



AUSTIN NEWSLETTER

Texas Farm Bureau's Weekly Newsletter for the 86th Legislature

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Every Friday, this newsletter will keep you up to speed on some of the legislation important to Texas Farm Bureau members that Austin staff are following.

Please do not hesitate to contact the appropriate staff with any questions.

Taxes

[HB 639](#), by **Rep. Drew Springer (R-Muenster)**, and **[SB 135](#)**, by **Sen. Robert Nichols (R-Jacksonville)**, pertain to the eligibility of land used as an ecological laboratory (eco-labs).

This bill would require that land qualified as an ecological laboratory be principally used for its purpose by a college or university for five of the preceding seven years. Currently, land can qualify for this appraisal immediately after application, and the "eco-lab" appraisal is tied to the agriculture value. The change proposed in the bills would raise the requirement to match what landowners already have to achieve to receive agriculture valuation.

Both bills have been heard and have been left pending in their respective committee.

TFB supports HB 639 and SB 135. (TFB Policy: Property Taxes 142, lines 195-200)

Daylight Saving Time

[HB 3784](#), by **Rep. Lyle Larson (R-San Antonio)**, is a bill authorizing a statewide referendum on removing the time change Texans go through every spring and fall.

The referendum would take place in November elections on Nov. 5, 2019. If the bill passes, the secretary of state shall design the ballot and provide notice of the election in the same manner that notice of proposed constitutional amendments are given.

If the majority of the votes cast are in favor of exempting the state from daylight saving time, the entire state will be exempt from the provisions of the law that establish daylight saving time. However, if the majority of the votes cast are in favor of observing daylight saving time year-around, the state will proceed in that manner only if the United States Congress passes legislation that authorizes the state of Texas to observe daylight saving time year-around.

TFB is neutral on HB 3784. (TFB Policy: Rural Living 183, lines 4-5)

Annexation

[HB 347](#), by **Rep. Phil King (R-Weatherford)**, which was reported on two weeks ago in the ninth issue of *Austin Newsletter* has been favorably voted out of the House Land and Resource Management Committee. This bill would allow all property owners the right to vote on whether a city can annex them.

The following companion bills--[SB 408](#) by **Sen. Brian Birdwell (R-Granbury)**, [SB 745](#) by **Sen. Charles Schwertner (R-Georgetown)** and [SB 1432](#) by **Sen. Pat Fallon (R-Prosper)**--have all been referred to the Senate Intragovernmental Relations Committee.

TFB supports these bills. (TFB Policy: Cities 171, lines 4-12)

State Flood Planning

The following three bills were all unanimously passed from the Senate floor on March 20.

[SB 6](#), by **Sen. Lois Kolkhorst (R-Brenham)**, consists of three components that are based on recommendations in the Rebuild Texas Commission's report on Hurricane Harvey. This legislation is designed to provide local governments with the resources they need to effectively prepare and recover from disasters. It is based on input from local officials, businesses and agencies who lived through the storm.

1. Disaster response model guide and training: The bill instructs the Texas Division of Emergency Management (TDEM) to create a model guide for local officials on disaster response and recovery designed to reduce confusion and delay after an event.
2. Debris management and disposal: The bill contains several provisions related to the disposal and management of debris following a disaster.
3. Emergency credentialing work group: The bill directs TDEM to establish a working group to study and develop a proposal for training and credentialing emergency management directors. The division would coordinate with institutions of higher education in the state to develop credentialing and training programs while

considering a variety of factors, including the geography, population, infrastructure and resources associated with a particular region.

[SB 7](#), by **Sen. Brandon Creighton (R-Conroe)**, amends the existing floodplain management account to create the Texas Infrastructure Resiliency Fund (TIRF). TIRF will house four accounts within the fund:

- the floodplain management account, which will continue to be used for grants, data collection, stream gaging and outreach;
- the Hurricane Harvey account, which will be used to meet local match requirements to leverage federally appropriated money for recovery use as a result of Hurricane Harvey;
- the flood plan implementation account, which will be used to finance flood mitigation projects included in the state flood plan; and
- the federal matching account, which will be used to meet matching requirements for projects funded partially by the United States Army Corps of Engineers.

SB 7 also includes oversight by an advisory committee, a report from agencies that use federal dollars to better track revenue streams and expenses, transparency requirements and cost sharing requirements with political subdivisions. TIRF will be used to quickly get Texans' tax dollars back down from Washington, D.C.

[SB 8](#), by **Sen. Charles Perry (R-Lubbock)**, was outlined in the fifth issue of *Austin Newsletter* as SB 396. This bill would establish a State Flood Plan administered by the Texas Water Development Board in coordination with the Texas Division on Emergency Management and Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board.

TFB supports SB 6, SB 7 and SB 8. (TFB Policy: TSSWCB 108, lines 30-33; Surface Water 154, lines 17-22; 85-91; 130-137; Water Management 155, lines 85-86)

Eminent Domain

[SB 554](#), by **Sen. Charles Schwertner (R-Georgetown)**, which was described last week in the tenth issue of *Austin Newsletter*, has been voted out of the Senate with a 30-1 vote and has now been received by the House. This bill relates to establishing "actual progress" for the purposes of determining the right of repurchase real property from a condemning entity.

The companion bill, **[HB 1253](#)**, by **Rep. Ben Leman (R-Iola)** has been referred to the House Land and Resource Management Committee.

TFB supports SB 554 and HB 1253. (TFB Policy: Eminent Domain 151, lines 67-71)



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