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Eighty-Seventh Legislature:Bills of Special Interest to Pool Members

A legislative session that got its start during two major disasters – the Coronavirus Pandemic and Winter Storm Uri – ended with the passage of more than 300 bills that affect local governments. The Texas Municipal League prepared its "legislative session wrap-up" edition of the <u>Legislative Update</u> newsletter (the June 11, 2021 edition, Number 22), which contains summaries of all city-related bills – 90 pages worth.

Pool staff has prepared the following abbreviated update for Pool Members as a complement to TML's work. Some of the bills will become effective as soon as they are signed by the governor, others will become effective on September 1, and a few have special effective dates. The link for each bill leads to its "landing page" on the *Texas Legislature Online* website. To read the final version, click on the "text" tab and click on the "enrolled" version on that screen.

Public Safety

<u>H.B. 54 (Talarico/Whitmire)</u> – **Police Reality TV Shows**: prohibits a law enforcement agency from authorizing a person to film a peace officer acting in the line of duty for the purpose of producing a reality television program.

<u>H.B. 558 (White/Hall)</u> – **Blood and Breath Specimens**: this bill makes numerous changes to the procedures and mandates related to taking a specimen of a person's blood if the person is suspected of certain intoxication offenses.

<u>H.B. 929 (Sherman/West)</u> – **Body Worn Cameras**: requires body cameras financed by a grant from the governor's office require the peace officer actively participating in an investigation to keep the camera activated for the entirety of the officer's active participation in the investigation.

H.B. 1069 (Harris/Birdwell) – **First Responders Carrying Handguns**: allows firefighters and EMTs in cities of a population of 30,000 or less to carry handguns if the firefighter or EMT has a license to carry a handgun, has completed the training under Chapter 411 of the Government Code, and has the required liability policy of \$1 million. The bill goes on to state that the city is not

liable for any civil action arising from the discharge of the handgun, and such discharge is outside the course and scope of the firefighter's or EMT's duties.

<u>H.B. 1493 (Herrero/Hinojosa)</u> – Falsely Implying Governmental Affiliation: allows a governmental entity to enjoin another person's use of the entity's name that falsely implies governmental affiliation with the governmental unit.

H.B. 1900 (Goldman/Huffman) – Law Enforcement Funding: prohibits municipalities with a population of more than 250,000 to reduce the budget appropriation to the municipalities' police department. A defunding municipality is one that adopts a budget that reduces the appropriation to the municipality's police department according to a formula in the statute and for which the criminal justice division of the office of the governor determines to be a reduction. A defunding determination continues until the division issues a determination that the municipality has reversed the reduction and adjusted for inflation. A defunding municipality may not annex an area beginning on the date the division has made a determination and for ten years after the division has found the municipality has reversed the reduction. The municipality must also hold a separate election in each area annexed by the municipality in the preceding 30 years on the question of deannexing the area. The bill also provides for limitations on property tax rates, reduction of sales taxes and limitation on raising rates of municipally owned utilities.

<u>H.B. 1927 (Schaefer/Schwertner)</u> – Unlicensed Handgun Carry: authorizes Texans over 21 years of age to carry a handgun in a concealed manner or openly in a holster without the requirement to obtain a handgun license. A licensed or unlicensed carrier is prohibited from entering certain places while carrying a handgun, such as polling places, court rooms, and meetings of a governmental entity open to the public. (Note: Two episodes of the Pool's <u>Stronger, Together Podcast Series</u>, along with detailed written materials, explain this bill.)

<u>H.B. 1938 (Jetton/Kolkhorst)</u> – **Body Worn Camera Grants:** establishes a grant program for law enforcement agencies to defray the cost of data storage for recordings created with body-worn cameras.

H.B. 2622 (Holland/Hall) – Firearm Regulation: prohibits political subdivisions, law enforcement officers, and other persons employed by political subdivisions to contract with or provide assistance to a federal agency or official with respect to the enforcement of a federal statute or regulation that imposes a prohibition, restriction, or other regulation that does not exist under the law of this state and relates to: (1) a registry requirement for a firearm or ammunition; (2) a requirement that an owner of a firearm or ammunition possess a license; (3) a requirement that a background check by conducted for the private sale or transfer of a firearm or ammunition; (4) a program for confiscating a firearm or ammunition from a person who is not prohibited by the laws of Texas from possessing such; or (5) a program that requires an owner of a firearm or ammunition to sell such. A political subdivision violating these provisions may not receive state funds.

