

AN ACT

relating to the eviction from real property of certain persons not entitled to enter, occupy, or remain in possession of the premises.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF TEXAS:

SECTION 1. Section 24.004, Property Code, is amended by amending Subsection (a) and adding Subsection (c) to read as follows:

(a) Except as provided by Subsection (b), a justice court in the precinct in which the real property is located has jurisdiction in an eviction suit ~~[suits]~~. Eviction suits include forcible entry and detainer and forcible detainer suits. A justice court has jurisdiction to issue a writ of possession under this chapter ~~[Sections 24.0054(a), (a-2), and (a-3)]~~.

(c) A justice court in which a petition is filed under Section 24.00505 must adjudicate the right to actual possession of the premises. The justice court may not adjudicate title to the premises. Counterclaims and the joinder of suits against third parties are not permitted in eviction suits. This subsection does not preclude a claim that may not be asserted under this subsection from being brought in a separate suit in a court of proper jurisdiction.

SECTION 2. Chapter 24, Property Code, is amended by adding Sections 24.0041, 24.0042, and 24.0043 to read as follows:

Sec. 24.0041. VENUE. An eviction suit must be brought in

1 the justice precinct in which the real property is located.

2 Sec. 24.0042. COMPUTATION OF TIME. A period of time
3 prescribed by this chapter:

4 (1) does not include the day of the event that begins
5 the period;

6 (2) includes Saturdays, Sundays, and state or federal
7 holidays;

8 (3) includes the last day of the period; and

9 (4) if the last day of the period is a Saturday,
10 Sunday, or state or federal holiday, is extended so that the last
11 day of the period is the next day that is not a Saturday, Sunday, or
12 state or federal holiday.

13 Sec. 24.0043. AUTHORITY TO MODIFY OR SUSPEND EVICTION
14 PROCEDURES. (a) Except as provided by Subsection (b) but
15 notwithstanding any other law, including Section 22.004,
16 Government Code, only the legislature may modify or suspend
17 procedures prescribed by this chapter.

18 (b) This section does not affect the authority of the
19 supreme court to modify or suspend certain provisions for the
20 conduct of any court proceedings affected by a disaster under
21 Section 22.0035(b), Government Code, but such a modification or
22 suspension may be applied to an eviction suit only if:

23 (1) the modification or suspension is applicable to
24 all courts similarly affected by the disaster without regard to the
25 subject matter of an action; and

26 (2) any request for the modification or suspension is
27 made in writing and available to the public.

SECTION 3. The heading to Section 24.005, Property Code, is amended to read as follows:

Sec. 24.005. NOTICE REQUIRED BEFORE [~~TO VACATE PRIOR TO~~] FILING CERTAIN EVICTION SUITS [~~SUIT~~].

SECTION 4. Section 24.005, Property Code, is amended by amending Subsections (a) and (e) and adding Subsections (c-1), (f-3), and (f-4) to read as follows:

(a) If the occupant is a tenant under a written lease or oral rental agreement, the landlord must give a tenant who defaults or holds over beyond the end of the rental term or renewal period at least three days' written notice to vacate the premises before the landlord files a forcible detainer suit, unless the parties have contracted for a shorter or longer notice period in a written lease or agreement. In a forcible detainer suit against a tenant whose right of possession is terminated based solely on nonpayment of rent and who was not late or delinquent in paying rent to the landlord before the month in which the notice is given, written notice under this section shall be given in the form of a notice to pay rent or vacate. In a forcible detainer suit against a tenant whose right of possession is terminated based on nonpayment of rent and who was late or delinquent in paying rent to the landlord before the month in which the notice is given, written notice under this section may be given in the form of either a notice to pay rent or vacate or a notice to vacate. A landlord who files a forcible detainer suit on grounds that the tenant is holding over beyond the end of the rental term or renewal period must also comply with the tenancy termination requirements of Section 91.001.

