

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center
83R4330 EAH-D

S.B. 766
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Intergovernmental Relations
3/19/2013
As Filed

AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

There is no greater, longer-running expression of volunteerism in United States history than that of the volunteer fire service, which still saves taxpayers billions of dollars in avoided losses each year. Almost three-fourths of the nation's 1.1 million firefighters are volunteers, and two-thirds of all fire departments are volunteer.

In Texas, there are approximately 879 volunteer fire departments and 187 departments that combine volunteer and professional firefighters in Texas. Overall, volunteers comprise 77 percent of the state's fire service.

As the population of the state continues to grow, along with the threat of wildfires, the need for volunteer firefighters also grows. Despite increasing demand, funding for emergency services continues to decline while the threat of increased regulation continues to rise. This trend is particularly burdensome for volunteers who risk their lives and give their time solely for the purpose of serving their communities.

The purpose of this bill is to help slow the decline in the number of volunteer firefighters willing to serve the State of Texas by prohibiting unnecessary government regulation.

As proposed, S.B. 766 amends current law relating to prohibiting a requirement that a volunteer firefighter obtain a license or certification.

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 Section 419.071, Government Code, by adding Subsection (e), to provide that, except as provided by Section 419.072 (Obtaining Paid Employment as a Fire Fighter), a volunteer fire fighter is not required to complete the voluntary certification program under this section.

SECTION 2. Amends Chapter 180, Local Government Code, by adding Section 180.008, as follows:

Sec. 180.008. LICENSE OR CERTIFICATION NOT REQUIRED FOR VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTER. Prohibits a political subdivision from requiring a volunteer firefighter to obtain a license or certification in order to be a volunteer firefighter.

SECTION 3. Effective date: upon passage or September 1, 2013.