

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center

H.B. 737
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Intergovernmental Relations
5/14/2015
Engrossed

AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

The citizens of central Texas pay a service fee for every communications device they own or operate. These fees are statutorily set and can only be used for 9-1-1 expenses. The current system requires that the fees be remitted to the State of Texas for redistribution to the Texas Council of Governments. Historically these funds were remitted in full, but in the mid-1990s they became subject to the appropriations process. This resulted in an average of 60 to 68 percent of the funding, which local government entities are forced to subsidize with local funds. The current 9-1-1 system operates over analog trunks, which are owned and maintained by the various telephone systems. This monopoly creates higher costs for a system with limited lifespan and usefulness. An analog system cannot use digital data such as texts and digital feeds and is incompatible with next generation technology being deployed in major metropolitan areas. This bill creates a district which will receive 100 percent of communication fees, approximately one million dollars annually, as originally intended by the 9-1-1 enabling legislation. This additional revenue would be used to upgrade the system to next generation capability over the next two biennia and could result in the fee being reduced.

H.B. 737 amends current law creating regional emergency communications districts; authorizes the issuance of bonds; and authorizes a fee.

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 772, Health and Safety Code, by adding Subchapter H as follows:

SUBCHAPTER H. REGIONAL EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS DISTRICTS: CERTAIN STATE PLANNING REGIONS WITH POPULATIONS OF AT LEAST 425,000

Sets forth standard language for the creation of regional emergency communications districts for certain state planning regions with populations of at least 425,000. Sets forth standards, procedures and criteria for:

Definition and application of this subchapter (Sections 772.551 and 772.552);

Creation, purpose, intent, and approval of the district (Sections 772.553-772.555);

Size, budget, governing body, appointment process, and terms for the board of directors of the district (Sections 772.556-772.560);

Powers and duties of the district, allowable expenses, number and location identification, and public review (Sections 772.561-772.570);

Dissolution procedures (Section 772.571)

General financial provisions and authority to impose taxes and to issue bonds (Sections 772.572-772.580); and

Transfer of assets (Section 772.581).

SECTION 2. Amends Section 771.001(3), Health and Safety Code, as follows:

(3) Defines "emergency communication district" as:

(A) a public agency or group of public agencies acting jointly that provided 9-1-1 service before September 1, 1987, or that had voted or contracted before that date to provide that service; or

(B) a district created under Subchapter B, C, D, F, G, or H, Chapter 772.

SECTION 3. Effective date: September 1, 2015.