<u>S.B. 64 (Nelson/White)</u> – **Peer Support**: provides, among other things, that: (1) the Texas Commission on Law Enforcement (TCOLE) shall develop a peer support network for law enforcement officers that includes: (a) peer-to-peer support; (b) training for peer service coordinators and peers that includes suicide prevention training; (c) technical assistance for

program development, peer service coordinators, licensed mental health professionals, and peers; and (d) identification, retention, and screening of licensed mental health professionals; (2) as part of the peer support network for law enforcement officers, TCOLE shall ensure law enforcement officers have support in both urban and rural jurisdictions; (3) information relating to a law enforcement officer's participation in peer-to-peer support and other peer-to-peer services under the network is confidential and may not be disclosed under the Public Information Act, by: (a) TCOLE; (b) a law enforcement agency that employs a law enforcement officer participant; or (c) any other state agency or political subdivision that employs a law enforcement officer participant; and (4) a law enforcement officer's participation in peer-to-peer support and other peer-to-peer services under the network may not: (a) serve as the basis for a revocation, suspension, or denial of a license issued by TCOLE; or (b) be considered in any proceeding related to the officer's TCOLE licensure.

S.B. 69 (Miles/White) – Use of Force: requires a peace officer to intervene to stop or prevent another peace officer from using unreasonable force. It also provides that a peace officer may not use a choke hold, carotid artery hold, or similar neck restraint in searching or arresting a person unless the restraint is necessary to prevent serious bodily injury to or the death of the officer or another person.

<u>S.B. 2212 (West/S. Thompson)</u> – **Duty to Render and Request Aid**: provides that a peace officer: (1) who encounters an injured person while discharging the officer's official duties shall immediately and as necessary: (a) request emergency medical services personnel to provide the person with emergency medical services; and (b) while waiting for emergency medical services personnel to arrive, provide first aid or treatment to the person to the extent of the officer's skill and training; and (2) is not required to request emergency medical services or provide first aid or treatment under (1), above, if: (a) making the request or providing the treatment would expose the officer or another person to a risk of bodily injury; or (b) the officer is injured and physically unable to make the request or provide the treatment.

Emergency Management

<u>H.B. 525 (Shaheen/Hall)</u> – **Religious Organizations**: provides that a religious organization is an essential business at all times, including during a declared state of disaster, and a governmental entity may not prohibit a religious organization from engaging in religious or other related activities.

<u>H.B. 1239 (Sanford/Paxton)</u> – **Religious Freedom**: provides that in a state of disaster declared by the governor, a government agency or public official may not issue an order that closes or has the effect of closing places of worship in the state.

H.B. 1500 (Hefner/Creighton) – **Firearm Regulation**: provides that the Texas Disaster Act of 1975 does not authorize any person to prohibit or restrict the business or operations of a firearms or ammunition manufacturer, distributor, wholesaler, supplier, or retailer or a sport shooting range, in connection with a disaster.

S.B. 6 (Hancock/Leach) – Pandemic Liability: this bill, among other things, provides that:

- 1. except in a case of reckless conduct or intentional, willful, or wanton misconduct, and subject to other limited exceptions, a physician, health care provider, or first responder is not liable for an injury, including economic and noneconomic damages, or death arising from care, treatment, or failure to provide care or treatment relating to or impacted by a pandemic disease or a disaster declaration issued by the president or governor related to a pandemic disease, if the physician, health care provider, or first responder proves by a preponderance of the evidence that:
 - a. a pandemic disease or disaster declaration related to a pandemic disease was a producing cause of the care, treatment, or failure to provide care or treatment that allegedly caused the injury or death; or
 - b. the individual who suffered injury or death was diagnosed or reasonably suspected to be infected with a pandemic disease at the time of the care, treatment, or failure to provide care or treatment;
- 2. the statutory provisions relating to liability of physicians, health care providers, and first responders during a pandemic described in Number 1, above, do not constitute a waiver of sovereign immunity of the state or governmental immunity of a political subdivision and do not create a civil cause of action;
- 3. a person (including a governmental entity) is not liable for injury or death caused by exposing an individual to a pandemic disease during a pandemic emergency unless the claimant establishes that:
 - a. the person who exposed the individual:
 - i. knowingly failed to warn the individual of or remediate a condition that the person knew was likely to result in the exposure of an individual to the disease, provided that the person:
 - 1. had control over the condition;
 - 2. knew that the individual was more likely than not to come into contact with the condition; and
 - 3. had a reasonable opportunity and ability to remediate the condition or warn the individual of the condition before the individual came into contact with the condition; or
 - ii. knowingly failed to implement or comply with government-promulgated standards, guidance, or protocols intended to lower the likelihood of exposure to the disease that were applicable to the person or the person's business, provided that:
 - 1. the person had a reasonable opportunity and ability to implement or comply with the standards, guidance, or protocols; and
 - 2. the person refused to implement or comply with or acted with flagrant disregard of the standards, guidance, or protocols; and
 - 3. the government-promulgated standards, guidance, or protocols that the person failed to implement or comply with did not, on the date that the individual was exposed to the disease, conflict with government-promulgated standards, guidance, or protocols that the person implemented or complied with; and

- b. reliable scientific evidence shows that the failure to warn the individual of the condition, remediate the condition, or implement or comply with the government-promulgated standards, guidance, or protocols was the cause in fact of the individual contracting the disease;
- 4. a claimant must serve on the defendant, not later than the 120th day after the date a defendant files an answer to a claim to which Number 3, above, applies:
 - a. a report authored by at least one qualified expert that provides a factual and scientific basis for the assertion that the defendant's failure to act caused the individual to contract a pandemic disease; and
 - b. a curriculum vitae for each expert whose opinion is included in the report.

S.B. 968 (Kolkhorst/Klick) – Public Health Disaster Preparedness: this bill, among other things: (1) requires the Texas Department of Emergency Management (TDEM) to establish a process for designating individuals who are included in the emergency assistance registry as medically fragile, and collaborate with first responders, local governments, and local health departments to conduct wellness checks on those individuals during certain events (e.g., a disaster or power outage), as determined by TDEM; (2) provides that a wellness check under (1), above, must include an automated phone call, a personalized call and, if the person is unresponsive to calls, an in-person check, and requires each city to adopt procedures to conduct wellness checks in compliance with minimum standards adopted by TDEM; and (3) provides that a governmental entity may not issue a vaccine passport, vaccine pass, or other standardized documentation to certify an individual's COVID-19 vaccination status to a third party for a purpose other than health care or otherwise publish or share any individual's COVID-19 immunization record or similar health information for a purpose other than health care.

<u>S.J.R. 27 (Hancock/Leach)</u> – **Religious Services**: amends the Texas Constitution to prohibit the state or a political subdivision of the state from enacting, adopting, or issuing a statute, order, proclamation, decision, or rule that prohibits or limits religious services by a religious organization established to support and serve the propagation of a sincerely held religious belief. (Goes before the voters on November 2, 2021.)

Open Government

S.B. 841 (Hughes/Schaefer) – **Public Information**: adds certain honorably retired law enforcement positions to the personal information exceptions of the Public Information Act and the confidentiality of home address section in the tax appraisal statute.

S.B. 1225 (Huffman/Paddie) – Temporary Suspension of TPIA: this bill, among other things, provides that: (1) for purposes of suspending the requirements of the Texas Public Information Act (TPIA), during a catastrophe, the term "catastrophe" does not mean a period when staff is required to work remotely and can access information responsive to an application for information electronically, but the physical office of the governmental body is closed; (2) a governmental body may suspend the requirements of the TPIA only once for each catastrophe; (3) a governmental body may suspend the requirements of the TPIA if the governmental body is currently significantly impacted by a catastrophe such that the catastrophe directly causes the inability of a governmental

body to comply with the TPIA; (4) a governmental body that initiates a suspension period may not initiate another suspension period related to the same catastrophe, except for a single extension period, and that the combined suspension period for a governmental body may not exceed a total of 14 consecutive calendar days with respect to any single catastrophe; (5) if a governmental body closes its physical offices, but requires staff to work, including remotely, then the governmental body shall make a good faith effort to continue responding to applications for public information, to the extent staff have access to public information responsive to an application, while its administrative offices are closed; and (6) failure to respond to requests in accordance with (5), above, may constitute a refusal to request an attorney general's decision or a refusal to supply public information or information that the attorney general has determined is public information that is not excepted from required disclosure.

