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Public Safety

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Oilfield Theft Prevention Act

HB 13 – SB 18

Bill Analysis

BACKGROUND & PURPOSE

This bill establishes a specialized Organized Oilfield Theft Prevention Unit within the Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS) to combat the growing problem of organized oilfield theft, which costs the industry millions annually and threatens the state's energy economy. Cartels and other criminal groups target oil and gas equipment and petroleum products through organized theft rings that are challenging to investigate and prosecute. The unit will investigate, and arrest individuals engaged in offenses under Penal Code Sections 31.19 (Theft of Petroleum Products) and 31.03 (General Theft) related to oil and gas equipment, collaborating with federal, state, and local law enforcement, district attorneys, the Railroad Commission of Texas, and industry stakeholders. Headquartered in DPS Region 4 (Permian Basin) with statewide authority as needed, the unit aims to protect oilfield assets, strengthen the energy industry, prevent economic losses, and dismantle criminal enterprises. DPS will provide specialized training for law enforcement on investigating oilfield theft, maintain a centralized database to monitor incidents and trends, and submit a biennial report to state leadership detailing the unit's activities, arrest and prosecution statistics, recovered assets, and legislative and administrative recommendations.

This bill amends current law relating to the creation of an organized oilfield theft prevention unit within the Department of Public Safety.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

Rulemaking authority is expressly granted to the public safety director in SECTION 1 (Section 411.036, Government Code) of this bill.

ANALYSIS

SECTION 1. Amends Chapter 411, Government Code, by adding Subchapter C-1, as follows: SUBCHAPTER C-1. ORGANIZED OILFIELD THEFT PREVENTION UNIT Sec. 411.035. DEFINITIONS. Defines "oil and gas equipment," "petroleum product," and "unit." Sec. 411.036. ORGANIZED OILFIELD THEFT PREVENTION UNIT. (a) Requires the public safety director (director) to create an organized oilfield theft prevention unit (unit) to be operated by the Department of Public Safety of the State of Texas (DPS). (b) Authorizes the unit to investigate and arrest individuals determined to have committed an offense under Section 31.19 (Theft of Petroleum Product), Penal Code, or under Section 31.03 (Theft), Penal Code, if the unlawfully appropriated property includes oil and gas equipment. (c) Requires the unit to



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coordinate with federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies, attorneys representing the state, the Railroad Commission of Texas, and any person who is a victim of an offense described by Subsection (b) as necessary to carry out the duties of the unit. (d) Requires the director to designate a command structure within DPS to supervise the operations of the unit. (e) Requires the director to adopt rules, subject to Public Safety Commission (commission) approval, as necessary for the control and general administration of the unit, including rules governing the procurement of facilities and equipment for the unit, regarding required training for unit personnel, and regarding working conditions of unit personnel. Sec. 411.037. JURISDICTION; HEADQUARTERS. (a) Provides that the unit has statewide jurisdiction but is required to operate primarily within the designated region of DPS that is adjacent to the international border and contains the city of El Paso. Requires that the unit's headquarters be located in that region. (b) Authorizes DPS, subject to commission approval, to establish in any DPS region one or more additional regional offices of the unit to assist in the duties of the unit. Sec. 411.038. UNIT DUTIES. Requires the unit, together with DPS, to develop and deploy to local law enforcement agencies specialized training, resources, and policing strategies tailored to investigating and preventing offenses described by Section 411.036(b), conduct public outreach and awareness initiatives to educate industry professionals and communities regarding offenses described by Section 411.036(b), and maintain a centralized database for tracking offenses described by Section 411.036(b) and related criminal enterprises. Sec. 411.039. BIENNIAL REPORT. Requires DPS, not later than January 1 of each odd numbered year, to prepare and submit to the governor, the lieutenant governor, the speaker of the house of representatives, and each standing committee of the legislature with primary jurisdiction over natural resources or criminal justice matters a written report that: (1) summarizes the unit's activities and evaluates the unit's effectiveness during the preceding two-year period, including by providing statistics regarding any arrests made by the unit and any prosecutions that resulted from those arrests or assets that were recovered as a result of those arrests; and (2) provides recommendations for legislative or administrative action to improve the effectiveness of the unit.

SECTION 2. Requires the director, not later than March 1, 2027, to adopt rules necessary to implement Subchapter C-1, Chapter 411 (Department of Public Safety of the State of Texas), Government Code, as added by this Act.

EFFECTIVE DATE
January 1, 2027.