

## **BILL ANALYSIS**

S.B. 289  
By: Estes  
Licensing & Administrative Procedures  
Committee Report (Unamended)

### **BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE**

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 more than 800 volunteer fire departments and nearly 200 departments that combine volunteer and professional firefighters. Moreover, volunteers account for approximately 75 percent of the state's overall fire service. According to the parties, as the state's population continues to grow and 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, which is particularly burdensome for volunteers. S.B. 289 seeks to slow the decline in the number of volunteer firefighters willing to serve Texas by amending current law relating to the licensure or certification of volunteer firefighters and members of industrial emergency response teams.

### **CRIMINAL JUSTICE IMPACT**

It is the committee's opinion that this bill does not expressly create a criminal offense, increase the punishment for an existing criminal offense or category of offenses, or change the eligibility of a person for community supervision, parole, or mandatory supervision.

### **RULEMAKING AUTHORITY**

It is the committee's opinion that this bill does not expressly grant any additional rulemaking authority to a state officer, department, agency, or institution.

### **ANALYSIS**

S.B. 289 amends the Government Code to prohibit a department, board, commission, committee, council, agency, office, or other entity in the executive, legislative, or judicial branch of state government, the jurisdiction of which is not limited to a geographical portion of the state, including any public technical institute, public junior college, public senior college or university, medical or dental unit, public state college, or other agency of higher education, from requiring a member of a volunteer fire department who is not a full-time paid employee or part-time fire protection employee to obtain a license or certification in order to be a volunteer firefighter or from 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.

### **EFFECTIVE DATE**

On passage, or, if the bill does not receive the necessary vote, September 1, 2015.