

SUBJECT: Creating a task force to assist with long-term disaster recovery efforts

COMMITTEE: Homeland Security and Public Safety — committee substitute recommended

VOTE: 9 ayes — Nevárez, Paul, Burns, Calanni, Clardy, Goodwin, Israel, Lang, Tinderholt
0 nays

WITNESSES: For — Burt Mills, Aransas County; Patrick Rios, City of Rockport; William A. DiLibero, City of Port Lavaca; Kendrick Jimmy, Town of Fulton; Kay Roach, Town of Woodsboro, Refugio County; Ben Zeller, Victoria County; Jeff Bauknight; (*Registered, but did not testify*: Tammy Embrey, City of Corpus Christi; Jamaal Smith, City of Houston Mayor's Office; Fatima Mann, Community Advocacy and Healing Project; Jim Allison, County Judges and Commissioners Association of Texas; Daryl Fowler, DeWitt County; Priscilla Camacho, Dallas Regional Chamber; Trent Townsend, DRC Emergency Services; Joel Romo, Nueces County; Russell Schaffner, Tarrant County; Aurora Flores, Texas Association of Counties; Michael Barba, Texas Catholic Conference of Bishops; Gabriela Villareal, Texas Conference of Urban Counties; Mike Wisko, Texas Fire Chiefs Association; Julia Parenteau, Texas Realtors; Perry Fowler, Texas Water Infrastructure Network; Augustus Campbell, West Houston Association)

Against — None

On — Nim Kidd, Texas Division of Emergency Management and the Texas Emergency Management Council; (*Registered, but did not testify*: Heather Lagrond, Texas General Land Office)

DIGEST: CSHB 6 would require the Texas Division of Emergency Management (TDEM) to develop a disaster recovery task force to operate throughout the long-term recovery period following natural and man-made disasters. The task force would provide specialized assistance for communities and

individuals to address financial issues, available federal assistance programs, and recovery and resiliency planning to speed recovery efforts at the local level.

The task force would develop procedures for preparing and issuing a report listing each disaster-related project that qualified for federal assistance. A report would be submitted to appropriate federal agencies as soon as practicable after a disaster.

The task force could include and use the resources of any appropriate state agencies, including institutions of higher education, and organized volunteer groups.

Each quarter, the task force would brief the Legislature, legislative staff, and state agency personnel on the response and recovery efforts for previous disasters and any preparation or planning for potential future hazards, threats, or disasters.

The bill would take effect September 1, 2019.

**SUPPORTERS
SAY:**

Based on recommendations from the Governor's Commission to Rebuild Texas, CSHB 6 would help local communities better respond to future disasters by supporting more effective coordination between state and local governments during disaster recovery. In assessing response efforts to Hurricane Harvey, the commission identified recovery as the weakest phase of the emergency management cycle. Chaotic state efforts to address local communities' urgent needs were complicated by a lack of available state and federal agency experts. CSHB 6 would create a disaster recovery task force to work with local governments, supporting bottom-up, locally led, long-term disaster recovery efforts.

The disaster recovery task force proposed by the bill would strengthen recovery functions while utilizing existing state resources. The task force would identify a pool of experts with the knowledge and contacts to provide specialized assistance for communities and individuals for financial issues, federal assistance programs, and recovery and resiliency

programs to speed recovery at the local level after a disaster. This is particularly important for rural communities that lack the resources, funding, and manpower to sustain long-term recovery efforts. A pre-designated group of experts would help the response and early recovery efforts function more efficiently and less stressfully. The bill also would support a more well rounded plan to communicate about disasters and hazard threats to stakeholders by providing for quarterly briefings.

The bill also would ensure that efforts to pursue federal funding for disaster-related projects were continued after any future disaster. In response to Hurricane Harvey, Texas sent a report to the federal government identifying projects that needed federal funding to restore destroyed infrastructure. This report helped signal to local jurisdictions that the state was taking project requests seriously and identified priority projects to donors.

OPPONENTS
SAY:

No concerns identified.

NOTES:

According to the Legislative Budget Board, CSHB 6 would result in a negative impact of \$10.4 million to general revenue related funds through the biennium ending August 31, 2021.

TDEM provided an exceptional item request for the disaster recovery task force, and the \$10.4 million in funding was placed in Art. 11 of the House-passed version of HB 1 by Zerwas, the general appropriations act.