1 (c-1) If a federal law or rule requires a landlord to give
2 notice to a tenant before the landlord requires the tenant to vacate
3 the premises:

4 (1) a landlord that satisfies the notice requirements
5 of this section is not required to delay the filing of an eviction
6 suit based on the federal requirement;

7 (2) the federal requirement is not a basis for a court
8 to delay or abate the conduct of the eviction suit; and

9 (3) a writ of possession may not be served on the
10 tenant until the period between the delivery of the notice under
11 this section and the service of the writ equals or exceeds the
12 period prescribed by the federal requirement.

13 (e) If the lease or applicable state or federal law or rule
14 requires a [the] landlord to give a tenant an opportunity to respond
15 to a notice of proposed eviction before filing an eviction suit:

16 (1) the notice period in a notice to pay rent or vacate
17 or [a] notice to vacate under Subsection (a) may, at the landlord's
18 discretion, run concurrently with [not be given until] the period
19 provided for the tenant to respond to the notice of proposed
20 eviction; and

21 (2) the notice to pay rent or vacate or notice to
22 vacate may include the required opportunity to respond to the
23 notice of proposed eviction [notice has expired].

24 (f-3) A notice required by this section must be delivered
25 using at least one of the following methods:

26 (1) mail, including first class mail, registered mail,
27 certified mail, or a delivery service;

1 (2) delivery to the inside of the premises, in a
2 conspicuous place;

3 (3) hand delivery to any tenant of the premises who is
4 16 years of age or older; or

5 (4) if the parties have agreed in writing, electronic
6 communication, including e-mail or other electronic means.

7 (f-4) Subsection (f-3) does not apply if the tenant actually
8 receives the notice.

9 SECTION 5. Chapter 24, Property Code, is amended by adding
10 Sections 24.00505 and 24.00506 to read as follows:

11 Sec. 24.00505. PETITION. To initiate an eviction suit, a
12 sworn petition must be filed with the court. The petition must
13 include the contents required by the Texas Rules of Civil
14 Procedure.

15 Sec. 24.00506. RULES OF COURT. (a) A court may adopt local
16 rules, forms, or standing orders for eviction suits in accordance
17 with the Texas Rules of Civil Procedure.

18 (b) A court may not adopt local rules, forms, or standing
19 orders for eviction suits that:

20 (1) require content in or with the petition other than
21 the content required by the Texas Rules of Civil Procedure;

22 (2) require any mediation, pretrial conference, or
23 other proceeding before trial; or

24 (3) authorize the dismissal of an eviction suit on the
25 basis that the petition is improper if the petition:

26 (A) meets the requirements of the Texas Rules of
27 Civil Procedure; or

SUIT TO EVICT

THIS SUIT TO EVICT INVOLVES IMMEDIATE DEADLINES. A TENANT WHO IS SERVING ON ACTIVE MILITARY DUTY MAY HAVE SPECIAL RIGHTS OR RELIEF RELATED TO THIS SUIT UNDER FEDERAL LAW, INCLUDING THE SERVICEMEMBERS CIVIL RELIEF ACT (50 U.S.C. APP. SECTION 501 ET SEQ.), OR STATE LAW, INCLUDING SECTION 92.017, TEXAS PROPERTY CODE. CALL THE STATE BAR OF TEXAS TOLL-FREE AT 1-877-9TEXBAR IF YOU NEED HELP LOCATING AN ATTORNEY. IF YOU CANNOT AFFORD TO HIRE AN ATTORNEY, YOU MAY BE ELIGIBLE FOR FREE OR LOW-COST LEGAL ASSISTANCE.

