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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.

Pollinator Health

HB 136, by Rep. Mary Gonzalez (D-Clint), relates to a pollinator's health by requiring Texas A&M AgriLife and the Texas Department of Agriculture to develop educational materials to be included in existing pesticide applicator trainings, along with creating a "Task Force on Pollinator Health" designed to study this issue.

The task force will include 10 qualified members, and they will be responsible for examining issues relevant to pollinator health.

The task force makeup would include:

1. One member of the Texas Senate (nonvoting member);
2. One member of the Texas House (nonvoting member);
3. One member of a university faculty specializing in pollinator health;
4. One member representing an advocacy group for nurseries and greenhouse producers;
5. One member representing an advocacy group for farmers;
6. One member representing an advocacy group dedicated to the protection of pollinators and invertebrates;
7. One member representing an advocacy group for environmental protection;
8. One member representing an advocacy group for retailers;
9. One member certified as a master gardener by Texas A&M AgriLife; and
10. One member who is a beekeeper.

The task force would be charged with reviewing science and all educational materials in order to make informed policy recommendations. This would include studying regulations from other states and countries, studying successful educational programs and outreach plans from other states, evaluating the effectiveness of applicator licensing and other legal requirements, identifying possible funding streams, investigating the means in which other states collect data on populations of bees and other pollinating insects, and examining existing management practices. A final report will be given to the proper committees with agricultural jurisdiction in the House and Senate containing recommendations for legislation.

TFB is neutral on HB 136. (TFB Policy: Honey 118, lines 12-13)

State Flood Planning

SB 396, by Sen. Charles Perry (R- Lubbock), 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. The development of the State Flood Plan would somewhat mirror the planning process used to develop the State Water Plan. A Regional Flood Planning Group would be composed of representatives of the governing body of each county that is located wholly or partly in a flood planning region. A county may have several representatives during the deliberations of the flood planning group. However, in voting on the final version of the Regional Flood Plan, each county would only be entitled to a single vote.

The legislation also directs the Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board to develop and maintain a Ten-year Dam Repair and Maintenance Plan for existing flood control dams and structures.

SB 397, by Sen. Charles Perry (R- Lubbock), would establish a State Flood Plan Implementation Fund under the Texas Water Development Board. The fund would be used to implement the State Flood Plan and the Ten-year Dam Repair and Maintenance Plan (developed and administered by the Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board).

The legislation also includes provisions that would enable the Texas Water Development Board to shift existing resources to maximize their ability to finance and support these programs, with or without the passage of SJR 28.

In addition, SB 397 would establish a State Flood Plan Implementation Fund Advisory Committee consisting of the Comptroller and legislators residing over key committees and/or appointed by the Lt. Governor and Speaker of the House of Representatives.

[SJR 28](#), by Sen. Charles Perry (R- Lubbock), would propose a constitutional amendment (and statewide referendum) for the creation of the State Flood Plan Implementation Fund to assist in the financing of projects identified in the State Flood Plan and transfer \$1.2 billion from the Rainy Day Fund to help finance these projects. This fund would include financing for the repair and maintenance of existing dams.

TFB supports SB 396, SJR 28, and SB 397. (TFB Policy: TSSWCB 108, lines 30-33; Surface Water 154, lines 17-22; 85-91; 130-137; Water Management 155, lines 85-86)

Taxes

[SB 2](#), by Sen. Paul Bettencourt (R-Houston), and [HB 2](#), by Rep. Dustin Burrows (R-Lubbock), includes changes related to the tax rate process, appraisal process, and changes to the rollback tax rate calculation and ballot languages for ISDs.

For taxing units that collect more than \$15 million in tax revenue annually, the following changes will occur:

- Lowers the rollback tax rate from the current 8 percent to 2.5 percent.
- Requires an automatic ratification election if a taxing unit adopts a tax rate that exceeds the rollback rate, eliminating the petition requirement in current statute.
- Requires rollback elections to be held on the uniform November election day and adjusts the property tax calendar accordingly.
- For taxing units that collect no more than \$15 million in tax revenue annually, the current 8 percent rollback rate will remain.

Another change related to the tax rate process is the effective tax rate will be renamed as the "No-New-Revenue tax rate" so that property owners and local elected officials can better understand and use the tax rate as a benchmark for evaluating the tax rates proposed by local taxing units.

SB 2 and HB 2 will also create the "real-time tax rate notice" to inform property owners of the tax rates proposed by their local taxing units for their property.

Changes also establish an "office of tax rate notices" in each county and places responsibility on that office for publishing the real-time tax rate notice and for maintaining the real-time tax rate database that populates the notice, along with

revising and reformatting the tax notice required by Tax Code § 26.06 to increase the understandability and usefulness of the notice to taxpayers.

The bill prohibits a taxing unit from adopting a tax rate before the taxing unit has certified the accuracy of the no-new-revenue tax rate and rollback tax rate calculations; before a taxing unit that imposes an additional sales tax for property tax relief has certified that the sales tax revenue has been applied to reduce the debt component of the taxing unit's property tax rate; until the 14th day after the taxing unit has submitted the information required for the real-time tax rate notice to the office of tax rate notices; before the office of tax rate notices has delivered the real-time tax rate notice; or before the taxing unit has published the tax rate and budget information required by Tax Code § 26.18 on the county's website.

Changes would also require all taxing units to use electronic forms promulgated by the Texas Comptroller to calculate the no-new-revenue tax rate and the rollback tax rate. It would also require the no-new-revenue tax rate and rollback tax rate worksheets of each taxing unit to be published as part of the truth-in-taxation notice required by Tax Code § 26.16, as an appendix to the taxing unit's budget, and on the taxing unit's website.

For both the tax rate and appraisal process, a Property Tax Administration Advisory Board in the Texas Comptroller's office will be created to oversee the entire property tax process.

Changes relating to both the rollback tax rate calculation and ballot language for ISDs include adjusting the school district rollback tax rate calculation to reflect the 2.5 percent revenue cap recommendation in the Public School Finance Commission Report and modifying the required ballot language if an election is required, due to a district wishing to exceed the 2.5 percent revenue increase.

TFB supports SB 2. (TFB Policy: Property Tax 142, line 21)

Grassroots Advocacy Focuses on Eminent Domain

The feedback at these meetings was positive, but we must follow up! Things can change quickly at the Capitol depending on what our opposition's lobbyists are telling your legislators.

Also, we have many verbal commitments to co-author SB 421 and HB 991, but we must make sure legislators take action. Each week will provide a list of the current co-authors. **If your legislator isn't on these lists, please contact them.**

A strong list of co-authors demonstrates that the Legislature is serious about supporting eminent domain reform this session. As of January 31, 2019 this is the list of co-authors:

HB 991 by Burns

Charles "Doc" Anderson	Trent Ashby	Keith Bell
Brad Buckley	Stan Lambert	Mike Lang
Dr. J.D. Sheffield	Hugh Shine	Phil Stevenson
Gary VanDeaver	James White	

SB 421 by Kolkhorst

Charles Perry

TFB Poll Results on Eminent Domain

TFB had an opportunity this fall to participate in a statewide voter poll with two other membership organizations. As a participant, we were allowed to ask voters some questions on an issue important to TFB. Therefore, we used our questions to ask voters how they felt about our priorities for eminent domain reform. Texas voters overwhelming agreed with our position! This was consistent among Republicans and Democrats from both rural and urban areas. This poll proves that private property rights and eminent domain reform are important to ALL Texans.

[Click here to view the results from the poll](#)

TFB members are welcome to use this information when visiting with your legislators about supporting SB 421 and HB 991.

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