

**SUBJECT:** Restricting the disposal of DSHS grant-funded ambulances

**COMMITTEE:** Public Health —favorable, without amendment

**VOTE:** 7 ayes — Kolkhorst, Naishtat, Coleman, S. Davis, S. King, Schwertner, Truitt  
0 nays  
4 absent — Alvarado, V. Gonzales, Laubenberg, Zerwas

**SENATE VOTE:** On final passage, April 7 — 31-0, on Local and Uncontested Calendar

**WITNESSES:** For — None  
Against — None  
On — Greg Wilburn, Texas Department of State Health Services

**BACKGROUND:** The Department of State Health Services (DSHS) awards grants from the Extraordinary Emergency Fund (EEF) for licensed emergency medical service (EMS) providers, hospitals, and registered first responder organizations that have experienced a severe disruption or reduction in the delivery of emergency medical care. These funds are allocated from the Trauma Facilities and Trauma Care System Fund and the Designated Trauma Facility and Emergency Medical Services Account, established by SB 1131 and HB 3588, respectively, by the 78th Legislature in 2003. Since the program began in 2006, the grants have helped to purchase 25 ambulances in several regions in Texas.

**DIGEST:** SB 901 would prohibit the disposal of an ambulance that was entirely paid for by trauma care grant funding before the fourth year of the grant award, unless approved by DSHS. The bill would apply only to grants awarded on or after the effective date of the bill.  
  
The bill would take effect September 1, 2011, and would apply only to grants awarded on or after that date.

**SUPPORTERS** SB 901 would enhance the level of oversight of the Extraordinary

**SAY:** Emergency Fund, which helps communities that have faced a severe disruption in emergency services purchase ambulances to continue the base level of service. There has been some concern that under current law, a grant recipient could purchase an ambulance that was fully funded by DSHS and then re-sell the vehicle without having to seek approval from the department. The purpose of the funding stream is to allow EMS providers to serve areas that have experienced a significant event or problem with an ambulance when the area served does not have a tax base that would allow the community to purchase a new ambulance. SB 901 would help to ensure the funds that were used to completely pay for an ambulance were spent appropriately and would allow DSHS to be aware of sales that occurred within four years of a purchase.

**OPPONENTS SAY:** SB 901 could help the state monitor the sale of an ambulance that was paid entirely by the Extraordinary Emergency Fund, but the bill should go further to try and recoup these costs by expanding the scope to include the sale of an ambulance for which DSHS funded a major share, not only a full share. The emergency fund has helped 25 communities purchase ambulances since 2006, but only 12 have been fully funded. This same level of oversight should be required for grant recipients that received funding that paid for more than half of the cost of an ambulance to ensure that the state's funds were not being misappropriated. These funds are vital to communities in rural areas and those that have been affected by a natural disaster, so it would make sense to ensure that all of these funds were spent wisely.