(e) If the landlord files a motion for summary disposition under Section 24.005106 with the petition, the citation must include the following notice to the tenant on the first page of the citation in English and Spanish and in conspicuous bold print:

THE PETITION INCLUDES A MOTION FOR SUMMARY DISPOSITION. IF THE MOTION SHOWS THERE ARE NO GENUINELY DISPUTED FACTS THAT WOULD PREVENT A JUDGMENT IN FAVOR OF THE LANDLORD, THE COURT MAY ENTER JUDGMENT IN FAVOR OF THE LANDLORD WITHOUT A TRIAL UNLESS:

(1) NOT LATER THAN THE FOURTH DAY AFTER YOU ARE SERVED WITH THE LANDLORD'S SWORN PETITION, YOU FILE A RESPONSE SETTING OUT SUPPORTING FACTS AND ANY APPLICABLE DOCUMENTS ON WHICH YOUR RESPONSE RELIES; AND

(2) THE JUSTICE COURT DETERMINES THAT SERVICE ON YOU WAS PROPER AND, BASED ON THE LANDLORD'S SWORN PETITION AND YOUR RESPONSE, THERE ARE GENUINELY DISPUTED FACTS THAT WOULD PREVENT A JUDGMENT IN FAVOR OF THE LANDLORD.

(f) A sheriff or constable, including a deputy sheriff or

deputy constable, shall make a diligent effort to serve the citation and petition not later than the fifth business day after the date the petition is filed. If the citation and petition are not served on or before the fifth business day after the date the petition is filed, the landlord may, but is not obligated to, provide for the citation and petition to be served by any other law enforcement officer, including an off-duty officer with appropriate identification, that has received appropriate training in the service of process, eviction procedures, and the execution of writs, as determined by the Texas Commission on Law Enforcement.

(g) The court:

(1) shall, subject to this subsection, hold the trial of an eviction suit on a date that is not earlier than the 10th day or later than the 21st day after the date the petition is filed;

(2) may not hold the trial on a date that is earlier than the fourth day after the date the tenant is served with the petition; and

(3) may not postpone the date of a trial for more than seven days unless the parties agree to the postponement in writing.

SECTION 7. Chapter 24, Property Code, is amended by adding Sections 24.005105, 24.005106, and 24.005107 to read as follows:

Sec. 24.005105. ELECTRONIC PROCEEDINGS. If the parties agree, a justice court may allow the parties in an eviction suit to appear at a court proceeding in the suit by videoconference, teleconference, or other available electronic means.

Sec. 24.005106. SUMMARY DISPOSITION AND TRIAL. (a) A landlord that files a sworn petition alleging a forcible entry and

1 detainer under Section 24.00505 may include with the petition a
2 sworn motion for summary disposition without trial. The motion
3 must set out all supporting facts, and documents on which the motion
4 relies must be attached. If the motion shows that there are no
5 genuinely disputed facts that would prevent a judgment in favor of
6 the landlord, the court may enter judgment in favor of the landlord
7 without a trial unless:

8 (1) not later than the fourth day after the date the
9 tenant is served with the landlord's sworn petition, the tenant
10 files a response setting out supporting facts, and providing any
11 applicable documents, on which the response relies; and

12 (2) the justice court determines that service on the
13 tenant was proper and, based on the landlord's sworn petition and
14 the tenant's response, if any, there are genuinely disputed facts
15 that would prevent a judgment in favor of the landlord.

16 (b) The justice court:

17 (1) may enter judgment for the landlord regardless of
18 the tenant's response if the response does not show there is a
19 genuinely disputed fact that would prevent judgment in favor of the
20 landlord; and

21 (2) may consider a response filed by the tenant later
22 than the fourth day after the date the tenant was served with the
23 landlord's sworn petition and motion if the response shows there is
24 a genuinely disputed fact that would prevent judgment in favor of
25 the landlord and the tenant has filed the response before judgment
26 has been entered.

27 (c) If the justice court determines that there are genuinely

1 disputed facts that would prevent a judgment in favor of the
2 landlord, the justice court shall set a trial date that is not
3 earlier than the 10th day and not later than the 21st day after the
4 date the petition is filed by the landlord. The justice court may
5 immediately set the case for trial upon the tenant's request for a
6 trial in response to a motion for summary disposition.

