



Texas now has earthquake sensors. But will anyone be watching them?

Posted by [David Hunn](#) Date: April 10, 2017



In this Feb. 2, 2017 photo, scientists from the University of Texas and a contractor, Nanometrics, install a seismometer on a hillside owned by Sul Ross University in Alpine, Texas. Scientists say it's clear there's a connection with the rise in earthquakes: Oil and gas operations pump billions of barrels of water deep into the earth every year, pressuring faults underground. Politicians, industry leaders and officials of the Texas Railroad Commission, which regulates the oil and gas industry, have steadfastly argued that there is little proof, if any, of such a tie. (Lydia DePillis/Houston Chronicle via AP)

IT LOOKS LIKE TEXNET, THE PROGRAM INSTALLING 55 NEW EARTHQUAKE SENSORS ALL OVER TEXAS, MAY GET STATE FUNDING AFTER ALL.

Two years ago, the state Legislature sent \$4.5 million to the Bureau of Economic Geology at the University of Houston at Austin to start the program. Legislators, scientists and the oil and gas industry were all concerned with a boost in the number of earthquakes in Texas. Research suggested the quakes were tied to oil and gas wastewater disposal. But industry leaders and Texas Railroad Commissioners, who regulate drilling, said they saw no causal relationship and wanted more data.

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But when TexNet came back up before the Legislature this year, seeking another two years of funding, some legislators balked. The two-year-old crash in crude prices has made for a tough budget cycle.

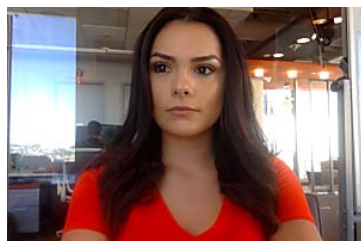
Researchers will finish installing the seismometers this year. But the Bureau says it will have a hard time funding the accompanying research if the Legislature doesn't fund the program. It's asking for \$3.4 million for the two-year budget cycle.

TexNet is far from re-funded. But it has some champions. Rep. Drew Darby, a Republican from the oil and gas lands just east of Midland, is [introducing a bill](#) on Monday, [House Bill 2819](#), to make TexNet part of the bi-annual budget, to be considered for funding every year.

Ed Longanecker, president of the Texas Independent Producers & Royalty Owners Association, is testifying in support of the bill on Monday.

"Texas has lead the country in efforts to study this important issue in an effort to provide more reliable data on the true cause of seismic events in our state," Longanecker said in an email. "Correlation does not imply causation, and we must be able to separate fact from fiction to have a meaningful discussion."

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