Cybersecurity

H.B. 1118 (Capriglione/Paxton) – Cybersecurity: provides that: (1) a local government employee or official that uses a computer to complete at least 25 percent of the employee or official's required duties shall complete a cybersecurity training certified by the state cybersecurity coordinator and the state's cybersecurity council; (2) the governing body of a local government or the governing body's designee may deny access to the local government's computer system or database to an individual identified as one that is required to take cybersecurity training and is noncompliant with that requirement; (3) to apply for certain state grants (submitted on or after September 1, 2021), a local government must submit with its grant application proof of compliance with the cybersecurity training requirements; and (4) a local government that has not complied with the cybersecurity training requirements must repay the grant and will be ineligible for another grant for two years.

S.B. 475 (Nelson/Capriglione) – Cybersecurity: this bill, among other things: (1) requires the Department of Information Resources (DIR) to establish a framework for regional cybersecurity working groups to execute mutual aid agreements that allow state agencies, local governments, and others to assist with responding to a cybersecurity event in the state; (2) requires DIR to establish the Texas volunteer incident response team to provide rapid response assistance to any participating entity (which could include a city) under DIR's direction during a cybersecurity event; (3) authorizes DIR to establish a regional network security center to assist in providing cybersecurity support and network security to certain entities (including cities) that elect to participate in and contract for services through such a center; (4) makes confidential and excepted from disclosure under the Public Information Act information written, produced, collected, assembled, or maintained by DIR, a participating entity, the cybersecurity council, or a volunteer relating to the response team if the information: (a) contains the contact information of a volunteer; (b) identifies or provides a means of identifying a person who may, as a result of disclosure of the information, become a victim of a cybersecurity event; (c) consists of a participating entity's cybersecurity plans or cybersecurity-related practices; or (d) is obtained from a participating entity or from a participating entity's computer system in the course of providing assistance through the team; and (5) includes robotic process automation among the next generation technologies a local government must consider using in the administration of the government.

Personnel

H.B. 21 (Neave/Zaffirini) – Sexual Harassment: extends the time period in which to file a sexual harassment complaint with the Texas Workforce Commission. Previously, such complaints had to be received within 180 days of the alleged sexual harassment. This time period has been extended to 300 days of the alleged sexual harassment. All other alleged unlawful employment practices still must be filed within 180 days.

<u>H.B. 786 (Oliverson/Perry)</u> – CPR Training: requires a law enforcement telecommunicator to be trained in cardiopulmonary resuscitation.

H.B. 792 (Burns/Birdwell) – **Police Dispatchers:** provides that: (1) a city with a population of more than 10,000 may adopt an alternate work schedule for the police department dispatchers if a majority of the dispatchers vote in favor of the alternate work schedule; and (2) a dispatcher working under an alternate work schedule described in (1) is entitled to overtime pay if the dispatcher works more hours during a calendar month than the number of hours in the normal work month of the majority of the employees of the city other than fire fighters and police officers.

H.B. 1589 (Davis/Menéndez) – Paid Military Leave: provides that a person called to state active duty by the governor in response to a disaster is entitled to a paid leave of absence from the person's duties for each day the person is called to active duty, not to exceed seven work days in a fiscal year.

H.B. 1752 (Oliverson/Schwertner) – Workers' Compensation: allows the Workers' Compensation Division to conduct benefit review conferences by video conference. In order for there to be an in-person benefit review conference, there must be a showing of good cause as determined by the Workers' Compensation Division.

H.B. 1753 (Oliverson/Schwertner) – Workers' Compensation: changes the informational report card that analyses the quality, cost, health care provider availability and health care networks by the Division to be conducted on even-number years only, rather than annually.

<u>H.B. 2073 (Burrows/Springer)</u> – Paid Quarantine Leave: requires political subdivisions to provide paid quarantine leave for fire fighters, peace officers, detention officers, and emergency medical technicians which are ordered to quarantine or isolate due to a possible or known exposure to a communicable disease while on duty. The political subdivision may not reduce any other paid leave balance in connection with paid quarantine leave taken. (Note: this bill is unrelated to workers' compensation claims. For more information, visit https://www.tml.org/737/July-9-2021-Number-26#quarantineleave.)