7 (d) A judgment on summary disposition under this section has
8 the same effect as any other judgment in an eviction suit.

9 Sec. 24.005107. APPEAL TO COUNTY COURT. (a) A party may
10 appeal the judgment of a justice court in an eviction suit by filing
11 a bond, cash deposit, or statement of inability to afford payment of
12 court costs with the justice court not later than the fifth day
13 after the date the judgment is signed. A tenant who files an appeal
14 must affirm, under penalty of perjury, the tenant's good faith
15 belief that the tenant has a meritorious defense and that the appeal
16 is not for the purpose of delay. An appeal is perfected when a bond,
17 cash deposit, or statement of inability to afford payment of court
18 costs is timely filed with the justice court in accordance with this
19 section.

20 (b) The justice court shall forward the transcript and
21 original papers in an appeal of an eviction case to the county
22 court, by electronic means or otherwise, not earlier than 4 p.m. on
23 the sixth day or later than 4 p.m. on the 10th day after the date the
24 tenant files the appeal, except that, if the court confirms that the
25 tenant has timely paid the initial rent payment into the justice
26 court registry in accordance with Section 24.0053, the court may
27 forward the transcript and original papers immediately.

1 (c) The county court shall hold a trial not later than the
2 21st day after the date the transcript and original papers are
3 delivered to the county court.

4 SECTION 8. Section 24.00511(a), Property Code, is amended
5 to read as follows:

6 (a) In a residential eviction suit [~~for nonpayment of rent~~],
7 the justice court shall state in the court's judgment the amount of
8 the appeal bond, taking into consideration the money required to be
9 paid into the court registry under Section 24.0053.

10 SECTION 9. Section 24.00512(f), Property Code, is amended
11 to read as follows:

12 (f) If an appeal of a decision disapproving the appeal bond
13 is filed, the justice court shall transmit to the county court the
14 contest to the appeal bond and all relevant documents. The county
15 court shall docket the appeal, schedule a hearing to be held not
16 later than the fifth day after the date the appeal is docketed,
17 notify the parties and the surety of the hearing time and date, and
18 hear the contest de novo. The failure of the county court to hold a
19 timely hearing is not grounds for approval or denial of the appeal.
20 A writ of possession may not be issued before the county court
21 issues a final decision on the appeal bond, except as provided by
22 Section 24.0054.

23 SECTION 10. Section 24.0052, Property Code, is amended to
24 read as follows:

25 Sec. 24.0052. TENANT APPEAL ON STATEMENT OF INABILITY TO
26 AFFORD PAYMENT OF COURT COSTS [~~PAUPER'S AFFIDAVIT~~]. (a) If a
27 tenant in a residential eviction suit is unable to pay the costs of

1 appeal or file an appeal bond as required by the Texas Rules of
2 Civil Procedure, the tenant may appeal the judgment of the justice
3 court by filing with the justice court, not later than the fifth day
4 after the date the judgment is signed, a statement of inability to
5 afford payment of court costs [~~pauper's affidavit~~] sworn before the
6 clerk of the justice court or a notary public that states that the
7 tenant is unable to pay the costs of appeal or file an appeal bond.
8 The statement [~~affidavit~~] must contain the following information:

- 9 (1) the tenant's identity;
- 10 (2) the nature and amount of the tenant's employment
11 income;
- 12 (3) the income of the tenant's spouse, if applicable
13 and available to the tenant;
- 14 (4) the nature and amount of any governmental
15 entitlement income of the tenant;
- 16 (5) all other income of the tenant;
- 17 (6) the amount of available cash and funds available
18 in savings or checking accounts of the tenant;
- 19 (7) real and personal property owned by the tenant,
20 other than household furnishings, clothes, tools of a trade, or
21 personal effects;
- 22 (8) the tenant's debts and monthly expenses; and
- 23 (9) the number and age of the tenant's dependents and
24 where those dependents reside.

