

SUBJECT: Relating to emergency and disaster management, response, and recovery

COMMITTEE: Homeland Security and Public Safety — committee substitute recommended

VOTE: 9 ayes — Nevárez, Paul, Burns, Calanni, Clardy, Goodwin, Israel, Lang, Tinderholt

0 nays

WITNESSES: For — (*Registered, but did not testify:* Tammy Embrey, City of Corpus Christi; Michael Barba, Texas Catholic Conference of Bishops; Monty Wynn, Texas Municipal League; Dennis Baggett, Texas Press Association; Kay Roach, Town of Woodsboro and Refugio County, Texas; CJ Grisham)

Against — None

DIGEST: CSHB 2340 would establish an unmanned aircraft study group and an information sharing work group and provide for the study of federal laws and policies related to disaster response.

**Unmanned aircraft study group.** The bill would establish a study group to examine issues related to the appropriate use of unmanned aircraft in responding to and recovering from a disaster, including:

- strategies for coordinating and promoting the use of unmanned aircraft among state, local, and private entities in the response and recovery; and
- recommended changes to state law that would allow entities to more effectively use unmanned aircraft in the response and recovery.

The group would submit recommendations on the issues to the Legislature by November 1, 2020, and would be abolished on January 1, 2021.

The Texas Division of Emergency Management (TDEM) chief would appoint the members of the study group, which would include representatives from TDEM and institutions of higher education as well as other appropriate persons.

**Information sharing work group.** The bill would require TDEM to establish a work group of state agencies involved in disaster management. The work group would develop recommendations for improving the way electronic information was stored and shared among state agencies and between state and federal agencies to improve agencies' capacities to respond and coordinate responses to a disaster.

The group would submit its recommendations to the governor by November 1 of each even-numbered year.

The TDEM chief would appoint the members of the work group, which would include representatives from the comptroller's office, the Department of State Health Services, the Texas Department of Transportation, the General Land Office, the Health and Human Services Commission, institutions of higher education, and appropriate federal agencies.

**Federal legislative and policy recommendations regarding disaster assistance.** The bill would require the Office of State-Federal Relations, in consultation with TDEM, federal agencies, and members of Congress, to study federal laws and policies related to the ability of federal agencies, state agencies, and local governments to cooperate in responding to a disaster, including issues related to procurement, housing assistance, information sharing, personnel, and federal disaster assistance programs.

The Office of State-Federal Relations would make recommendations to improve federal laws and policies related to these issues to the Office of State-Federal Relations Advisory Policy Board by November 1, 2020. Related provisions of the bill would expire January 1, 2021.

**Adopting goals of FEMA strategic plan.** The bill would add to the

purposes of the Texas Disaster Act (Government Code ch. 418) to encourage state agencies, local governments, nongovernmental organizations, private entities, and individuals to adopt from the Federal Emergency Management Agency strategic plan the goals that emphasized cooperation among federal and state agencies, local governments, nongovernmental organizations, private entities, and individuals in each project to ensure that the state was prepared to effectively respond to and recover from a disaster.

The bill would take effect September 1, 2019.

**SUPPORTERS SAY:** CSHB 2340 would implement several recommendations from the Governor's Commission to Rebuild Texas, allowing the state to be better prepared to withstand future disasters.

**Unmanned aircraft study group.** Drones played an important role for emergency responders, insurance companies, state government agencies, private industries, and others in the immediate aftermath of Hurricane Harvey. To ensure the effective use of drones in future disasters, stakeholders should examine appropriate uses of drones in disasters, how to coordinate and promote their use, and applicable state laws and regulations.

**Information sharing work group.** In responding to the hurricane, state and federal agencies were challenged by the quality of available data to support disaster-related programs and the ability of agencies to share that information. The problems stemmed from incompatible data sets, privacy issues, and other matters. It is important that these issues are identified and addressed before the next disaster, and the bill would provide for a formal venue to cooperatively examine secure data infrastructure and data sharing protocols.

**Federal legislative and policy recommendations regarding disaster assistance.** The bill would reduce red tape and improve the effectiveness of response and recovery efforts at all levels. The federal-state partnership under the bill could improve and streamline federal laws and policies

related to procurement, housing assistance, data sharing, staffing issues, and federal disaster assistance programs.

**Adopting goals of FEMA strategic plan.** Texas should embrace the tenets of the Federal Emergency Management Agency's strategic plan, especially as it pertains to cooperation among federal agencies, state and local governments, nongovernmental organizations, the private sector, and citizens. In doing so, agencies at all levels of government could share lessons learned during disasters and use collective resources to improve disaster response and recovery and be better able to deal with any future disasters.

OPPONENTS      No concerns identified.  
SAY: