

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center
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C.S.S.B. 766
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Intergovernmental Relations
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Committee Report (Substituted)

AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

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. Almost three-fourths of the nation's 1.1 million firefighters are volunteers, and two-thirds of all fire departments are volunteer.

In Texas, there are approximately 879 volunteer fire departments and 187 departments that combine volunteer and professional firefighters in Texas. Overall, volunteers comprise 77 percent of the state's fire service.

As the population of the state continues to grow, along with the threat of wildfires, the need for volunteer firefighters also grows. Despite increasing demand, funding for emergency services continues to decline while the threat of increased regulation continues to rise. This trend is particularly burdensome for volunteers who risk their lives and give their time solely for the purpose of serving their communities.

The purpose of this bill is to help slow the decline in the number of volunteer firefighters willing to serve the State of Texas by prohibiting unnecessary government regulation.

C.S.S.B. 766 amends current law relating to the regulation of volunteer fire departments, 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. STATE REGULATION PROHIBITED. (a) Defines "state agency" in this section.

(b) Prohibits a state agency from:

- (1) regulating a volunteer fire department;
- (2) requiring a volunteer firefighter to obtain a license or certification in order to be a volunteer firefighter; or
- (3) 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, 2013.