



AUSTIN NEWSLETTER

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

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86th Regular Session

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.

Eminent Domain Update

[SB 421](#), by **Sen. Lois Kolkhorst (R-Brenham)** and **sponsored by Rep. DeWayne Burns (R-Cleburne)**, was heard in the House Land and Resource Management Committee on April 25.

The hearing was well-attended by landowners who have been impacted by private entities wielding eminent domain. Many stayed past midnight to tell the committee their stories. The committee finally adjourned at 1:22 a.m.

Russell Boening, Texas Farm Bureau (TFB) President, traveled to Austin to testify on behalf of the organization.

Boening told the committee TFB understands the need for eminent domain, but landowners deserve a fair process and the just compensation guaranteed by the constitution. He explained negotiating a deal with a company who has eminent domain authority is not a willing buyer/seller relationship. It's not a voluntary transaction for the landowner, who can never just walk away. Boening then briefly explained the three components of SB 421 and why each was important to landowners to improve the current process.

Boening concluded by describing the many concessions landowner groups have given and stressed the countless hours that have been spent negotiating in good faith with other stakeholders. But, he cautioned, we must have a bill that works for both landowners and private entities.

You can watch the first part of the hearing at this [link](#) starting at 13:20 and the second part of the hearing at this [link](#).

Texas Farm Bureau Leader Day in Austin

As part of the grassroots action plan on eminent domain reform, TFB's board of directors approved 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.

All County Farm Bureau (CFB) presidents are invited to attend this Leader Day. If the CFB president cannot attend, another board member may come in his or her place. We encourage anyone attending to share vehicles, or if possible, to ride with a member of the TFB field staff. TFB will cover hotel rooms and travel expenses for one person per county. Breakfast will be provided. All other meal expenses are on your own.

Information regarding hotel reservations and registration was mailed to CFB presidents. This event is coming quickly, so please register as soon as possible.

Industrial Hemp

[HB 1325](#), by Rep. Tracy King (D-Uvalde), was unanimously passed from the House on April 24. HB 1325 relates to the production and regulation of hemp and products made from hemp; requiring authorization to produce hemp; and authorizing penalties and fees. An overview on the committee hearing was given in the 13th issue of the *Austin Newsletter*.

TFB supports HB 1325. (TFB Policy: Agriculture Commodities 109, lines 23-25)

Brackish Groundwater

[HB 724](#), by Rep. Lyle Larson (R- San Antonio), was unanimously voted out of the House on April 25. This bill facilitates the use of treated brackish groundwater and allows treated brackish groundwater that is discharged into a water course to be diverted and used again. HB 724 was first reported on in the second issue of the *Austin Newsletter*.

TFB supports HB 724. (TFB Policy: Water Management 155, lines 37-40, 43-45)

Transportation

[HB 2837](#), by Rep. Terry Canales (D- Edinburg), is a multi-purpose transportation bill relating to the operation of and equipment for vehicles that was unanimously passed out of the House on April 25.

This bill adds vehicles that are being used for the purpose of participating in equine activities or attending livestock shows and covered farm vehicles to the list of vehicles exempt from being operated by a driver with a commercial driver's license.

HB 2837 also authorizes an improved shoulder as lane of traffic for slow-moving vehicles.

The final provision states that a trailer, semitrailer, or pole trailer that is equipped with air or vacuum brakes or that has a gross weight of 4,500 instead of 3,000 pounds would be required to have brakes on all wheels that are operating and that they be able to be applied promptly and remain applied for at least 15 minutes in case of a breakaway from the towing vehicle.

HB 2837 was originally summarized in the 10th issue of the *Austin Newsletter*.

TFB supports HB 2837. (TFB Policy: Farm Machinery 163, lines 6-9 and 13-18, General Law Enforcement 184, lines 36-40, Truck Transportation 164, lines 4-8)

Racing

[HB 1995](#), by Rep. Tracy King (D- Uvalde), was voted out of the House 121-10. This bill redirects certain money deducted from simulcast pari-mutuel pools and simulcast cross-species pari-mutuel pools to the Texas Racing Commission. This legislation is the result of concerns being raised that the Texas Racing Commission has trouble regulating the racing industry because it is unable to use funding from certain revenue sources for operational expenses.

The companion bill, [SB 2274](#), by Sen. Chuy Hinojosa (D- McAllen), has been referred to the Senate Water and Rural Affairs Committee.

TFB Supports HB 1995. (TFB Policy: Horses 119, lines 3-5, line 24)



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