

BILL ANALYSIS

H.B. 1861

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Homeland Security & Public Safety

Committee Report (Unamended)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

The mission of the Commission on State Emergency Communications (Commission) is to preserve and enhance public safety and health in Texas through reliable access to emergency telecommunications services, including 911 service, and poison prevention, treatment, and education services. To achieve its 911-related mission, the Commission contracts with the 24 Regional Planning Commissions to provide 911 service to about one-third of the population in Texas in mostly rural areas. Emergency Communications Districts and Municipal Emergency Communications Districts provide 911 service to the rest of the state.

The Commission is subject to the Sunset Act and will be abolished on or before September 1, 2011, unless continued by the Legislature. The Sunset Advisory Commission found that Texas has a clear and ongoing need to provide emergency communications services, but the current 911 system has not kept pace with evolving technologies. As a result of the Sunset Advisory Commission's recommendations, the provisions in H.B. 1861 aim to clarify the Commission's authority regarding the development, implementation, and management of a state-level digital network, which will be a part of a statewide Next Generation 911 system; ensure the Commission has expertise necessary to help implement the network and system; and make additional statutory modifications.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

It is the committee's opinion that this bill does not expressly grant any additional rulemaking authority to a state officer, department, agency, or institution.

ANALYSIS

Continues the Commission on State Emergency Communications for 12 years

H.B. 1861 continues the Commission as an independent agency responsible for the provision of 911 and poison control services statewide for 12 years.

Clarifies the Commission's authority to coordinate a state-level emergency services network

H.B. 1861 authorizes the Commission, with the assistance of an advisory committee, to coordinate the development, implementation, and management of a state-level emergency services Internet Protocol network. The bill defines state-level emergency services Internet Protocol network as a private Internet Protocol network or virtual network used for communications between and among public safety answering points and other entities that support or are supported by public safety answering points in providing emergency call handling and response. The bill also specifies the network will be a part of the Texas Next Generation Emergency Communications System. If the Commission acts on its authority to coordinate the interconnected state-level emergency services Internet Protocol network, the bill requires the Commission to set policy and oversee agency involvement in developing and implementing the network.

Authorizes the establishment of the Emergency Communications Advisory Committee

H.B. 1861 requires the Commission to establish the Emergency Communications Advisory Committee to assist with the development, implementation, and management of the interconnected, state-level emergency services Internet Protocol network, if the Commission acts on its authority to coordinate the network. The advisory committee must include at least one representative from a regional planning commission, one representative from an emergency communication district, and one representative from a municipal emergency communication district. The bill also requires the Commission, in appointing the advisory committee members, to consult with the regional planning commissions and emergency communication districts throughout the state. H.B. 1861 requires the Commission to ensure that each member of the advisory committee has appropriate training, experience and knowledge in 911 systems and network management to assist in the implementation and operation of a complex network.

Applies a standard Sunset across-the-board recommendation

H.B. 1861 adds standard Sunset language requiring the Commission to develop a policy that encourages the use of negotiated rulemaking and alternative dispute resolution.

EFFECTIVE DATE

Upon passage, or, if the Act does not receive the necessary vote, the Act takes effect September 1, 2011.