

- SUBJECT:** Alert system to help apprehend those harming law enforcement officers
- COMMITTEE:** Homeland Security and Public Safety — favorable, without amendment
- VOTE:** 7 ayes — King, Nevárez, Burns, Hinojosa, Metcalf, Schaefer, Wray
1 nay — J. Johnson
1 absent — Holland
- SENATE VOTE:** On final passage, March 13 — 30-0
- WITNESSES:** For — (*Registered, but did not testify:* Andrew Romero, Austin Police Association; Chris Jones, Combined Law Enforcement Associations of Texas; David Sinclair, Game Warden Peace Officers Association; Jessica Anderson, Houston Police Department; Bill Elkin, Houston Police Retired Officers Association; James Jones, San Antonio Police Department; Jimmy Rodriguez, San Antonio Police Officers Association; Mitch Landry, Texas Municipal Police Association; James McLaughlin, Texas Police Chiefs Association; Deborah Ingersoll, Texas State Troopers Association)
Against — None
- BACKGROUND:** In 2008, Gov. Rick Perry signed an executive order creating a blue alert system to aid in the apprehension of those who kill or seriously injure local, state, or federal law enforcement officers. Some have called for this system to be codified in statute.
- DIGEST:** SB 1138 would require the Department of Public Safety (DPS) to develop and implement a statewide blue alert system to help apprehend individuals suspected of killing or causing serious bodily injury to a law enforcement officer.

The director of DPS would be the statewide coordinator of the alert system and would have to adopt rules for the system, including ones about

the procedures law enforcement agencies would use to verify whether an individual was suspected of killing or causing serious bodily injury to a law enforcement officer and was not yet apprehended. The director also would have to adopt procedures to report information about a missing suspect to designated media outlets in Texas. DPS would be required to recruit television and radio broadcasters, private entities, government entities, the public and others to help develop and implement the system.

The Texas Department of Transportation would be required to establish a plan to give information to the public through its existing system of dynamic message signs. The bill would establish the requirements for state agencies participating in the system, including a plan for providing information to their officers, investigators, and employees if the system had been activated.

The bill would establish the types of information that law enforcement agencies would have to give to DPS if they suspected someone of killing or causing serious bodily injury to a law enforcement officer and the person had not yet been apprehended. The bill also would establish how DPS would activate the system, including sending an alert to media outlets, law enforcement agencies, and state agencies. The bill also would establish the content of alerts and when alerts would be terminated.

The bill would take effect September 1, 2017.

NOTES:

A companion bill, HB 2189 by Krause, was referred to the Homeland Security and Public Safety Committee on March 21.