

## **BILL ANALYSIS**

Senate Research Center  
85R2611 TSR-D

S.B. 580  
By: Estes  
Natural Resources & Economic Development  
3/31/2017  
As Filed

### **AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT**

Interested parties contend that 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. Recent reports indicate that almost three-fourths of the nation's firefighters are volunteers and that two-thirds of all fire departments are volunteer. In Texas, there are over 800 volunteer fire departments and nearly 200 departments that combine volunteer and career firefighters. Moreover, volunteers comprise approximately 75 percent of the state's overall fire service.

As the population of the state continues to grow, drought conditions persist, along with the threat of wildfires, the need for volunteer firefighters also grows. However, there are concerns that, despite this increasing demand, funding for emergency services continues to decline while the threat of increased governmental regulation continues to rise and that this trend is particularly burdensome for volunteers. S.B. 580 seeks to slow the decline in the number of volunteer firefighters willing to serve Texas by prohibiting certain governmental regulation of volunteer firefighters and members of industrial emergency response teams.

As proposed, S.B. 580 amends current law relating to the licensure or certification of volunteer firefighters and members of industrial emergency response teams.

### **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 Subchapter Z, Chapter 419, Government Code, by adding Section 419.910, as follows:

Sec. 419.910. CERTAIN REGULATION PROHIBITED. (a) Defines "state agency" and "volunteer firefighter."

(b) Prohibits a state agency from requiring a volunteer firefighter to obtain a license or certification in order to be volunteer firefighter or from requiring a member of an industrial emergency response team (team) to obtain a license or certification in order to be a member of a team.

SECTION 2. Effective date: upon passage or September 1, 2017.