

- SUBJECT:** State funds for Civil Air Patrol training
- COMMITTEE:** Public Safety — committee substitute recommended
- VOTE:** 6 ayes — Oakley, Bailey, Carter, Luna, Madden, McCoulskey  
0 nays  
3 absent — Allen, Driver, Edwards
- WITNESSES:** For — Joe Negron, Civil Air Patrol of Texas  
Against — None
- BACKGROUND:** The Civil Air Patrol (CAP) is a nonprofit nationwide organization using volunteer pilots that has traditionally assisted the United States Air Force with search and rescue missions. As a result of Air Force budget reductions, CAP markets its services to other federal and state entities.  
  
CAP assists on a state level with searches for missing airplanes and aerially monitors and gives reports on natural disaster areas and hazardous waste spills. In addition, the federal government has consistently contracted with CAP to patrol the Texas-Mexico border to locate marijuana patches and drug labs.
- DIGEST:** CSHB 158 would allow the Division of Emergency Management to provide financial assistance to the Civil Air Patrol, Texas Wing, for assisting the state with disaster-related activities and for the training associated with those activities.  
  
The bill would take effect immediately if approved by two-thirds of the membership of each house.
- SUPPORTERS SAY:** The state should provide financial assistance to the Civil Air Patrol to allow this vital state resource to survive and continue providing needed services to the state. The training for the disaster-related activities of CAP is mainly funded by CAP members or local donors. However, in recent years, the cost of training and aircraft maintenance has risen beyond CAP's

ability to fund. In addition, CAP membership has decreased because of the heavy financial sacrifice members must make, approximately \$1,500 a year.

CAP in Texas has 2,500 trained members and 26 specially equipped search and rescue aircraft. The patrol provides vital disaster-related services to the state at a fraction of the cost of state helicopters or fixed-wing planes and has pilots and planes in all areas of the state. The bill would allow the governor's division of emergency management, at its discretion, to financially assist CAP with training exercises and costs of operation. The money would go toward aircraft maintenance, fuel and other necessary items as determined by the division. The volunteer pilots would not receive compensation, hotel or meal expenses. Forty other states provide financial assistance to CAP in their states.

**OPPONENTS  
SAY:**

No apparent opposition

**NOTES:**

The committee substitute made the financial assistance permissive rather than mandatory, and clarified that training expenses could be funded.