

SJR93 INTRODUCED



1 SJR93
2 JPLGWFN-1
3 By Senator Weaver
4 RFD: RULES
5 First Read: 17-Mar-26



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SJR___ ESTABLISHING THE ALABAMA RURAL EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES AND VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT STUDY COMMISSION.

WHEREAS, rural communities across Alabama are essential to the state's economy, culture, and quality of life, yet they often face significant challenges in maintaining access to essential services, including emergency medical response and fire protection; and

WHEREAS, timely access to emergency medical services (EMS), including ambulance services and volunteer fire departments, is critical to public health and safety, particularly in rural areas where hospitals and trauma centers may be located significant distances from residents; and

WHEREAS, many rural communities rely heavily on volunteer fire departments and limited ambulance providers as the first line of emergency response, often operating with constrained financial resources, workforce shortages, aging equipment, and long response distances; and

WHEREAS, the sustainability of rural EMS systems is increasingly challenged by rising operational costs, declining volunteer participation, reimbursement limitations, regulatory requirements, and demographic changes affecting workforce availability and service demand; and



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29 WHEREAS, the State of Alabama has launched the Rural
30 Roadmap Initiative, a coordinated effort of legislative
31 leadership and stakeholders designed to strengthen rural
32 communities through strategic focus on health care,
33 infrastructure, workforce development, economic development,
34 small business, agriculture, and quality of life; and

35 WHEREAS, emergency medical services and volunteer
36 fire departments play a critical role in each of these areas
37 by supporting rural health care delivery, relying on
38 transportation and communications infrastructure, developing
39 local workforce pipelines, supporting economic stability,
40 and strengthening community safety and quality of life; and

41 WHEREAS, a comprehensive review of the structure,
42 funding, workforce development, regulatory framework, and
43 service delivery models for EMS and volunteer fire
44 departments in rural Alabama would assist policymakers in
45 identifying opportunities to strengthen emergency response
46 systems across the state; now therefore,

47 BE IT RESOLVED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF ALABAMA, BOTH
48 HOUSES THEREOF CONCURRING, That there is created the Alabama
49 Rural Emergency Medical Services and Volunteer Fire
50 Department Study Commission to conduct a comprehensive
51 review of emergency medical service delivery in rural areas
52 of the state, with particular emphasis on ambulance services
53 and volunteer fire departments and their role within the
54 broader rural health care system.

55 (a) The study commission shall consist of the
56 following members:



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57 (1) Two members of the Senate appointed by the
58 President Pro Tempore of the Senate, and one member of the
59 Senate appointed by the Minority Leader of the Senate.

60 (2) Two members of the House of Representatives
61 appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives,
62 and one member of the House of Representatives appointed by
63 the Minority Leader of the House of Representatives.

64 (3) The State Health Officer, or his or her designee
65 from the Office of Emergency Medical Services of the Alabama
66 Department of Public Health.

67 (4) The following members, appointed jointly by the
68 President Pro Tempore of the Senate and the Speaker of the
69 House of Representatives:

70 a. One representative of a rural ambulance service.

71 b. One licensed paramedic or emergency medical
72 technician practicing in a rural area.

73 c. One representative of volunteer fire departments
74 providing emergency medical services.

75 d. One representative of rural hospitals.

76 e. One representative of county government.

77 f. One representative of municipal government.

78 g. One representative of emergency medical services
79 education or workforce training from one of the six main
80 Emergency Medical Services (EMS) regions.

81 (b) The President Pro Tempore of the Senate and the
82 Speaker of the House of Representatives shall jointly
83 designate a chair and vice chair from among the members of
84 the commission.



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85 (c) The appointing authorities shall coordinate their
86 appointments to assure the study commission membership is
87 inclusive and reflects the racial, gender, geographic,
88 urban, rural, and economic diversity of the state.
89 Additionally, appointments, to the extent practicable, shall
90 ensure geographic representation from rural areas across the
91 state, including representation from north, central, and
92 south Alabama and from communities with populations of fewer
93 than 25,000 residents.

94 (d) The commission shall examine and evaluate, at a
95 minimum, all of the following:

96 (1) The structure, availability, and service coverage
97 of rural ambulance services and EMS providers, including
98 response times and provider sustainability.

99 (2) The role of volunteer fire departments as first
100 responders, including training requirements, equipment
101 needs, liability considerations, and coordination with EMS
102 providers.

103 (3) The financial sustainability of rural EMS
104 systems, including reimbursement models, Medicaid and
105 Medicare payment structures, local funding mechanisms, and
106 alternative service delivery models.

107 (4) Workforce challenges and training pipelines for
108 EMTs, paramedics, and volunteer firefighters, including
109 partnerships with community colleges, career technical
110 programs, and local school systems.



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111 (5) Coordination between EMS services and rural
112 health care providers, including hospitals, clinics, trauma
113 networks, and telehealth systems.

114 (6) The impact of transportation infrastructure,
115 dispatch systems, and emergency communications technology on
116 response times and service delivery.

117 (7) Opportunities to strengthen rural EMS systems
118 consistent with the strategic goals of the Rural Roadmap
119 Initiative.

120 (e) The commission may review best practices from
121 other states and receive testimony from stakeholders
122 including EMS providers, volunteer fire departments, rural
123 hospitals, local governments, educational institutions, and
124 relevant state agencies.

125 (f) The first meeting of the study commission shall
126 be held at the call of the chair no later than 90 days after
127 this resolution's passage. The study commission may then
128 meet as necessary to conduct business.

129 (g) The commission shall develop recommendations for
130 legislative, regulatory, or administrative actions necessary
131 to strengthen the sustainability and effectiveness of rural
132 emergency medical services and volunteer fire departments in
133 Alabama.

134 (h) (1) All state departments, boards, bureaus,
135 commissions, and agencies of the State of Alabama shall
136 cooperate with the commission and, upon request, provide
137 available data, reports, and other information reasonably
138 necessary for the commission to carry out its duties.



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139 (2) The commission may request information from EMS
140 providers, volunteer fire departments, hospitals, health
141 care providers, local governments, and other relevant
142 stakeholders as necessary to complete its work.

143 (i)(1) The legislative members of the study
144 commission shall be entitled to their legislative
145 compensation, per diem, and travel expense for each day they
146 attend a meeting of the study commission pursuant to Section
147 49 of the Constitution of Alabama of 2022.

148 (2) The nonlegislative members of the study
149 commission shall serve without compensation but may be
150 reimbursed for necessary expenses in attending meetings of
151 the study commission according pursuant to the policies of
152 their respective appointing authorities.

153 (j) The study commission shall submit a report of its
154 findings and recommendations to the Governor and the
155 Legislature no later than November 1, 2026, at which point
156 the study commission shall stand dissolved and discharged of
157 any future duties and liabilities.

158 (k) Pursuant to Section 36-14-17.1, Code of Alabama
159 1975, the study commission shall provide a notice of all
160 meetings, the name of each member serving on the study
161 commission, and a copy of its final report and any other
162 documents produced by the study commission throughout its
163 duration to the Secretary of State.