

LEGISLATIVE BUDGET BOARD
Austin, Texas

FISCAL NOTE, 80TH LEGISLATIVE REGULAR SESSION

May 10, 2007

TO: Honorable Tracy King, Chair, House Committee on Border & International Affairs

FROM: John S. O'Brien, Director, Legislative Budget Board

IN RE: SB822 by Wentworth (Relating to the creation of the atmosphere modification research program and center and the administration of the weather modification and control program.),
As Engrossed

Estimated Two-year Net Impact to General Revenue Related Funds for SB822, As Engrossed: a negative impact of (\$359,697) through the biennium ending August 31, 2009.

The bill would make no appropriation but could provide the legal basis for an appropriation of funds to implement the provisions of the bill.

General Revenue-Related Funds, Five-Year Impact:

Fiscal Year	Probable Net Positive/(Negative) Impact to General Revenue Related Funds
2008	(\$181,731)
2009	(\$177,966)
2010	(\$177,966)
2011	(\$177,966)
2012	(\$177,966)

All Funds, Five-Year Impact:

Fiscal Year	Probable Savings/(Cost) from <i>GENERAL REVENUE FUND</i> 1	Change in Number of State Employees from FY 2007
2008	(\$181,731)	1.0
2009	(\$177,966)	1.0
2010	(\$177,966)	1.0
2011	(\$177,966)	1.0
2012	(\$177,966)	1.0

Fiscal Analysis

The bill would establish the Atmosphere Modification Research Program, a competitive grant program for researchers at Texas institutions of higher education that specialize in weather modification or atmospheric science, and would require that the Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA) serve as the administrator of the grant program.

The bill specifies that an independent evaluation of the program is to be conducted by a team of experts not associated with the program or TDA during the second year of the program and every two years thereafter.

The bill provides that TDA establish an Atmosphere Modification Research Center at Texas Tech University (TTU). The purpose of the center would be to conduct basic and applied research to increase understanding of precipitation and the ability to control precipitation to decrease the damaging effects of drought, hail, and flooding.

The bill would create the Atmosphere Modification Research Center Fund as a trust fund with the Comptroller. TDA would administer the fund, which would consist of gifts, grants, and other donations; revenue from the operation of the center; and legislative appropriations. The fund would only be used to finance the center's atmosphere modification research.

The bill provides that TTU Board of Regents shall select a director and staff members from TTU to staff the center and that TDA shall establish a scientific advisory board to advise the Atmosphere Modification Research Center on research, priorities, guidelines, and procedures.

The bill would also transfer administration of the Weather Modification and Control Program from the Texas Department of Licensing and Regulation (TDLR) to TDA.

Methodology

TDA anticipates that one FTE would be necessary to administer the Atmosphere Modification Research Program for a total cost \$76,974 a fiscal year. The agency anticipates \$2,757 in other operating expenses in fiscal year 2008 and \$992 in each subsequent fiscal year. The agency also estimates providing \$100,000 each fiscal year in grants. For purposes of this fiscal note, it is assumed that funding for the program would be provided by General Revenue.

The bill would require TDA to coordinate an independent evaluation of the program by a team of experts not associated with the program or TDA. For purposes of this analysis, it is assumed that the Weather Modification Advisory Committee, which the bill provides would be transferred to TDA, can serve as the independent team of experts, resulting in no significant fiscal impact to the state.

It is not anticipated that there would be a significant cost to TTU because the bill provides that the new Atmosphere Modification Research Center would be staffed with existing TTU employees.

The bill would allow gifts, grants and donations as well as revenue from operation of the center to be deposited into the new Atmosphere Modification Research Center Fund. The state could receive revenue from these sources, but according to the Comptroller of Public Accounts, neither this revenue nor the amount of money the Legislature might appropriate to the new fund can be estimated.

The bill would transfer the Weather Modification and Control Program from TDLR to TDA. This transfer is not anticipated to have a significant fiscal impact on the state.

The fund, account, or revenue dedication included in the bill would be subject to funds consolidation review by the current Legislature.

Technology

Start-up figures include \$2,000 for the purchase of one new desktop computer and software.

Local Government Impact

No fiscal implication to units of local government is anticipated.

Source Agencies: 304 Comptroller of Public Accounts, 452 Department of Licensing and Regulation, 551 Department of Agriculture, 768 Texas Tech University System Administration, 592 Soil and Water Conservation Board

LBB Staff: JOB, CL, DB, ZS, JF