

SUBJECT: Establishing an institute and study committee to plan for disaster events

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 — Wes Birdwell, Texas Floodplain Management Association; (*Registered, but did not testify:* Tom Oney, Lower Colorado River Authority; Monty Wynn, Texas Municipal League; Kay Roach, Town of Woodsboro, Refugio County; CJ Grisham)

Against — None

On — Henry Van de Putte III, American Red Cross; Sam Brody, Texas A&M University; (*Registered, but did not testify:* John Dupnik and Sam Marie Hermitte, Texas Water Development Board)

DIGEST: CSHB 2345 would establish the Institute for a Disaster Resilient Texas and a Flood Event Partnership Options Special Study Committee to analyze certain disaster-preparedness issues.

Institute for a Disaster Resilient Texas. The bill would establish the Institute for a Disaster Resilient Texas as a component of Texas A&M University under the management and direction of the Texas A&M University System's board of directors. The institute would collaborate with state and local government entities to:

- develop data analytics tools to support disaster planning, mitigation, response, and recovery;
- create and maintain online tools to communicate disaster risks, including tools that work on the level of individual parcels of land;
- provide information and solutions to aid in the formation of state

- and local partnerships to promote disaster resilience;
- collect, display, and communicate flood-related information, including updated inundation maps, for use by the public; and
- study and test ideas for flood planning and mitigation.

The institute could employ personnel, including experts in planning, engineering, hydrology, ecology, and economics, and could accept gifts or grants from any public or private source.

CSHB 2345 would require the Texas Water Development Board to coordinate with the institute created by this bill and to create an inventory of flood mitigation and resiliency projects and develop a method of prioritizing those projects.

Flood Event Partnership Options Special Study Committee. The bill also would establish a Flood Event Partnership Options Special Study Committee consisting of nine persons appointed by the governor to represent various stakeholder groups. The study committee would be required to conduct a study on state-local partnerships to address flooding events in the state. The study would identify state and local entities interested in and capable of participating in such partnerships and the appropriate structure for these partnerships. The study also would address flood planning at the watershed level, possible negative effects that flood-prevention efforts in one local area might have on another area, and other topics for research and consideration.

CSHB 2345 would require the Texas A&M University System to support the committee with assistance, necessary support staff, and facilities to conduct meetings.

The members of the committee would be appointed by the governor by October 1, 2019. The committee's report would be due to the governor and the Legislature by December 1, 2020. The committee would be abolished May 1, 2021.

The bill would take immediate effect if finally passed by a two-thirds

record vote of the membership of each house. Otherwise, it would take effect September 1, 2019.

SUPPORTERS
SAY:

CSHB 2345 would help address the need to better understand and communicate disaster risks to Texas communities, plan for disaster events, and take steps to mitigate them. It would do this by establishing the Institute for a Disaster Resilient Texas and the Flood Event Partnership Options Special Study Committee and by requiring a flood mitigation project inventory from the Texas Water Development Board.

Institute for a Disaster Resilient Texas. The bill would build on recommendations of the Governor's Commission to Rebuild Texas, which highlighted the importance of communicating risk to Texas communities and called for the creation of an institute within the Texas A&M University System to contribute to accomplishing this task. As established under the bill, the institute would help homeowners and businesses understand risks to their property through web-based analytical and visual tools to communicate flood risk. The institute also would serve as a venue for scientists, policymakers, and entrepreneurs to collaborate and learn and would produce data and technology to help inform public policy decisions.

Projects inventory. Under the bill, the Texas Water Development Board would create an inventory of flood mitigation and resiliency projects and a prioritization methodology, which would help to guide local, state, and federal decision makers.

Flood Event Partnership Options Special Study Committee. CSHB 2345 would enact another recommendation of the Governor's Commission by establishing the Flood Event Partnership Options Special Study Committee to study the possible structure, means of administration, and membership of state-local partnerships. While primary responsibility for designing and implementing flood mitigation projects should rest with local jurisdictions closest to the problem of flooding, state government also has a role as a representative of state interests that cross jurisdictional lines and as a source of assistance. The bill would help these stakeholders

to collaborate effectively.

The bill would come with a minimal start-up cost to ramp up implementation at the Water Development Board and at Texas A&M, which would be expected to draw down \$5 million in federal funding for the program.

OPPONENTS
SAY:

No concerns identified.

NOTES:

According to the Legislative Budget Board, the bill would have a negative fiscal impact of \$161,054 on general revenue related funds through the biennium ending August 31, 2021.