

By: Hegar

S.B. No. 1440

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT

1
2 relating to certain duties of the Office of Rural Community Affairs
3 relating to assisting, and providing information regarding,
4 volunteer fire departments in rural areas.

5 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF TEXAS:

6 SECTION 1. Section 487.051, Government Code, is amended to
7 read as follows:

8 Sec. 487.051. POWERS AND DUTIES. The office shall:

9 (1) develop a rural policy for the state in
10 consultation with local leaders representing all facets of rural
11 community life, academic and industry experts, and state elected
12 and appointed officials with interests in rural communities;

13 (2) work with other state agencies and officials to
14 improve the results and the cost-effectiveness of state programs
15 affecting rural communities through coordination of efforts;

16 (3) develop programs to improve the leadership
17 capacity of rural community leaders;

18 (4) monitor developments that have a substantial
19 effect on rural Texas communities, especially actions of state
20 government, and compile an annual report describing and evaluating
21 the condition of rural communities;

22 (5) administer the federal community development
23 block grant nonentitlement program;

24 (6) administer programs supporting rural health care

1 as provided by this chapter;

2 (7) perform research to determine the most beneficial
3 and cost-effective ways to improve the welfare of rural
4 communities;

5 (8) ensure that the office qualifies as the state's
6 office of rural health for the purpose of receiving grants from the
7 Office of Rural Health Policy of the United States Department of
8 Health and Human Services under 42 U.S.C. Section 254r;

9 (9) manage the state's Medicare rural hospital
10 flexibility program under 42 U.S.C. Section 1395i-4; ~~and~~

11 (10) seek state and federal money available for
12 economic development in rural areas for programs under this
13 chapter; and

14 (11) work with interested persons to assist volunteer
15 fire departments and emergency services districts in rural areas.

16 SECTION 2. Section 487.060, Government Code, as added by
17 Chapter 634, Acts of the 79th Legislature, Regular Session, 2005,
18 is amended to read as follows:

19 Sec. 487.060. EMERGENCY SERVICES DISTRICT PROGRAM. (a) The
20 office shall establish a program to provide interested rural
21 communities with:

22 (1) general information about emergency services
23 districts;

24 (2) information and training related to the
25 establishment of an emergency services district; and

26 (3) technical assistance related to the
27 implementation of an emergency services district.

1 (b) The program may:

2 (1) assist fire departments in rural areas with the
3 recruitment and retention of volunteer firefighters;

4 (2) provide to fire departments in rural areas
5 information relating to assistance programs offered to rural
6 volunteer firefighters, including the federal Staffing for
7 Adequate Fire and Emergency Response grant program to help fire
8 departments increase staffing and deployment capabilities; and

9 (3) provide to rural homeowners information relating
10 to the benefits of volunteer fire departments, including a
11 reduction in homeowners insurance risk ratings, lower homeowners
12 insurance rates, and better fire protection.

13 SECTION 3. This Act takes effect immediately if it receives
14 a vote of two-thirds of all the members elected to each house, as
15 provided by Section 39, Article III, Texas Constitution. If this
16 Act does not receive the vote necessary for immediate effect, this
17 Act takes effect September 1, 2007.