

- SUBJECT:** Offering leave for state employees who are search and rescue volunteers
- COMMITTEE:** State Affairs — favorable, without amendment
- VOTE:** 13 ayes — Phelan, Hernandez, Deshotel, Guerra, Harless, Holland, Hunter, P. King, Parker, Raymond, E. Rodriguez, Smithee, Springer
- 0 nays
- WITNESSES:** For — Travis Miller, Montgomery County Search and Rescue; (*Registered, but did not testify:* Joel Romo, Association of Texas EMS Professionals; Marshall Kenderdine, Texas Business First; Patrick Shipp, Texas Fire Chief Association; Walter West II, VHSE, RPT; Daniel Owens)
- Against — None
- BACKGROUND:** Government Code sec. 661.905(b) entitles state employees who are volunteer firefighters and emergency medical services volunteers to a paid leave of absence of up to five days to attend fire or emergency medical training conducted by a state agency or institution of higher education.
- Sec. 661.905(c) allows a state agency or institution of higher education to grant paid leave to volunteer firefighters and emergency medical services volunteers responding to an emergency fire or medical situation.
- DIGEST:** HB 41 would add state employees who were search and rescue volunteers to the list of emergency services volunteers entitled to a paid leave of absence for emergency training. It also would add search and rescue volunteers to the list of employees to whom a state agency or institution of higher education could grant paid leave to respond to an emergency event.
- The bill would define a search and rescue volunteer as an individual who without remuneration, except reimbursement for expenses, provides services for or on behalf of a search and rescue organization.
- This bill would take effect September 1, 2019.

**SUPPORTERS  
SAY:**

HB 41 would remove barriers to serving in a crisis by allowing state agencies and institutions of higher education to grant paid leave to search and rescue volunteers during a disaster in the same manner as they may grant it for volunteer firefighters and emergency medical services volunteers.

The bill's definition of search and rescue volunteers as members of an organization would provide oversight and structure, helping to ensure the time and resources of volunteers and the state were used effectively and responsibly.

**OPPONENTS  
SAY:**

No concerns identified.