25 (b) The justice court shall make available a [~~an affidavit~~]
26 form that a person may use to comply with the requirements of
27 Subsection (a).

1 (c) The justice court shall promptly notify the landlord if
2 a statement described by Subsection (a) [~~pauper's affidavit~~] is
3 filed by the tenant.

4 (d) A landlord may contest a statement filed under this
5 section [~~pauper's affidavit~~] on or before the fifth day after the
6 date the statement [~~affidavit~~] is filed. If the landlord contests
7 the statement [~~affidavit~~], the justice court shall notify the
8 parties and hold a hearing to determine whether the tenant is unable
9 to pay the costs of appeal or file an appeal bond. The hearing shall
10 be held not later than the fifth day after the date the landlord
11 notifies the court clerk of the landlord's contest. At the hearing,
12 the tenant has the burden to prove by competent evidence, including
13 documents or credible testimony of the tenant or others, that the
14 tenant is unable to pay the costs of appeal or file an appeal bond.

15 (e) If the justice court approves a statement filed by [~~the~~
16 ~~pauper's affidavit of~~] a tenant under this section, the tenant is
17 not required to pay the county court filing fee or file an
18 additional statement [~~affidavit~~] in the county court under
19 Subsection (a).

20 SECTION 11. Section [24.0053](#), Property Code, is amended by
21 amending Subsections (a), (a-1), (a-2), (a-3), (b), (c), (d), and
22 (e) and adding Subsection (a-5) to read as follows:

23 (a) If the justice court enters judgment for the landlord in
24 a residential eviction case [~~based on nonpayment of rent~~], the
25 court shall determine the amount of rent to be paid each rental pay
26 period during the pendency of any appeal and shall note that amount
27 in the judgment. If a portion of the rent is payable by a government

1 agency, the court shall determine and note in the judgment the
2 portion of the rent to be paid by the government agency and the
3 portion to be paid by the tenant. The court's determination shall
4 be in accordance with the terms of the rental agreement and
5 applicable laws and regulations. If there is no rental agreement,
6 the court shall determine:

7 (1) the rental pay period; and

8 (2) the amount of rent to be paid by the tenant in each
9 rental pay period, which must be the greater of:

10 (A) \$250; or

11 (B) the fair market rent, if determined by the
12 court. ~~[This subsection does not require or prohibit payment of~~
13 ~~rent into the court registry or directly to the landlord during the~~
14 ~~pendency of an appeal of an eviction case based on grounds other~~
15 ~~than nonpayment of rent.]~~

16 (a-1) If ~~[In an eviction suit for nonpayment of rent, if]~~ a
17 tenant files an appeal of a justice court's judgment in an eviction
18 suit ~~[a pauper's affidavit in the period prescribed by Section~~
19 ~~24.0052 or an appeal bond pursuant to the Texas Rules of Civil~~
20 ~~Procedure]~~, the justice court shall provide to the tenant a written
21 notice at the time the ~~[pauper's affidavit or]~~ appeal ~~[bond]~~ is
22 filed that contains the following information in bold or
23 conspicuous type:

24 (1) the amount of ~~[the initial deposit of]~~ rent stated
25 in the judgment that the tenant must pay into the justice court or
26 county court registry, as applicable, during the pendency of the
27 appeal;

1 (2) whether the rent [~~initial deposit~~] must be paid in
2 cash, cashier's check, or money order, and to whom the cashier's
3 check or money order, if applicable, must be made payable;

4 (3) the calendar date by which the rent [~~initial~~
5 ~~deposit~~] must be paid into the justice court or county court
6 registry, as applicable;

7 (4) for a court that closes before 5 p.m. on the date
8 specified by Subdivision (3), the time the court closes; and

9 (5) a statement that failure to pay the required
10 amount into the justice court or county court registry, as
11 applicable, by the date prescribed by Subdivision (3) may result in
12 the justice court or county court issuing a writ of possession
13 without a hearing.

