

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center
87R16192 CXP-F

H.B. 632
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Administration
5/17/2021
Engrossed

AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

The Texas Seismic Monitoring Program (TexNet) housed at the Bureau of Economic Geology at The University of Texas at Austin was established in 2015 to collect data on seismic activity occurring in Texas. In 2017, H.B. 2819 created the TexNet Technical Advisory Committee, which served to guide the work of TexNet and provided biennial reports to the governor, lieutenant governor, and the speaker of the Texas House of Representatives. The reports were used to help improve the Texas environment, infrastructure, and economy. The advisory committee, however, expired in 2019, leaving a communication gap between researchers and legislative leaders.

H.B. 632 would reconstitute the nine-member TexNet Technical Advisory Committee to allow the committee to again provide guidance for the TexNet program as well as provide important information to leaders of the Texas Legislature.

H.B. 632 amends current law relating to the establishment of an advisory committee for the TexNet seismic monitoring program.

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 E, Chapter 67, Education Code, by adding Section 67.72, as follows:

Sec. 67.72. TEXNET TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE. (a) Defines "program."

(b) Provides that the TexNet Technical Advisory Committee (advisory committee) is established as an advisory committee within The University of Texas Bureau of Economic Geology (bureau).

(c) Provides that the advisory committee consists of nine members appointed by the governor who work or reside in this state, including:

(1) one representative of the Railroad Commission of Texas (RRC) who specializes in seismology, geomechanical engineering, reservoir engineering, or another related field recommended to the governor by the executive director of RRC; and

(2) at least three representatives from the oil and gas industry, not to include the representative appointed under Subdivision (1).

(d) Requires the governor to designate a member of the advisory committee as the chair of the advisory committee to serve in that capacity at the pleasure of the governor.

(e) Prohibits a person affiliated with the bureau or under contract for services with the bureau from serving as a voting member of the advisory committee.

(f) Requires the director of the bureau to serve, ex officio, as a nonvoting member of the advisory committee.

(g) Requires the advisory committee to:

(1) in coordination with the bureau, develop recommendations for a program of work to assist the program and any research efforts affiliated with the program in accomplishing the goals of the TexNet seismic monitoring program (program), including recommendations regarding:

(A) the acquisition and deployment of equipment;

(B) contracting with vendors;

(C) determining the scope of research programs associated with the program; and

(D) determining the scope of any use of funds appropriated by the legislature for the program or associated research;

(2) review and approve or reject expenditures made in connection with the program;

(3) prepare and approve an annual budget for the use of any funds appropriated for the program by the legislature;

(4) provide oversight and input on the acquisition, deployment, and operation of new and existing program equipment;

(5) ensure that there is a monthly transmission of the data collected by seismic equipment operated under the program to the Incorporated Research Institutions for Seismology database; and

(6) meet with the bureau quarterly to discuss the progress of the program, expenditures made in connection with the program, and any other information related to the program that the advisory committee finds necessary.

(h) Requires the advisory committee and the bureau, not later than December 31 of each even-numbered year, to jointly prepare and submit to the governor, the lieutenant governor, and the speaker of the Texas House of Representatives a report that includes:

(1) a review of the use of any funds appropriated for the program by the legislature;

(2) a complete listing and accounting of all research funded through the program, including a list of contractors employed under the program, an itemized budget for each program element, and a list of the geographic coverage of the program; and

(3) recommendations related to the ongoing operations and requirements of the program.

SECTION 2. Effective date: September 1, 2021.