

BILL ANALYSIS

H.B. 2166
By: Raymond
Homeland Security & Public Safety
Committee Report (Unamended)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

Concerns have been raised regarding reports indicating the potential for extensive and severe wildfires in Texas over the next few decades. Fire departments, especially under-resourced departments and those subject to increasing budgetary constraints, need to be equipped to handle the projected increases in wildfires. In addition to wildfires, urban areas are susceptible to extreme drought, creating extensive infrastructure damage and threatening normal city operations. Without proper planning and resources, communities across the state will not be prepared for these events, which need to be studied comprehensively at the state level in order to allow state and local agencies to collaborate on planning and mitigation efforts. H.B. 2166 seeks to address this issue by directing the Texas Division of Emergency Management to conduct a statewide study assessing the future impacts and costs of drought and wildfires, along with recommendations for planning and mitigation efforts.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE IMPACT

It is the committee's opinion that this bill does not expressly create a criminal offense, increase the punishment for an existing criminal offense or category of offenses, or change the eligibility of a person for community supervision, parole, or mandatory supervision.

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

H.B. 2166 requires the Texas Division of Emergency Management (TDEM) to conduct a study regarding the potential effects of droughts and wildfires in Texas over the next 50 years. The bill requires the study to include an assessment of the following:

- the projected ecological effects of droughts and wildfires;
- the projected effects of droughts on the temperature in urban areas;
- the projected economic effects of droughts and wildfires;
- vulnerabilities to droughts and wildfires;
- the availability of local resources to combat wildfires and adapt to droughts; and
- potential mitigation strategies for reducing the risk of and damage caused by droughts and wildfires.

The bill sets out the entities from which TDEM must solicit and consider information in conducting the study. The bill requires TDEM, not later than March 1, 2022, to submit a written report that includes a summary of the study and any legislative recommendations based on the study to the governor, the lieutenant governor, the speaker of the house of representatives, each standing legislative committee with primary jurisdiction over TDEM, the Department of Public Safety, the Department of Agriculture, the Parks and Wildlife Department, and the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality. These provisions expire January 1, 2023.

EFFECTIVE DATE

On passage, or, if the bill does not receive the necessary vote, September 1, 2021.