

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center
84R2432 TSR-D

S.B. 289
By: Estes
Agriculture, Water, and Rural Affairs
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As Filed

AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

Interested parties contend that there is no greater, longer-running expression of volunteerism in United States history than that of the volunteer fire service, which still saves taxpayers billions of dollars in avoided losses each year. Recent reports indicate that almost three-fourths of the nation's firefighters are volunteers and that two-thirds of all fire departments are volunteer. In Texas, there are over 800 volunteer fire departments and nearly 200 departments that combine volunteer and professional firefighters. Moreover, volunteers comprise approximately 75 percent of the state's overall fire service.

As the population of the state continues to grow, extreme drought conditions persist, along with the threat of wildfires, the need for volunteer firefighters also grows. However, there are concerns that, despite this increasing demand, funding for emergency services continues to decline while the threat of increased governmental regulation continues to rise and that this trend is particularly burdensome for volunteers. S.B. 289 seeks to slow the decline in the number of volunteer firefighters willing to serve Texas by prohibiting certain governmental regulation of volunteer firefighters and members of industrial emergency response teams.

As proposed, S.B. 289 amends current law relating to the licensure or certification of volunteer firefighters and members of industrial emergency response teams.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

This bill does not expressly grant any additional rulemaking authority to a state officer, institution, or agency.

SECTION BY SECTION ANALYSIS

SECTION 1. Amends Subchapter Z, Chapter 419, Government Code, by adding Section 419.910, as follows:

Sec. 419.910. CERTAIN REGULATION PROHIBITED. (a) Defines "state agency" and "volunteer firefighter."

(b) Prohibits a state agency from:

- (1) requiring a volunteer firefighter to obtain a license or certification in order to be a volunteer firefighter; or
- (2) requiring a member of an industrial emergency response team to obtain a license or certification in order to be a member of an industrial emergency response team.

SECTION 2. Effective date: upon passage or September 1, 2015.