

- SUBJECT:** Requiring report on projected environmental changes for agency planning
- COMMITTEE:** International Trade and Intergovernmental Affairs — committee substitute recommended
- VOTE:** 6 ayes — Anchia, Lozano, R. Anderson, Bernal, Burrows, Koop
0 nays
1 absent — Scott Turner
- WITNESSES:** For — Luke Metzger, Environment Texas; Laura Blackburn, League of Women Voters of Texas; Cyrus Reed, Lone Star Chapter Sierra Club; Tom “Smitty” Smith, Public Citizen, Inc.; Bee Moorhead, Texas Impact; Kenneth Flippin; (*Registered, but did not testify:* Theodore (Tod) Wickersham; Kate Zerrenner, Environmental Defense Fund; David Weinberg, Texas League of Conservation Voters; Chloe Lieberknecht, The Nature Conservancy; David Matiella, U.S. Green Building Council)

Against — (*Registered, but did not testify:* Steve Perry, Chevron USA; Richard A. (Tony) Bennett, Texas Association of Manufacturers; Patrick Tarlton, Texas Chemical Council; Bill Peacock and Leigh Thompson, Texas Public Policy Foundation; William Hussey)

On — Ursula Parks, Legislative Budget Board; (*Registered, but did not testify:* Steve Hagle, Vincent Meiller, Texas Commission on Environmental Quality; Katy Sellers, General Land Office)
- BACKGROUND:** State agencies are required by Government Code, sec. 2056.002(a) to issue strategic plans of operation every two years to cover the five years that follow. These plans are created to identify and prepare for issues which may affect that agency’s operations.
- DIGEST:** CSHB 2571 would amend the elements to be included in an agency’s strategic plan by adding requirements for certain state agencies.

Agency strategic plan requirements. The bill would require strategic plans to include an analysis of expected changes, including adverse impacts, in the services provided by the agency because of projected changes in weather, water availability, and climate variability as determined by the Texas state climatologist's report. These requirements would apply only to agencies most affected by these environmental changes, including the Texas Department of Agriculture, the Public Utility Commission, and the Texas Water Development Board, among others.

Each selected agency also would be required to include a description of the means and strategies for meeting the agency's needs and managing the risks associated with the projected changes for five years beginning with the next odd-numbered year, and for at least 20 years and not longer than 50 years beginning with the next odd-numbered year. For this description of the means and strategies, each agency also would be required to identify any financial resources and analyze partnerships between the agency and other state, local, and federal government entities that would be needed to carry out those means and strategies.

State climatologist report. The bill would require the Texas state climatologist to provide a report on projected changes in weather, water availability, and climate variability across the state. The report would be provided to the Legislative Budget Board (LBB) for state agencies to use to develop their strategic plans by February 1 of each even-numbered year. It would include projected changes for a period of five years beginning with the next odd-numbered year and at least 20 years and not longer than 50 years beginning with the next odd-numbered year. The bill would list the specific environmental projections that the report could include, including projections of precipitation, temperature, and sea level changes.

The bill would allow the Texas state climatologist to use a forecast created outside the office of the state climatologist if the climatologist considers it suitable for the requirements of the report.

The LBB would be required to distribute the climatologist's report to the state agencies identified in CSHB 2571 by March 1 of each even-numbered year.

This bill would take effect September 1, 2015.

**SUPPORTERS
SAY:**

Agency strategic plan requirements. CSHB 2571 would give agencies most impacted by weather changes, water availability, and climate variability needed information for strategic agency plans to prepare for ways that changes in weather could affect their operations. The agencies identified in the bill would not be required to use specific portions of the climatologist's report — it would be available to use only as they saw necessary or appropriate. No agency would be penalized for failure to use the information.

Texas has a unique and varied climate that could pose threats to the operations of government agencies if they did not consider informed projections in developing their strategic plans. Forecasts in the climatologist's report are reliable because the climatologist develops the report based on educated, informed studies and accepted scientific research.

State climatologist report. The bill would give the state's expert climatologist discretion to decide which forecasts from outside the climatologist's office to use in the report. The climatologist already has discretion to decide what appears in the report, so it would be appropriate for the climatologist to make the final decision about using outside forecasts.

**OPPONENTS
SAY:**

Agency strategic plan requirements. CSHB 2571 could weaken each agency's strategic plan by requiring them to incorporate limited and potentially inaccurate information from the state climatologist. Much of the information is based on far-off projections that are nearly impossible to estimate with enough accuracy to benefit the agencies' plans.

The bill would duplicate the activities of regional water groups, which

already are projecting water conditions every five years as part of the state water plan.

State climatologist report. The bill would not include any particular requirements for which forecasts developed outside the climatologist's office could be used for the report, potentially allowing information from less credible experts or organizations into the report.