

1-1 By: Hegar S.B. No. 1440
1-2 (In the Senate - Filed March 8, 2007; March 20, 2007, read
1-3 first time and referred to Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural
1-4 Affairs and Coastal Resources; April 18, 2007, reported favorably
1-5 from Committee on Natural Resources by the following vote: Yeas 9,
1-6 Nays 0; April 18, 2007, sent to printer.)

1-7 A BILL TO BE ENTITLED
1-8 AN ACT

1-9 relating to certain duties of the Office of Rural Community Affairs
1-10 relating to assisting volunteer fire departments and emergency
1-11 services districts in rural areas.

1-12 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF TEXAS:

1-13 SECTION 1. Section 487.051, Government Code, is amended to
1-14 read as follows:

1-15 Sec. 487.051. POWERS AND DUTIES. The office shall:

1-16 (1) develop a rural policy for the state in
1-17 consultation with local leaders representing all facets of rural
1-18 community life, academic and industry experts, and state elected
1-19 and appointed officials with interests in rural communities;

1-20 (2) work with other state agencies and officials to
1-21 improve the results and the cost-effectiveness of state programs
1-22 affecting rural communities through coordination of efforts;

1-23 (3) develop programs to improve the leadership
1-24 capacity of rural community leaders;

1-25 (4) monitor developments that have a substantial
1-26 effect on rural Texas communities, especially actions of state
1-27 government, and compile an annual report describing and evaluating
1-28 the condition of rural communities;

1-29 (5) administer the federal community development
1-30 block grant nonentitlement program;

1-31 (6) administer programs supporting rural health care
1-32 as provided by this chapter;

1-33 (7) perform research to determine the most beneficial
1-34 and cost-effective ways to improve the welfare of rural
1-35 communities;

1-36 (8) ensure that the office qualifies as the state's
1-37 office of rural health for the purpose of receiving grants from the
1-38 Office of Rural Health Policy of the United States Department of
1-39 Health and Human Services under 42 U.S.C. Section 254r;

1-40 (9) manage the state's Medicare rural hospital
1-41 flexibility program under 42 U.S.C. Section 1395i-4; ~~and~~

1-42 (10) seek state and federal money available for
1-43 economic development in rural areas for programs under this
1-44 chapter; and

1-45 (11) work with interested persons to assist volunteer
1-46 fire departments and emergency services districts in rural areas.

1-47 SECTION 2. Section 487.060, Government Code, as added by
1-48 Chapter 634, Acts of the 79th Legislature, Regular Session, 2005,
1-49 is amended to read as follows:

1-50 Sec. 487.060. EMERGENCY SERVICES DISTRICT PROGRAM.

1-51 (a) The office shall establish a program to provide interested
1-52 rural communities with:

1-53 (1) general information about emergency services
1-54 districts;

1-55 (2) information and training related to the
1-56 establishment of an emergency services district; and

1-57 (3) technical assistance related to the
1-58 implementation of an emergency services district.

1-59 (b) The program may:

1-60 (1) assist fire departments in rural areas with the
1-61 recruitment and retention of volunteer firefighters;

1-62 (2) provide to fire departments in rural areas
1-63 information relating to assistance programs offered to rural
1-64 volunteer firefighters, including the federal Staffing for

2-1 Adequate Fire and Emergency Response grant program to help fire
2-2 departments increase staffing and deployment capabilities; and
2-3 (3) provide to rural homeowners information relating
2-4 to the benefits of volunteer fire departments, including a
2-5 reduction in homeowners insurance risk ratings, lower homeowners
2-6 insurance rates, and better fire protection.

2-7 SECTION 3. This Act takes effect immediately if it receives
2-8 a vote of two-thirds of all the members elected to each house, as
2-9 provided by Section 39, Article III, Texas Constitution. If this
2-10 Act does not receive the vote necessary for immediate effect, this
2-11 Act takes effect September 1, 2007.

2-12 * * * * *