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H.B. No. 13

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT

relating to creating the Texas Interoperability Council and a grant
program administered by the council.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF TEXAS:

SECTION 1. Chapter 421, Government Code, is amended by
adding Subchapter G to read as follows:

SUBCHAPTER G. TEXAS INTEROPERABILITY COUNCIL; GRANT PROGRAM

Sec. 421.121. DEFINITIONS. In this subchapter:

(1) "Council" means the Texas Interoperability
Council established under this subchapter.

(2) "Division" means Texas Division of Emergency
Management.

(3) "Local government" means a municipality, county,
special district or authority, or any other political subdivision
of this state.

Sec. 421.122. TEXAS INTEROPERABILITY COUNCIL. (a) The
Texas Interoperability Council is established to:

(1) develop and coordinate the implementation of a
statewide strategic plan for governing the interoperability of
emergency communication equipment and infrastructure in this
state, develop and implement, as advisable, emergency alert
systems, and incorporate as necessary communication technologies
into the emergency communications network of this state; and

(2) administer a grant program to assist local

1 governments with acquiring emergency communication equipment that
2 is interoperable with other emergency communication equipment and
3 infrastructure in this state and with constructing additional
4 emergency communication infrastructure to ensure that the first
5 responders of this state have access to equipment and
6 infrastructure that is interoperable to the extent necessary to
7 effectively communicate during an emergency.

8 (b) The council is composed of the chief of the division and
9 six members appointed as follows:

10 (1) two members appointed by the governor;

11 (2) two members appointed by the lieutenant governor;

12 and

13 (3) two members appointed by the speaker of the house
14 of representatives.

15 (c) Appointed council members serve staggered terms of six
16 years, with the terms of two members expiring September 1 of each
17 odd-numbered year.

18 (d) A majority of the voting members of the council
19 constitutes a quorum to transact business. If a quorum is present,
20 the council may act on any matter within the council's jurisdiction
21 by a majority vote.

22 (e) The chief of the division serves as the council's
23 presiding officer.

24 Sec. 421.123. MEETINGS. The council shall meet as often as
25 necessary at the call of the presiding officer to perform the
26 council's duties.

27 Sec. 421.124. APPLICABILITY OF OTHER LAW TO COUNCIL. (a)

1 Chapters 551 and 2001 do not apply to the council.

2 (b) Information held by the council is excepted from
3 required public disclosure under Chapter 552.

4 Sec. 421.125. STRATEGIC PLAN. (a) The council, in
5 collaboration with any state agency or private entity as the
6 council determines appropriate, shall develop a statewide
7 strategic plan to govern the interoperability of emergency
8 communication equipment and infrastructure in this state.

9 (b) The strategic plan must include:

10 (1) a plan for the construction of communication
11 infrastructure necessary to ensure effective emergency
12 communications among first responders in this state, including the
13 acquisition of land as necessary for construction;

14 (2) training programs necessary to ensure that state
15 and local governments have the skills and resources necessary to
16 access and effectively use the emergency communication equipment
17 and infrastructure available in this state;

18 (3) a plan to ensure that first responders throughout
19 this state are equipped with emergency communication equipment that
20 is interoperable with other emergency communication equipment in
21 this state; and

22 (4) a plan to ensure that any new emergency
23 communication equipment and infrastructure acquired or constructed
24 under the plan can be adapted to or integrated with any existing
25 emergency communication equipment and infrastructure.

26 (c) The council shall consider including in the strategic
27 plan under Subsection (b):

1 (1) the use of outdoor warning sirens;

2 (2) implementing an emergency alert system to alert
3 the public of fire and any related evacuation recommendations or
4 orders that has the capability of alerting persons in an affected
5 geographic area through messages sent to those persons'
6 communication devices; and

7 (3) the use of broadband service as part of the
8 emergency communications network of this state.

9 Sec. 421.126. IMPLEMENTATION OF PLAN; NETWORK
10 COORDINATION. The council, in collaboration with state agencies as
11 needed, shall implement the statewide strategic plan developed
12 under Section 421.125 and coordinate the emergency communications
13 network of this state to ensure interoperability for first
14 responders.

15 Sec. 421.127. GRANT PROGRAM. (a) The council shall
16 establish a grant program to provide grants to local governments
17 for the purchase of emergency communication equipment and
18 infrastructure, the construction of emergency communication
19 infrastructure, and the expenses of training employees of the local
20 government for the effective use of the equipment during an
21 emergency.

22 (b) To be eligible for a grant under the grant program, an
23 applicant must be a local government, submit a proposal to the
24 council, and comply with the rules established by the council for
25 the administration of the grant program.

26 (c) The council shall establish procedures to administer
27 the grant program, including:

1 (1) eligibility criteria for a grant recipient;
2 (2) guidelines relating to grant amounts; and
3 (3) procedures for submitting and evaluating
4 proposals.

5 (d) The council shall enter into a contract that includes
6 performance requirements with each grant recipient. The council
7 shall monitor and enforce the terms of the contract.

8 (e) The council may require as a condition of a grant
9 awarded under this section that:

10 (1) the officers or employees of the recipient
11 successfully complete one or more training programs, as determined
12 by the council, which may include incident command system training;
13 and

14 (2) the recipient adopt standardized procedures for
15 incident command or management.

16 (f) The council may delegate to a state agency the
17 administration of the grant program.

18 Sec. 421.128. USES OF GRANT MONEY. Money awarded under the
19 grant program may be used only to:

20 (1) purchase emergency communication equipment,
21 including radios, spare parts, and accessories, for use by first
22 responders that is interoperable with the other emergency
23 communication equipment and infrastructure in this state or enables
24 interoperability;

25 (2) construct emergency communication infrastructure,
26 including radio towers, that is interoperable with the other
27 emergency communication equipment and infrastructure in this state

1 or enables interoperability, including the acquisition of land
2 necessary for the construction;

3 (3) cover the cost of adapting existing emergency
4 communication equipment or infrastructure to, or otherwise
5 integrating the equipment or infrastructure with, new emergency
6 communication equipment purchased or infrastructure constructed;

7 (4) cover the operational or maintenance cost of the
8 equipment or infrastructure described by Subdivision (1), (2), or
9 (3); or

10 (5) attend or provide the training to first responders
11 on the effective use of the equipment and infrastructure described
12 by Subdivisions (1), (2), and (3).

13 Sec. 421.129. GRANT PROGRAM FUNDING. The council may use
14 any available funds to implement the grant program.

15 Sec. 421.130. GIFTS, GRANTS, AND DONATIONS. The council
16 may accept gifts, grants, and donations from any source, including
17 private and nonprofit organizations, for the purpose of
18 implementing this subchapter.

19 Sec. 421.131. RULES. The division may adopt rules to
20 administer this subchapter.

21 SECTION 2. As soon as practicable after the effective date
22 of this Act, the governor, lieutenant governor, and speaker of the
23 house of representatives shall appoint members to the Texas
24 Interoperability Council, as required by Section 421.122,
25 Government Code, as added by this Act, in the manner required by
26 that section, as follows:

27 (1) the governor shall appoint two council members to

1 a term expiring September 1, 2027;

2 (2) the lieutenant governor shall appoint two council
3 members to a term expiring September 1, 2029; and

4 (3) the speaker of the house of representatives shall
5 appoint two council members to a term expiring September 1, 2031.

6 SECTION 3. This Act takes effect September 1, 2025.