

BILL ANALYSIS

H.B. 18
By: Bonnen
Disaster Preparedness & Flooding, Select
Committee Report (Unamended)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

Natural disasters such as the Smokehouse Creek fire in 2024 and, more recently, the Central Texas floods in July of 2025 have highlighted the need for early warning and emergency notification systems. Furthermore, the bill author has informed the committee that emergency response agencies responding to these significant weather events have indicated that the lack of interoperable emergency radio systems have constrained response efforts. The 88th Legislature established the broadband infrastructure fund to be administered by the comptroller of public accounts to support a state-driven approach towards addressing the state's connectivity needs. H.B. 18 seeks to expand the authorized uses of the fund to include early warning and emergency notification systems and interoperable emergency radio systems that would be used during natural disasters and other emergency response events. The bill seeks to ensure that first responders are equipped with critically important interoperable emergency radio systems and to provide grant funding to support the deployment and operation of early warning and emergency systems.

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. 18 amends the Government Code, as effective September 1, 2025, to expand the authorized uses of the broadband infrastructure fund to include supporting the deployment and operation, including by funding costs for equipment, operation, and administration, of the following:

- early warning and emergency systems to provide notifications of natural disasters and other emergencies; and
- interoperable emergency radio systems.

H.B. 18 authorizes the broadband development office to award contracts, grants, low-interest loans, and other financial incentives to support the deployment and operation of such early warning and emergency systems and emergency radio systems. The bill authorizes the office, in awarding such financial incentives, to coordinate with the governor's office to support the governor's interoperable radio communications program. The bill establishes that an award granted under these provisions does not affect the eligibility of a telecommunications provider to receive support from the state universal service fund.

H.B. 18 clarifies that the prohibition against the broadband development office taking certain actions with regard to the broadband development program applies with respect to making an award under the program.

EFFECTIVE DATE

91st day after the last day of the legislative session.