14 (a-2) The tenant shall:

15 (1) not later than the fifth day after the date the
16 tenant files the appeal, pay rent for one rental pay period into the
17 justice court registry; and

18 (2) on or before the beginning of each rental pay
19 period during the pendency of the appeal, pay rent for one rental
20 pay period into the justice court or county court registry, as
21 applicable, according to the court in which the case is pending at
22 the time of payment [~~The date by which an initial deposit must be~~
23 ~~paid into the justice court registry under Subsection (a-1)(3) must~~
24 ~~be within five days of the date the tenant files the pauper's~~
25 ~~affidavit as required by the Texas Rules of Civil Procedure]~~.

26 (a-3) The justice court or county court, as applicable,
27 shall disburse rent paid into the justice court or county court

1 registry to the landlord on request at any time during or after the
 2 pendency of the appeal [~~If a tenant files an appeal bond to appeal~~
 3 ~~an eviction for nonpayment of rent, the tenant must, not later than~~
 4 ~~the fifth day after the date the tenant filed the appeal bond, pay~~
 5 ~~into the justice court registry the amount of rent to be paid in one~~
 6 ~~rental pay period as determined by the court under Subsection (a).~~
 7 ~~If the tenant fails to timely pay that amount into the justice court~~
 8 ~~registry and the transcript has not yet been transmitted to the~~
 9 ~~county court, the plaintiff may request a writ of possession. On~~
 10 ~~request and payment of the applicable fee, the justice court shall~~
 11 ~~issue the writ of possession immediately and without a hearing.~~
 12 ~~Regardless of whether a writ of possession is issued, the justice~~
 13 ~~court shall transmit the transcript and appeal documents to the~~
 14 ~~county court for trial de novo on issues relating to possession,~~
 15 ~~rent, or attorney's fees].~~

16 (a-5) A tenant's payment of rent into a court registry under
 17 this section relieves the tenant of the obligation to pay rent to
 18 the landlord only for the rental pay period for which the payment is
 19 made.

20 (b) [~~If an eviction case is based on nonpayment of rent and~~
 21 ~~the tenant appeals by filing a pauper's affidavit, the tenant shall~~
 22 ~~pay the rent, as it becomes due, into the justice court or the~~
 23 ~~county court registry, as applicable, during the pendency of the~~
 24 ~~appeal, in accordance with the Texas Rules of Civil Procedure and~~
 25 ~~Subsection (a).~~] If a government agency is responsible for all or a
 26 portion of the rent under an agreement with the landlord, the tenant
 27 shall pay only that portion of the rent determined by the justice

1 court under Subsection (a) to be paid by the tenant during appeal,
2 subject to either party's right to contest that determination under
3 Subsection (c).

4 (c) If ~~[an eviction case is based on nonpayment of rent and]~~
5 the tenant's rent during the rental agreement term has been paid
6 wholly or partly by a government agency, either party may contest
7 the portion of the rent that the justice court determines must be
8 paid into the county court registry by the tenant under this
9 section. The contest must be filed on or before the fifth day after
10 the date the justice signs the judgment. If a contest is filed, not
11 later than the fifth day after the date the contest is filed the
12 justice court shall notify the parties and hold a hearing to
13 determine the amount owed by the tenant in accordance with the terms
14 of the rental agreement and applicable laws and regulations. After
15 hearing the evidence, the justice court shall determine the portion
16 of the rent that must be paid by the tenant under this section.

17 (d) ~~[If the tenant objects to the justice court's ruling~~
18 ~~under Subsection (c) on the portion of the rent to be paid by the~~
19 ~~tenant during appeal, the tenant shall be required to pay only the~~
20 ~~portion claimed by the tenant to be owed by the tenant until the~~
21 ~~issue is tried de novo along with the case on the merits in county~~
22 ~~court.]~~ During the pendency of the appeal, either party may file a
23 motion with the county court to reconsider the amount of the rent
24 that must be paid by the tenant into the registry of the court.