H.B. 3712 (E. Thompson/West) – **Peace Officer Training**: requires basic peace officer training courses to include training on the prohibition against choke holds, carotid artery holds, or similar neck restraints. It also requires training on the duty of a peace officer to intervene to stop or prevent another peace officer from using force that exceeds that which is reasonable under the

circumstances. Each officer is required to complete 40 hours of continuing education on such training each 24-month period.

S.B. 22 (Springer/Patterson) – Disease Presumption: adds a provision to the Presumption Statute for Diseases or Illnesses Suffered by First Responders and Custodial Officers. The provision is only for COVID-19 and provides that the new section expires September 1, 2023. In order for the presumption to apply, the first responder must be employed in an area designated in a disaster declaration by the governor and contract the disease during the disaster declaration. The first responder must be employed on a fulltime basis and diagnosed with COVID-19 using a test authorized or approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. Further, the first responder must have been on duty within 15 days before being diagnosed with COVID-19. If the person is deceased, he/she must have been diagnosed using a U.S. Food and Drug Administration-approved test or by another means, including a physician. The deceased person must have been on duty within 15 days before the diagnosis, began to show symptoms, or was hospitalized for such symptoms. A rebuttal cannot be based solely on evidence relating to the risk of exposure to COVID-19 of a person with whom a first responder resides. However, there is no prohibition to using a rebuttal when the person with which the first responder resides tests positive for COVID-19.

<u>S.B. 24 (Huffman/Bonnen)</u> – Police Pre-Employment Procedures: requires a law enforcement agency, before it may hire a person licensed as a peace officer, to obtain and review the personnel files and other employee records from each previous law enforcement agency employer, the employment termination reports maintained by the Texas Commission on Law Enforcement, the service records maintained by the Commission, proof that the person meets the minimum qualifications for enrollment in a Commission-approved peace officer training program, criminal history records, information on pending warrants, driving records from the Department of Public Safety, proof of U.S. citizenship, and information on the person's background from at least three personal references and at least two professional references.

<u>S.B. 45 (Zaffirini/Zwiener)</u> – **Sexual Harassment:** adds to Chapter 21 of the Labor Code provisions prohibiting sexual harassment of an employee. The provisions are similar to current federal law, but there are a few areas where it is slightly broader than federal law. Damages under Chapter 21 of the Labor Code are capped for the largest governmental entities at \$300,000.

<u>S.B. 1359 (Hughes/White)</u> – Mental Health Leave Policy: requires law enforcement agencies to adopt a policy allowing the use of mental leave by peace officers who experience a traumatic event in the scope of employment.

Procurement

<u>H.B. 692 (Shine/Creighton)</u> – **Public Works Contracts Retainage**: this bill makes numerous changes to the use of retainage in public works contracts.

<u>H.B. 1477 (K. Bell/Nichols)</u> – **Public Work Contracts**: this bill: (1) defines, for purposes of certain state laws regarding public work performance and payment bonds: (a) a "prime contractor"

to include a person who leases any public property, other than a person who leases property from certain river authorities; and (b) a "public work contract" to include work performed on public property owned by a governmental entity or on property leased by a governmental entity to a nongovernmental entity, but does not include certain river authority contracts; and (2) provides that a governmental entity that makes a public work contract with a prime contractor or authorizes a nongovernmental entity leasing public property from the governmental entity to enter into a public work contract with a prime contractor to require the contractor, before beginning the work, to execute to the governmental entity in certain circumstances, a performance bond and a payment bond.

H.B. 2116 (Krause/Powell) – **Architects and Engineers**: prohibits, with certain exceptions, a covenant or promise in, in connection with, or collateral to a contract for engineering or architectural services related to an improvement to real property if the covenant or promise provides that a licensed engineer or registered architect must defend a party, including a third party against a claim based wholly or partly on the negligence of, fault of, or breach of contract by the owner, the owner's agent, the owner's employee, or another entity over which the owner exercises control.

