

LEGISLATIVE ACTION ON THE ISSUE OF EARTHQUAKES

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OVERVIEW

- The Texas Legislature traditionally appropriates funds to the University of Texas at Austin's Bureau of Economic Geology (BEG).



BUREAU OF ECONOMIC GEOLOGY

- 250 employees (including students)
- Dr. Scott Tinker (Director)
 - UT personnel
 - 16 years as director
- Also the State Geological Survey
 - 106 year old designation
- BEG is a full research entity
 - not policy oriented, not regulatory
 - science only (i.e. – objective)
- Facilities in Austin, Houston and Midland
- Advisory Board includes RRC, TCEQ, WDB, GLO, CPA



- HB 1 (as filed and adopted in the House) contained an exceptional item for the BEG
 - Article III - Rider 13
 - \$2,471,800 for the TextNet Seismic Monitoring Program
 - Rep. Myra Crownover (R-Denton) is the real author



RIDER 13 LANGUAGE TEXNET FUNDING

- *“Out of the funds appropriated to the University of Texas at Austin, Bureau of Economic Geology, **\$2,471,800** in General Revenue in fiscal year 2016 will be used for the **purchase of seismic equipment, deployment, and maintenance of seismic networks, and personnel costs associated with the TexNet Seismic Monitoring Program.**”*



BILL STATUS

- No similar provision in Senate version of HB 1
- HB 1 and SB 2 have been approved their respective committees and approved by both Chambers
- Anticipate conference committee members to be named shortly (as early as tomorrow)
- This issue will be decided in conference (late May)



TEXNET FUNDING PROPOSAL

- One time funding
 - 58 seismic monitoring machines
 - 22 “permanent” machines
 - 36 “portable machines”
 - To be deployed as necessary in groups of 12
 - Designed to compliment the 16 permanent seismometers that currently exist and are located across the state today



LIMITATIONS

- Money is for:
 - equipment and
 - installation costs only

- Nothing else



STUDY

- HB 2932
 - Rep. Rafael Anchia
 - Relating to a study and report by the Bureau of Economic Geology on land shifting



BACKGROUND

- Under current law, no state agency is statutorily charged with specifically studying earthquake activity in Texas.
- Moreover, no agency is charged with making formal findings or recommendations to the legislature nor is any agency specifically charged with conducting a hazards assessment regarding earthquake activity.
- This despite the fact that a series of earthquakes has occurred in the populous North Texas region over the course of the last few years.



- The purpose of the bill is three-fold:
 - identify earthquake activity in a formal report to the Legislature,
 - assess public safety issues related to earthquake activity, and
 - assess the equipment and monies needed to maintain an adequate network of seismic equipment in Texas



HB 2932

- Requires the BEG (in coordinate with and other qualified academic partners) to:
 - identify and report on earthquake activity in Texas of a certain magnitude by location,
 - approximate focal depths and epicenters,
 - identify any new or developing fault lines and
 - any causal factors that may have lead to the earthquake activity.
- The bill also requires a hazards assessment in coordination with the Division of Emergency Management and local emergency management personnel.
- Lastly, the bill require the to report to the Legislature the necessary equipment and related costs required to maintain a scientifically adequate seismic network.



COST

- BEG estimates \$1.5 million cost per year to conduct the study (\$3M over the biennium)
 - To hire team of 6-7 geologists, hydrologists, seismologists, and engineers
 - Plus some software and machine maintenance costs
- Prefers to raise some of that money (\$1M) privately
- Prefers the legislature to fund the rest (\$2M)
- Otherwise, the bill is an unfunded mandate



BILL STATUS

- Anticipate a public hearing in the House Committee on Energy Resources as early as next week or the week after
 - Anchia is a member of the committee
- Note: The issue of a “study” can also be addressed in HB 1 (the budget bill)
 - HB 2932 does not have to pass as a stand alone



QUESTIONS?

Thank You

Brandon Aghamalian

512.695.6709



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