25 (e) If either party files a contest under Subsection (c) and
26 the tenant files a statement of inability to afford payment of court
27 costs ~~[pauper's affidavit]~~ that is contested by the landlord under

1 Section 24.0052(d), the justice court shall hold the hearing on
2 both contests at the same time.

3 SECTION 12. Sections 24.0054(a), (a-1), (a-2), and (f),
4 Property Code, are amended to read as follows:

5 (a) During an appeal of an eviction case ~~[for nonpayment of~~
6 ~~rent]~~, the justice court or county court, as applicable, on request
7 shall immediately issue a writ of possession, without hearing, if~~+~~

8 ~~[(1)]~~ a tenant fails to pay ~~[the initial]~~ rent
9 ~~[deposit]~~ into the appropriate ~~[justice]~~ court registry ~~[within~~
10 ~~five days of the date the tenant filed a pauper's affidavit]~~ as
11 required by ~~[Rule 749b(1), Texas Rules of Civil Procedure, and]~~
12 Section 24.0053 and~~+~~

13 ~~[(2)]~~ the justice court has provided the written
14 notice required by Section 24.0053(a-1) ~~+, and~~

15 ~~[(3) the justice court has not yet forwarded the~~
16 ~~transcript and original papers to the county court as provided by~~
17 ~~Subsection (a-2)].~~

18 (a-1) The sheriff, the ~~[or]~~ constable, or another law
19 enforcement officer shall execute a writ of possession under
20 Subsection (a) in accordance with Sections 24.0061(d) through (h).
21 The landlord shall bear the costs of issuing and executing the writ
22 of possession.

23 (a-2) If the justice court issues a writ of possession under
24 this section, the ~~[The justice court shall forward the transcript~~
25 ~~and original papers in an appeal of an eviction case to the county~~
26 ~~court but may not forward the transcript and original papers before~~
27 ~~the sixth day after the date the tenant files a pauper's affidavit,~~

~~except that, if the court confirms that the tenant has timely paid the initial deposit of rent into the justice court registry in accordance with Section 24.0053, the court may forward the transcript and original papers immediately. If the tenant has not timely paid the initial deposit into the justice court registry, the justice court on request shall issue a writ of possession notwithstanding the fact that the tenant has perfected an appeal by filing a pauper's affidavit that has been approved by the court.~~
 The] justice court shall forward the transcript and original papers in the eviction case to the county court for trial de novo to resolve any remaining issues in the case, such as rent or attorney's fees, notwithstanding the fact that the [a] writ [~~of possession under this section~~] has [~~already~~] been issued or executed.

(f) During the appeal of an eviction case, if a government agency is responsible for payment of a portion of the rent and does not pay that portion to the landlord or into the justice court or county court registry, the landlord may file a motion with the county court requesting that the tenant be required to pay into the county court registry, as a condition of remaining in possession, the full amount of each rental period's rent, as it becomes due under the rental agreement. After notice and hearing, the court shall grant the motion if the landlord proves by credible evidence that:

- (1) a portion of the rent is owed by a government agency;
- (2) the portion of the rent owed by the government agency is unpaid;

1 (3) the landlord did not cause wholly or partly the
2 agency to cease making the payments; and

3 (4) the landlord did not cause wholly or partly the
4 agency to pay the wrong amount[~~; and~~

5 ~~[(5) the landlord is not able to take reasonable~~
6 ~~action that will cause the agency to resume making the payments of~~
7 ~~its portion of the total rent due under the rental agreement].~~

8 SECTION 13. Section 24.0061, Property Code, is amended by
9 amending Subsections (a), (b), (c), (h), and (i) and adding
10 Subsection (b-1) to read as follows:

11 (a) A landlord who prevails in an eviction suit is entitled
12 to a judgment for possession of the premises and a writ of
13 possession. In this chapter, "premises" means:

14 (1) a [the] unit that is occupied or rented; and

15 (2) [and] any outside area or facility;

16 (A) that a [the] tenant is entitled to use under a
17 written lease or oral rental agreement;

18 (B) [~~or~~] that is held out for the use of tenants
19 generally; and

20 (C) that is occupied by or in the possession of
21 the person against whom the eviction suit is filed.

