

Summary of Legislative Action

S.B. 1011 Estes (Harper-Brown)

The Legislature adopted elements of all of the Sunset Commission's recommendations, scaling back the recommendation for more independent policy making by the Fire Commission and adding provisions to expand the pool of persons eligible to serve on the Commission. The bill continues the Commission as an independent agency for twelve years, and focuses the agency more squarely on its mission to certify and regulate the paid fire service to ensure the safety of the public and fire service personnel. The list below summarizes the major provisions of S.B. 1011, and more detailed discussion is located in each issue.

Sunset Provisions

1. Authorize the Commission to decide and implement policy more independently of the Fire Fighter Advisory Committee.
2. Repeal the Commission's Fire Department Emergency Program and transfer the grants program to the Texas Forest Service, with volunteer and paid fire departments to be eligible to apply for grants.
3. Conform key elements of the Commission's certification and regulatory functions to commonly applied licensing practices.
4. Continue the Texas Commission on Fire Protection for 12 years, with an increased focus on preventing fire fighter injuries.

Provisions Added by the Legislature

1. Modify Commission member eligibility criteria to keep pace with changes in local communities and the fire service.
2. Ensure unbiased appointment of persons to serve on the Fire Fighter Advisory Committee.
3. Ensure state and federal entities coordinate when deploying fire service resources during a disaster.

Fiscal Implication Summary

Senate Bill 1011 saves the Commission one FTE and about \$45,000 a year it spends on administering its grant and loan program, allowing the Commission to apply these resources towards its regulatory functions. The Texas Forest Service can administer transferred program funding with existing resources.

Performing criminal history checks on applicants for certification will not have a net fiscal impact to the State, as the Legislature has authorized the Commission to set a fee to recover the costs of conducting these checks for those that do not provide this information to the Commission. Also, based on workloads, the Legislature authorized the Commission to hire one additional employee to conduct these checks if needed.