

BILL ANALYSIS

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S.B. 289
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AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

During the 85th Legislative Interim, the Senate Committee on Intergovernmental Relations (IGR) was charged with examining and reporting on ways to improve the coordination of rebuilding housing and infrastructure following a natural disaster. The IGR Committee heard from state, county, and local officials on how the state's recovery efforts could be strengthened and improved, especially by instituting provisions that would encourage communities to plan (before any disaster event occurs) on how they would undertake local reconstruction efforts.

S.B. 289 seeks to build on lessons learned by following through with IGR's recommendations and setting up provisions relating to disaster reconstruction. In so doing, S.B. 289 builds on the strengths and resources of key state agencies (such as Texas A&M's Hazard Reduction and Recovery Center, and the Texas General Land Office) while improving publicly administered disaster recovery programs. S.B. 289 sets up the framework to assist in reducing the period of time disaster survivors are out of their homes, maximizing local control over disaster reconstruction, and reducing the cost of recovery to homeowners and taxpayers.

Overall, S.B. 289 enhances coordination, skills, and preparedness to undertake local disaster recovery programs for housing by state and local government agencies, and other interested parties.

As proposed, S.B. 289 amends current law relating to natural disaster housing recovery.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

Rulemaking authority is expressly granted to the Texas General Land Office in SECTION 1 (Section 418.132, Government Code) of this bill.

SECTION BY SECTION ANALYSIS

SECTION 1. Amends Chapter 418, Government Code, by adding Subchapter F-1, as follows:

SUBCHAPTER F-1. NATURAL DISASTER HOUSING RECOVERY

Sec. 418.131. DEFINITIONS. Defines "center," "local government," and "plan."

Sec. 418.132. DUTIES OF GENERAL LAND OFFICE OR DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY. (a) Requires the Texas General Land Office (GLO), unless the governor designates a state agency under Subsection (d), to receive and administer federal and state funds appropriated for long-term natural disaster recovery.

(b) Requires GLO to:

- (1) collaborate with the Texas Division of Emergency Management and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to secure reimbursement for housing needs in areas affected by natural disasters;
- (2) seek prior approval from FEMA and the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development for the immediate post-disaster

implementation of local housing recovery plans approved by the governor under Section 418.136; and

(3) maintain a division with adequate staffing and other administrative support to carry out GLO's duties relating to long-term natural disaster recovery.

(c) Authorizes GLO to adopt rules as necessary to implement GLO's duties under this subchapter.

(d) Authorizes the governor to designate a state agency to be responsible for long-term natural disaster recovery under this subchapter instead of GLO. Provides that if the governor designates a state agency under this subsection, a reference to GLO in this subchapter means the designated state agency.

Sec. 418.133. LOCAL HOUSING RECOVERY PLAN. (a) Authorizes a local government to develop and adopt a local housing recovery plan to provide for the rapid and efficient construction of permanent replacement housing following a natural disaster.

(b) Requires a local government, in developing the plan, to seek input from:

(1) stakeholders in the community, including residents, local businesses, and community-based organizations; and

(2) neighboring local governments.

(c) Authorizes a local government to submit a plan developed and adopted under Subsection (a) to the Hazard Reduction and Recovery Center (center) for certification.

Sec. 418.134. DUTIES OF HAZARD REDUCTION AND RECOVERY CENTER; PLAN CRITERIA AND CERTIFICATION. (a) Requires the center to review and certify plans submitted to the center by local governments.

(b) Requires the center to establish criteria for certifying a plan. Prohibits the center from certifying a plan unless the plan:

(1) identifies areas in the local government's boundaries that are vulnerable to natural disasters;

(2) identifies sources of post-disaster housing assistance and recovery funds;

(3) provides procedures for rapidly responding to a natural disaster, including procedures for:

(A) assessing and reporting housing damage, disaggregated by insured and uninsured losses, to the governor;

(B) providing fair and efficient access to natural disaster recovery assistance for residents;

(C) determining residents' eligibility for natural disaster recovery assistance;

(D) educating residents about the rebuilding process and providing outreach and case management services; and

(E) prequalifying and training local professionals needed for natural disaster recovery;

(4) provides procedures to encourage residents to rebuild outside of the vulnerable areas identified under Subdivision (1);

(5) provides procedures to maximize the use of local businesses, contractors, and supplies to rebuild to the extent possible;

(6) provides procedures to maximize cost efficiency;

(7) provides for the construction of permanent replacement housing for displaced residents as soon as possible after the natural disaster, with a goal of completion in not later than six months; and

(8) complies with applicable state and federal law.

(c) Requires the center to identify the plan's deficiencies and assist the local government in revising the plan to meet the criteria if the center determines that a plan does not meet the criteria prescribed by Subsection (b).

(d) Requires the center to provide training to local governments and community-based organizations on developing a plan. Requires a local government that submits a plan to the center for certification under this section to designate at least one representative to attend the center's training. Requires the training to include information relating to:

(1) previous experiences with housing recovery from natural disasters;

(2) best practices for achieving rapid and efficient construction of permanent replacement housing;

(3) federal and state laws and regulations on natural disaster recovery;

(4) methods for identifying and planning for vulnerable areas and populations before a natural disaster; and

(5) cost-effective land use and building practices.

(e) Requires the center to create and maintain mapping and data resources related to natural disaster recovery and planning, including the Texas Coastal Communities Planning Atlas.

(f) Requires the center to assist a local government on request in identifying areas that are vulnerable to natural disasters.

(g) Requires the center to provide recommendations to the Texas Department of Insurance regarding the development of policies, procedures, and education programs to enable the quick and efficient reporting and settling of housing claims related to natural disasters.

(h) Authorizes the center to seek and accept gifts, grants, donations, and other funds to assist the center in fulfilling its duties under this section.

Sec. 418.135. REVIEW OF LOCAL HOUSING RECOVERY PLAN BY GENERAL LAND OFFICE. (a) Requires the center to submit to GLO a plan certified by the center under Section 418.134.

(b) Requires GLO to review the plan and consult with the center and the local government about any potential improvements GLO may identify. Requires GLO, in reviewing the plan, to give deference to the local government regarding matters in the local government's discretion.

(c) Requires GLO, on completion of review, to accept the plan unless GLO determines that the plan does not:

(1) satisfy the criteria for a certified plan under Section 418.134(b);

(2) provide for the rapid and efficient construction of permanent replacement housing; or

(3) comply with applicable state and federal law.

Sec. 418.136. APPROVAL BY GOVERNOR. (a) Requires GLO to submit to the governor for approval or rejection a plan that GLO accepts under Section 418.135.

(b) Requires the governor to provide to GLO a written explanation of the reasons for the rejection if the governor rejects a plan.

(c) Authorizes a local government, in consultation with the center and GLO, to revise a plan rejected by the governor under this section and resubmit the plan to the governor for approval.

Sec. 418.137. EFFECT OF APPROVAL. (a) Provides that a plan approved by the governor under Section 418.136 is valid for four years and may be implemented during that period without further approval if a natural disaster occurs.

(b) Authorizes the plan, in accordance with rules adopted by GLO, on or before expiration, to be reviewed by the center and GLO, updated if necessary, and resubmitted to the governor for approval or rejection.

SECTION 2. Effective date: September 1, 2019.