



Organized May 7, 1977

TEXAS FIRE MARSHALS' ASSOCIATION

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Chapter 9

April 6, 2017

RE: SB 2 AND HB15 ARE A THREAT TO PUBLIC SAFETY AND EMERGENCY CARE

Dear Senators and Representatives:

We are writing to you to express concerns we have that public safety and emergency care could be harmed by SB 2 and its companion HB 15. In these times of struggling revenues at the state and local level the cities, counties, hospitals, fire and EMS districts and others responsible for providing front line first responders and emergency care only have property taxes to raise additional revenue. We are very concerned that local units of government will find their hands tied these bills.

The reality is that it will close the door to bringing in extra dollars that may be needed to expand a police department, buy new fire trucks, fully equip ambulances, and subsidize public hospitals that are underpaid by Medicaid and Medicare. Private hospitals could also be impacted. Even though they are not taxing entities, many receive tax dollars indirectly from public hospitals so they can participate in the 1115 waiver and other hospital supplemental payment programs. Many of those dollars go into their trauma centers.

SB 2 and HB 15 are also doubly constraining for rural areas where government entities have a very low tax base. In a desperate situation, such as trying to keep a rural hospital open or trying to hire more officers in a small community with escalating crime, it could take a substantial tax increase to generate any significant additional revenue. SB 2 and HB 15 will have the effect of blocking that.

As the below signers of this letter, we believe SB 2 and HB 15 propose a fundamental shift from the current system of local control over tax rates at the local level. Instead, SB 2 and HB 15 propose to have Austin establish one-size fits all formulas that will drive tax rate decisions. This will erode our ability to prioritize and address issues at the local level and will close the door to any significant extra dollars going toward public safety.

We understand that the public is very vocal about taxes and appraisals. Those that provide the core public safety and emergency care across Texas are not their target. We respectfully request your opposition.

Respectfully submitted,

LAURIE L. CHRISTENSEN

President

Texas Fire Marshals' Association