

SUBJECT: Emergency appropriations to state agencies and an aquifer authority

COMMITTEE: Appropriations — committee substitute recommended

VOTE: 21 ayes — Junell, Delisi, Averitt, Coleman, Cuellar, Eiland, Gallego, Glaze, Greenberg, Haggerty, Heflin, Hinojosa, Kubiak, Moreno, Pitts, Price, Raymond, Swinford, Tillery, Walker, West

0 nays

6 absent — Davis, Finnell, Hernandez, Hochberg, Mowery, S. Turner

SENATE VOTE: On final passage, March 6 — 29-0

WITNESSES: For — Gregory Ellis, Edwards Aquifer Authority

Against — None

On — Alvin Miller, Beckie Zieschang, Office of the Attorney General; Steve Robinson, Texas Youth Commission; Edward Serna, Department of Information Resources; Mike Sheridan and Hazel Baylor, Texas Workforce Commission; Arnold Viramontes and Gwen Stafford, Telecommunications Infrastructure Fund Board

DIGEST: Effective immediately, CSSB 886 would make certain two-year emergency appropriations:

- \$18.681 million in federal funds from the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) block grant to the Department of Protective and Regulatory Services (DPRS) to adjust program financing to provide sufficient funding for such substitute care services as adoption and foster care services.
- \$5.106 million of TANF funds to the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) to provide services in the Job Opportunities and Basic Skills (JOBS) program and related transportation expenses.

- \$10.167 million in federal funds, general revenue and interagency receipts to the Texas Youth Commission (TYC) to pay unanticipated costs related to complying with the six-month minimum length of stay requirement established by the fiscal 1996-97 general appropriations act and to meeting increased juvenile commitments.
- \$4.082 million to the Employees Retirement System and the comptroller, consisting of TANF funds and general revenue to pay for employee benefit costs associated with the emergency appropriations to DPRS, TWC and TYC.
- \$500,000 in funds of trustee programs within the Governor's Office to the Texas Water Development Board to fund a contract between the board and the Edwards Aquifer Authority to pay for the authority's initial operating costs. The authority would have until August 31, 1999 to repay the loan with interest computed at the rate the amounts would have earned in the state treasury.
- \$1.245 million of general revenue to the Department of Information Resources to develop and implement a plan to reprogram state information systems to handle compatibility with the year 2000.
- \$550,000 of general revenue to the Texas Natural Resource Conservation Commission (TNRCC) to finance matching grants to political subdivisions for regional precipitation enhancement programs.
- \$10.827 million of general revenue to the Office of the Attorney General to pay for workers' compensation benefits.
- general authorization to the Telecommunications Infrastructure Fund Board to pay salaries of not more than 18 full-time equivalent employees out of funds previously appropriated.
- \$5.6 million of general revenue to the Texas Department of Transportation, contingent upon the enactment this session of SB 1706, to provide a loan to Amtrak to continue the Texas Eagle rail

passenger service in Texas. Loan repayments would have to be made by August 31, 1999, with interest calculated at the rate the amounts would have earned in the state treasury.

**SUPPORTERS
SAY:**

CSSB 886 would provide state agencies much needed funding for a variety of unanticipated but necessary efforts. These emergency appropriations would allow the agencies to carry out duties directed by the Legislature, fund unanticipated shortfalls in federal funds, plan for drought conditions by providing matching grants to local governments for seeding clouds, update computer and information systems to handle looming date problems in the year 2000, and allow a loan to continue operation in Texas of Amtrak rail passenger service of the Texas Eagle line from San Antonio to St. Louis and Chicago. The appropriated amounts would be funded out of anticipated TANF and general revenue balances for fiscal year 1997 and represent actual operational needs.

The Edwards Aquifer Authority has not sufficiently demonstrated that additional taxpayer dollars are needed to fund on an emergency basis other authority activities. The authority anticipates collecting permit fees and will soon have a steady cash flow to meet its operational needs.

**OPPONENTS
SAY:**

Additional funding would be helpful to some programs to meet current problems, and there is a sufficient revenue balance for the state to be more generous. For example, \$500,000 to the Edwards Aquifer Authority would be enough to cover current operations only; it would not provide sufficient funding to pay for installing meters on irrigation wells, an expense that will total at least \$1 million but is necessary to ensure equity between the fees charged irrigation water users and those of municipalities and industrial users. The authority was left with very few operational funds when its predecessor, the Edwards Underground Water District, was dissolved and would benefit from the immediate infusion of some extra funds.

NOTES:

According to the fiscal note, CSSB 886 would appropriate a total of \$23.714 million from general revenue and \$32.428 million in federal funds in fiscal 1997 and \$5.6 million in fiscal 1999.

The House committee substitute differs from the Senate engrossed version by adding emergency appropriations for DPRS, TYC, the Edwards Aquifer Authority, Department of Information Resources, TNRCC, and the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT).

SB 1898 by Ratliff, which also would authorize emergency appropriations, was reported favorably as substituted by the House Appropriations Committee on April 17. The House committee substitute removed provisions from the Senate-passed version of SB 1898 that would have appropriated \$21.8 million of TANF funds to DPRS; financed TYC emergency appropriations using mostly federal funds; and appropriated \$1.8 million for Edwards Aquifer Authority operations, \$1.992 million for the Department of Information Resources, \$5.6 million to TxDOT for a loan to Amtrak to continue the Texas Eagle rail passenger line, and \$1 million for the precipitation enhancement grant program at TNRCC, among other provisions.

SB 1706 by Ratliff, authorizing a loan from TxDOT to Amtrak to continue operation of the Texas Eagle line, passed the Senate by 25-4 on March 25 and was reported favorably, as substituted, by the House Appropriations Committee by 20-3 on April 17.