a court requests an investigation.

22. What is the procedure relating to an investigation and hearing on a complaint?

There is no specified procedure for how an investigation is to be conducted by the board or how a hearing is to be handled procedurally by a bail bond board. Different counties handle the matter in different ways. Some counties have the county attorney or a representative of the district attorney present the complaint and call witnesses and present evidence. Other counties have subcommittees that investigate the complaint and present their findings and evidence to the bail bond board. All attempts should be made to provide the licensee with due process and equal opportunity to present evidence. On occasion, competing bondsmen will file sworn complaints against each other. If complaints are flowing back and forth between competing bondsmen, it is important to note that the complaints must be sworn. If, after the initial investigation into the complaint, the hearing on the complaint involves revocation or suspension of the license as a possible action on the complaint, the procedures provided in Section 1704.254 must be complied with before the hearing. Those procedures include notification to the licensee by certified mail, not later than the 11th day before the hearing, each alleged violation must be stated in the notice, and a copy of any written complaint on which the hearing will be based must be included in the certified mail notice. The hearing is strictly limited to each alleged violation contained in the notice. During the hearing, the licensee is entitled to be heard and may present and cross-examine witnesses. The hearing must be recorded. A licensee can obtain a transcript of the hearing upon payment of the reasonable cost of transcription. The procedure for the investigation and the procedures for the hearing are a proper ground for the adoption of local rules. However, whenever local rules are adopted, the board should make sure that they do not conflict with the statute or increase the administrative or enforcement powers and duties of the board.

23. When an e-bond is used, can a surety submit an unsworn declaration instead of an affidavit?

In the opinion of Flowers Davis law firm, an unsworn declaration that meets the requirements of Section 132.001 of the Texas Civil Practice and Remedies Code, may be used in lieu of an affidavit. However, this does not apply to any affidavit that is required to be filed with the county clerk.