

BILL SUMMARY
1st Session of the 60th Legislature

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| Bill No.: | HB 2426 |
| Version: | FULLPCS1 |
| Request Number: | 13209 |
| Author: | Rep. Fetgatter |
| Date: | 3/6/2025 |
| Impact: | |

SOK (FY-27): \$25,000-\$100,000 net increase to Severe Weather Tracker Fund

Research Analysis

The proposed committee substitute to HB 2426 creates the professional severe weather tracker license and provides guidelines for professional severe weather trackers. A *professional severe weather tracker* is defined in the measure as a licensed individual or company hired by an established media outlet or affiliated with a research program at certain universities. Licenses are issued by Service Oklahoma with a fee not to exceed \$500 for an initial three-year license and a renewal license fee of \$250. Violators are subject to a fine up to \$500 and revocation of their license.

Professional severe weather trackers are required to:

- Keep their license on file with either their employing media outlet or affiliated university;
- Display their license number and either the Federal Communications Commission license number of the employing media outlet or the identifying number of the affiliated university on both sides of their primary storm tracking vehicle;
- Submit to a national criminal history record check;
- Provide Service Oklahoma with a recommendation letter from either the employing media outlet or the dean or their designee at the affiliated university;
- Provide Service Oklahoma with valid insurance coverage for the storm tracking vehicle. A minimum insurance coverage of \$1 million of combined single liability is required;
- Take an emergency driving course before receiving the license and upon every renewal; and
- If employed by a media outlet, have been employed or contracted with a media outlet for at least one year and have not been terminated for cause by a qualified media outlet in the last four years.

During a significant weather event, professional severe weather trackers are authorized to exceed maximum speed limits, proceed past red lights or stop signs after slowing down to check for cross traffic, disregard regulations governing direction of movement and turning in specified directions, travel on closed roads and highways, and are considered an emergency vehicle and are authorized to activate flashing green and yellow emergency lights on their vehicles.

Additionally, the measure establishes that a professional severe weather tracker license is not to be used for the purpose of finding filming locations. It also establishes that nothing in the act is to prohibit the rights of any individual from engaging in recreational or commercial storm chasing.

Lastly, the measure creates the Severe Weather Tracker Licensure Fund in which all monies collected from license fees are to be deposited for the administrative costs associated with licensing professional severe weather trackers.

Prepared By: Keana Swadley

Fiscal Analysis

The proposed oversight committee substitute to HB 2426 authorizes Service Oklahoma (SOK) to create a professional severe weather tracker license. The licensing fee shall be no more than \$500 pursuant to the measure. In addition, the measure creates the Severe Weather Tracker Fund (Fund) and requires SOK to promulgate rules for implementation. SOK estimates that approximately 100-200 media-affiliated weather trackers and 50-100 university-affiliated weather trackers exist in Oklahoma for purposes of eligible applicants. This results in a total estimated pool of approximately 150-300 eligible applicants.

Implementation of the measure is anticipated to carry a one-time SOK administrative cost of approximately \$50,000. However, applying the licensing fee of \$500 to the estimated applicant pool, SOK is anticipated to generate \$75,000-\$150,000 towards the Fund in the first three-year licensing period. Following the first three-year licensing period, the renewal fee for such licenses is reduced from \$500 to \$250. Ultimately, in the first three-year licensing period, the one-time \$50,000 administrative cost is anticipated to be absorbed by the \$75,000-\$150,000 licensing revenue. Therefore, SOK is anticipated to have a net positive fiscal impact of \$25,000-\$100,000 in the first three-year licensing period by implementation of the measure.

Prepared By: Zach Lein, House Fiscal Staff

Other Considerations

None.