

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center
2001 S0769/1

S.B. 1344
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Intergovernmental Relations
4/10/2001
As Filed

DIGEST AND PURPOSE

In an emergency situation, firefighters and police officers often must deal with people in a state of panic or shock. Any obstacle to effective communication, such as a language barrier, could be dangerous. Firefighters and police officers who are fluent in languages other than English could break through this barrier, potentially saving lives. As proposed, S.B. 1344 mandates compensation for firefighters and police officers who are fluent in another language.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

This bill does not expressly grant any additional rulemaking authority to a state officer, institution, or agency.

SECTION BY SECTION ANALYSIS

SECTION 1. Amends Chapter 141, Local Government Code, by adding Subchapter C, as follows:

SUBCHAPTER C. ADDITIONAL WAGES FOR CERTAIN MUNICIPAL FIREFIGHTERS AND POLICE OFFICERS

Sec. 141.051. DEFINITIONS. Defines “additional language skill,” “firefighter,” and “police officer.”

Sec. 141.052. ENTITLEMENT TO ADDITIONAL WAGES FOR CERTAIN SERVICES. Authorizes a fire or police department to designate a firefighter or police officer as a bilingual interpreter and provides that such a designee is entitled to appropriate additional wages under certain conditions.

Sec. 141.053. DEPARTMENTAL GUIDELINES. Requires a fire or police department that designates a firefighter or police officer as a bilingual interpreter under Section 141.052 to establish certain guidelines for certain purposes.

Sec. 141.054. CIVIL PENALTY. Provides that a fire or police department that fails to compensate a firefighter or police officer entitled and qualified to receive additional wages under this subchapter and the departmental guidelines established under Section 141.053 is liable to the firefighter or police officer for a certain amount in damages.

SECTION 2. Amends Section 143.113(c), Local Government Code, to require, rather than authorize, the municipality’s governing body to authorize assignment pay for bilingual personnel performing specialized functions as interpreters or translators in their respective departments.

SECTION 3. (a) Provides that, except as provided by Subsection (b) of this section, this Act takes effect September 1, 2001.

(b) Provides that Section 141.054, Local Government Code, as added by this Act,

takes effect January 1, 2002.

(c) Provides that the change in the law made by Section 141.054, Local Government Code, applies only to the use of additional language skills on or after January 1, 2002.