22 (b) A writ of possession may not be issued before the sixth
23 day after the date on which the judgment for possession is rendered
24 unless a possession bond has been filed and approved under the Texas
25 Rules of Civil Procedure [~~and judgment for possession is thereafter~~
26 ~~granted by default~~].

27 (b-1) The issuance of a writ of possession is a ministerial

act not subject to review or delay. A sheriff or constable, including a deputy sheriff or deputy constable, shall serve the writ of possession not later than the fifth business day after the date the writ is issued. If the writ of possession is not served on or before the fifth business day after the date the writ is issued, the landlord may, but is not obligated to, have the writ served by any other law enforcement officer, including an off-duty officer with appropriate identification, who has received training as described by Section 24.0051(f).

(c) The court shall notify a tenant in writing of a default judgment for possession or a judgment for possession under Section 24.005106 by sending a copy of the judgment to the premises by first class mail not later than 48 hours after the entry of the judgment.

(h) An officer ~~[A sheriff or constable]~~ may use reasonable force in executing a writ under this section.

(i) A landlord is not liable for damages to the tenant resulting from the enforcement of a judgment in favor of the landlord under this chapter, including the execution of a writ of possession by an officer under this section.

SECTION 14. Section 24.011, Property Code, is amended to read as follows:

Sec. 24.011. NONLAWYER REPRESENTATION. (a) In an eviction suit ~~[suits]~~ in justice court ~~[for nonpayment of rent or holding over beyond a rental term]~~, the parties may represent themselves or be represented by their authorized agents, who need not be attorneys. ~~[In any eviction suit in justice court, an authorized agent requesting or obtaining a default judgment need not be an~~

1 ~~attorney.]~~

2 (b) In an appeal of an eviction suit for nonpayment of rent
3 in a county or district court, an owner of a multifamily residential
4 property may be represented by the owner's authorized agent, who
5 need not be an attorney~~[, or, if the owner is a corporation or other~~
6 ~~entity, by an employee, owner, officer, or partner of the entity,~~
7 ~~who need not be an attorney]~~.

8 SECTION 15. The following provisions of the Property Code
9 are repealed:

- 10 (1) Sections 24.005(f), (f-1), (f-2), (g), (h), and
11 (i);
12 (2) Section 24.0053(a-4); and
13 (3) Sections 24.0054(a-3), (a-4), (b), (c), (d), and
14 (e).

15 SECTION 16. The supreme court shall adopt rules as
16 necessary to clarify eviction procedures consistent with Chapter
17 24, Property Code, as amended by this Act.

18 SECTION 17. The changes in law made by this Act apply only
19 to an eviction suit in which the petition is filed on or after
20 January 1, 2026. An eviction suit in which the petition is filed
21 before January 1, 2026, is governed by the law as it existed
22 immediately before January 1, 2026, and that law is continued in
23 effect for that purpose.

24 SECTION 18. (a) Except as provided by Subsection (b) of
25 this section, this Act takes effect January 1, 2026.

26 (b) Section 16 of this Act takes effect September 1, 2025.

President of the Senate

Speaker of the House

I hereby certify that S.B. No. 38 passed the Senate on April 10, 2025, by the following vote: Yeas 21, Nays 8, one present not voting; and that the Senate concurred in House amendments on May 28, 2025, by the following vote: Yeas 23, Nays 8.

Secretary of the Senate

I hereby certify that S.B. No. 38 passed the House, with amendments, on May 24, 2025, by the following vote: Yeas 85, Nays 44, three present not voting.

Chief Clerk of the House

Approved:

Date

Governor