S.B. No. 709

AN ACT

relating to the continuation and functions of the Texas Commission on Fire Protection.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF TEXAS:

SECTION 1.  Section 419.003, Government Code, is amended to read as follows:

Sec. 419.003.  SUNSET PROVISION. The Texas Commission on Fire Protection is subject to Chapter 325 (Texas Sunset Act). Unless continued in existence as provided by that chapter, the commission is abolished [~~and this chapter expires~~] September 1, 2033 [~~2021~~].

SECTION 2.  Section 419.004(d), Government Code, is amended to read as follows:

(d)  Appointments to the commission shall be made without regard to the race, color, disability [~~handicap~~], sex, religion, age, or national origin of the appointees.

SECTION 3.  Section 419.0071, Government Code, is amended by amending Subsection (b) and adding Subsection (d) to read as follows:

(b)  The training program must provide the person with information regarding:

(1)  the law governing [~~legislation that created the~~] commission operations;

(2)  the programs, functions, rules, and budget of the commission;

(3)  the scope of and limitations on the rulemaking authority of the commission;

(4)  the results of the most recent formal audit of the commission;

(5) [~~(4)~~]  the requirements of:

(A)  laws relating to open meetings, public information, administrative procedure, and disclosing conflicts of interest; and

(B)  other laws applicable to members of a state policy-making body in performing their duties; and

(6) [~~(5)~~]  any applicable ethics policies adopted by the commission or the Texas Ethics Commission.

(d)  The executive director of the commission shall create a training manual that includes the information required by Subsection (b). The executive director shall distribute a copy of the training manual annually to each member of the commission. Each member of the commission shall sign and submit to the executive director a statement acknowledging that the member received and has reviewed the training manual.

SECTION 4.  Section 419.008(f), Government Code, is amended to read as follows:

(f)  The commission may appoint advisory committees to assist it in the performance of its duties. A member of an advisory committee appointed by the commission or otherwise appointed under this chapter may not receive compensation for service on the advisory committee. A member appointed under this chapter is entitled to receive reimbursement, subject to any applicable limitation on reimbursement provided by the General Appropriations Act, for actual and necessary expenses incurred in performing services as a member of the advisory committee. Members appointed under this chapter shall serve six-year staggered terms but may not be appointed to more than two consecutive terms.

SECTION 5.  Section 419.011(c), Government Code, is amended to read as follows:

(c)  The commission shall periodically notify the complaint parties of the status of the complaint until final disposition unless the notice would jeopardize an investigation.

SECTION 6.  Sections 419.026(a) and (d), Government Code, are amended to read as follows:

(a)  The commission shall set and collect a fee for each certificate that the commission issues or renews under this subchapter, except that if a person holds more than one certificate the commission may collect only one fee [~~each year~~] for the renewal of those certificates. The commission by rule shall set the amount of the fee under this subsection in an amount designed to recover the commission's costs in connection with issuing certificates under this subchapter, including the cost to the commission of obtaining fingerprint-based criminal history record information under Section 419.0325. The employing agency or entity shall pay the fee in the manner prescribed by commission rule. A certificate issued under this subchapter is valid for one or two years as determined by commission rule [~~The certificate must be renewed annually~~].

(d)  The commission shall send the fees authorized by Subsection (a) and Section 419.033(b) to the comptroller. The comptroller shall deposit [~~a portion of the fees collected into a special account in the general revenue fund dedicated for use by the commission. In any state fiscal biennium, the comptroller may not deposit into the account fees in an amount that exceeds the amount appropriated to the commission for that biennium, less any other amount appropriated to the commission from a source other than the fees. The account is exempt from the application of Section 403.095. The comptroller shall deposit the remainder of~~] the fees in the general revenue fund.

SECTION 7.  Subchapter B, Chapter 419, Government Code, is amended by adding Section 419.0265 to read as follows:

Sec. 419.0265.  RECIPROCITY. (a) The commission may waive any prerequisite to obtaining a certificate under this subchapter for an applicant who holds a license or certificate issued by another jurisdiction:

(1)  that has licensing or certification requirements substantially equivalent to those of this state; or

(2)  with which this state has a reciprocity agreement.

(b)  The commission may make an agreement with another state to allow for certification by reciprocity.

SECTION 8.  Section 419.032(c), Government Code, is amended to read as follows:

(c)  Fire protection personnel who receive temporary or probationary appointment and who fail to satisfactorily complete a basic course in fire protection, as prescribed by the commission, before one year after the date of the original appointment forfeit, and shall be removed from, the position. A temporary or probationary appointment may not be extended beyond one year by renewal of appointment or otherwise, except that on petition of a fire department one year or more after the date of the forfeiture and removal, the commission may reinstate the person's temporary or probationary employment. Fire protection personnel must complete a commission-approved training course in fire suppression before being assigned full-time to fire suppression duties. The commission may, on application by a fire department [~~and after receiving the comments and advice of the fire fighter advisory committee~~], extend from one year to a period not to exceed two years the time allowed for fire protection personnel receiving a temporary or probationary appointment to successfully complete a basic course in fire protection.

SECTION 9.  Sections 419.008(e), 419.0082, and 419.023, Government Code, are repealed.

SECTION 10.  (a) Except as provided by Subsection (b) of this section, Section 419.0071, Government Code, as amended by this Act, applies to a member of the Texas Commission on Fire Protection appointed before, on, or after the effective date of this Act.

(b)  A member of the Texas Commission on Fire Protection who, before the effective date of this Act, completed the training program required by Section 419.0071, Government Code, as the applicable law existed before the effective date of this Act, is required to complete additional training only on the subjects added by this Act to the training program required by Section 419.0071, Government Code. A member described by this subsection may not vote, deliberate, or be counted as a member in attendance at a meeting of the commission held on or after December 1, 2021, until the member completes the additional training.

SECTION 11.  This Act takes effect September 1, 2021.

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I hereby certify that S.B. No. 709 passed the Senate on April 9, 2021, by the following vote: Yeas 31, Nays 0; and that the Senate concurred in House amendment on May 27, 2021, by the following vote: Yeas 31, Nays 0.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_    Secretary of the Senate

I hereby certify that S.B. No. 709 passed the House, with amendment, on May 19, 2021, by the following vote: Yeas 145, Nays 1, one present not voting.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_    Chief Clerk of the House

Approved:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_             Date\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_           Governor