



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.

Texas Farm Bureau Leader Day in Austin

As part of the grassroots action plan on eminent domain reform, the Texas Farm Bureau state board of directors approved having a statewide "Leader Day" to make a final push for eminent domain reform. Leader Day is scheduled for Wednesday, May 15, and Thursday, May 16.

To date, volunteer leaders from 69 County Farm Bureaus have registered for the event. If more county leaders want to attend, we have additional space. Contact Betsy Simon at bsimon@txfb.org. We appreciate your willingness to make another trip to Austin to advocate for SB 421 by Sen. Lois Kolkhorst and Rep. DeWayne Burns.

Legislative Deadlines Coming Up

The rules of the House and Senate set certain deadlines for bills to be voted from committee or that particular chamber. Bills will either pass or fail over the next month based on these deadlines.

May 6: Last Day for HOUSE bills to be voted from House committees

May 9: Last Day for HOUSE bills to be passed on second reading in the House

May 18: Last Day for SENATE bills to be voted from House committees

May 21: Last Day for SENATE bills to be passed on second reading in the House

May 22: Last Day for ALL bills to be passed in the Senate

May 26: Last Day for the House and Senate to pass Conference Committee reports or concur on House or Senate amendments

Disease Prevention

C.S.H.B. 70 by Rep. Mary Gonzalez (D-Clint) was passed out of the House by a 144-3 vote on April 30. Cotton and cattle, our state's top two agricultural commodities, are affected by pests and diseases that can cause a major economic impact on farmers, ranchers and rural economies. The cotton industry has previously been devastated by boll weevils, but due to the state's involvement, a very successful eradication program has addressed this problem. Brucellosis has also been a past problem for the cattle industry, and they are currently fighting the spread of fever ticks in South Texas.

C.S.H.B. 70 seeks to ensure we are prepared for these and future issues by requiring the Texas Department of Agriculture to include in its strategic plan of operation a goal of preventing crop diseases and plant pests in the state. This will be done by improving TDA's preventative management practices for crop disease, expanding existing surveillance programs to reduce and/or prevent the importation of diseased plants and ensuring control and eradication methods.

C.S.S.B. 1672 by Sen. Charles Perry (R-Lubbock) was unanimously passed out of the Senate on April 25. The agricultural industry has been aggressively combating invasive organisms and species that hinder the productivity of agriculture. Early detection programs of these organisms and species is very important to allow for better containment or slowing their spread.

C.S.S.B. 1672 establishes an early plant detection and surveillance system through cooperative agreements with the Texas Department of Agriculture and universities in the state. This bill provides a full range of activities, including field inspection for early detection before the invasive species becomes established or becomes too large and costly to eradicate or control.

TFB supports C.S.H.B. 70 and C.S.S.B. 1672. (TFB Policy: Plant Diseases and Insects 136, lines 6-8)

Broadband Services

C.S.H.B. 669 by Rep. Ken King (R-Canadian) was passed out of the House by a 114-31 vote on May 1. This bill will allow electing broadband service providers to offer retail broadband service to underserved rural areas of Texas at comparable rates established

by the Federal Communications Commission.

The bill prohibits support received under this rural broadband service program from being used for another purpose and requires the PUC by rule to adopt criteria for areas of Texas to qualify as underserved rural areas for purposes of the program. C.S.H.B. 669 will expand broadband service access allowing rural Texans to benefit from modern technology advancements.

TFB supports C.S.H.B. 669. (TFB Policy: Utilities 146, lines 35-38)

Aquifers

C.S.H.B. 720 by Rep. Lyle Larson (R-San Antonio) was passed out of the House by a 135-3 vote on May 1. C.S.H.B. 720 addresses the development of aquifer storage and recovery projects and aquifer recharge projects. These provide for the retention of water but do not fall victim to substantial evaporation of surface water reservoirs.

C.S.H.B. 720 makes it easier to capture and store this valuable resource by facilitating aquifer recharge projects involving utilizing injection wells.

TFB Supports C.S.H.B. 720. (TFB Policy: Groundwater 153, lines 199-201)

Groundwater Rights

C.S.S.B. 2026 by Sen. Charles Perry (R-Lubbock) the production of a retail public utility well by a ground water conservation district.

C.S.S.B. 2026 protects landowners from public water utilities attempting to use landowners' groundwater without compensation or consent. These utilities have asked groundwater conservation districts and the Legislature to allow them to be credited with the acreage in their service area. They want credit for this acreage so they can pump groundwater from under this acreage without compensating landowners or getting the landowners' consent. This is a taking of private property for public use in violation of the Constitution.

C.S.S.B. 2026 requires the utilities to either buy, lease or get permission from the affected landowners to pump the groundwater under acreage the utility doesn't own. This method of determining how much a utility can pump is consistent with groundwater ownership.

The companion bill, **HB 2122** by Rep. Cody Harris (R-Palestine), was heard and left

pending in the House Natural Resources Committee on March 26. These bills were first reported on the in the tenth issue of the *Austin Newsletter*.

TFB Supports C.S.S.B. 2026 and H.B. 2122. (TFB Policy: Real Property Rights 150, lines 2-5; Groundwater 153, Lines 9-13; 78-82; 175-178)

Waste Disposal

C.S.S.B. 2070 by **Sen. Jose Menendez (D-San Antonio)** was passed out of the Senate by a 27-4 vote on April 29. Private companies have been accused of dumping processed grease trap waste or grit trap waste with sewage sludge. This has a negative impact on adjacent landowners and the environment through groundwater runoff, along with city's infrastructures.

This bill would amend the Health and Safety Code to prohibit the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality from issuing a permit, registration or other authorization for land application of grease trap waste or grit trap waste under certain circumstances.

C.S.S.B. 2026 requires the utilities to either buy, lease or get permission from the affected landowners to pump the groundwater under acreage the utility doesn't own. This method of determining how much a utility can pump is consistent with groundwater ownership.

The companion bill, **C.S.H.B. 3930** by **Rep. Geanie Morrison (R-Victoria)**, was reported from the House Environmental Regulation Committee on April 25.

TFB Supports C.S.S.B. 2070 and C.S.H.B. 3930. (TFB Policy: Waste Disposal 157, lines 242-246)



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