H.B. 2581 (Kacal/Hancock) – Construction and Civil Works Projects: this bill: (1) requires a the governing body of a governmental entity that considers a construction contract using a method other than competitive bidding to, among other things, publish in the request for qualifications a detailed methodology for scoring each criterion; (2) provides that: (a) an offeror who submits a bid, proposal, or response to a request for qualifications for a construction contract under certain law may, after the contract is awarded, make a request in writing to the governmental entity to provide documents related to the evaluation of the offeror's submission; and (b) not later than the 30th day after the date a request is made, the governmental entity shall deliver to the offeror the documents relating to the evaluation of the submission including, if applicable, its ranking of the submission; (3) provides that for civil works projects, the weighted value assigned to price must be at least 50 percent of the total weighted value of all selection criteria; however, if the governing body of a governmental entity determines that assigning a lower weighted value to price is in the public interest, the governmental entity may assign to price a weighted value of not less than 36.9 percent of the total weighted value of all selection criteria; and (4) provides that when the competitive sealed proposal procurement method is used, the governmental entity shall make the evaluations, including any scores, public and provide them to all offerors not later than the seventh business day after the date the contract is awarded.

S.B. 19 (Schwertner/Capriglione) – **Firearms**: among other things, (1) prohibits a governmental entity from entering into a contract with a value of \$100,000 or more that is to be paid from public funds with a company with more than 10 full-time employees for the purchase of goods or services unless the contract contains a written verification from the company that it: (a) does not have a practice, policy, guidance, or directive that discriminates against a firearm entity or firearm trade association; and (b) will not discriminate during the term of the contract against a firearm entity or firearm trade association; and (2) provides that the prohibition in (1) does not apply to a city that (a) contracts with a sole-source provider, or (b) the city does not receive any bids from a company that is able to provide the required verification required by (1).

S.B. 58 (Zaffirini/J. Turner) – Cloud Computing Services: adds cloud computing services to the definition of the term "personal property" for purposes of the Public Property Finance Act.

S.B. 219 (Hughes/Leach) – Real Property Construction and Repair: this bill: (1) provides that, in regard to a contract for the construction or repair of improvement to real property, a contractor is not responsible for the consequences of design defects in and may not warranty the accuracy, adequacy, sufficiency, or suitability of plans, specifications, or other design documents provided to the contractor by a person other than the contractor's agents, contractors, fabricators, or suppliers, or its consultants, of any tier; (2) requires a contractor, within a reasonable time of learning of a defect, inaccuracy, inadequacy, or insufficiency in the plans, specifications, or other design documents, disclose in writing to the person with whom the contractor enters into a contract the existence of any known defect in the plans, specifications, or other design documents that is discovered by the contractor, or that reasonably should have been discovered by the contractor using ordinary diligence, before or during construction; (3) excepts certain contracts from the new provisions regarding responsibility for defects in plans and specifications described in (1) and (2); (4) requires a construction contract for architectural or engineering services or a contract related to the construction or repair of an improvement to real property that contains architectural or engineering services as a component to require that the architectural or engineering services be performed with the professional skill and care ordinarily provided by competent architects or engineers practicing under the same or similar circumstances and professional license, and a provision in a contract with a different standard of care is void and unenforceable; and (5) provides that certain limitations on a contractor's responsibility for certain defects do not apply to a designbuild contract.

S.B. 538 (Blanco/Longoria) – Technology Purchases: expands the Department of Information Resources' cooperative contracts purchasing program for information technology commodity items to include items in demand by political subdivisions and governmental entities of another state.

S.B. 1821 (Huffman/Canales) – Contingent Fee Contracts for Legal Services: amends the definition of the term "contingent fee contract" to include an amendment to a contingent fee contract if the amendment: (1) changes the scope of representation; or (2) may result in the filing of an action or the amending of a petition in an existing action.

S.B. 2116 (Campbell/Parker) – Critical Infrastructure: among other things, prohibits a city from entering into a contract or other agreement relating to "critical infrastructure" (defined to mean a communication infrastructure system, cybersecurity system, electric grid, hazardous waste treatment system, or water treatment facility) in this state with a company if the city knows that the company is: (1) owned by or the majority of stock or other ownership interest of the company is held or controlled by: (a) individuals who are citizens of China, Iran, North Korea, Russia, or other designated countries; or (b) a company or other entity, including a governmental entity, that is owned or controlled by citizens of or is directly controlled by the government of China, Iran, North Korea, Russia, or other designated countries; or (2) headquartered in China, Iran, North Korea, Russia, or other designated countries.