

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.

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 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

Industrial Hemp

CSHB 1325 by Rep. Tracy King (D-Uvalde) and sponsored by Sen. Charles Perry (R-Lubbock) was heard and voted out of the Senate Agriculture Committee this week. CSHB 1325 relates to the production and regulation of hemp and products made from hemp; requires an authorization to produce hemp; and authorizes penalties and fees. The bill creates a production plan and a state hemp program and requires participation in the state hemp program in order to cultivate, handle or process hemp in Texas.

Bob Reed, former TFB state director and Matagorda CFB member, testified on behalf of Texas Farm Bureau. He was joined by eight other individuals who voiced their support for CSHB 1325. Like in the House Agriculture and Livestock Committee hearing, there was no opposition to the bill.

To see a complete list of the people who testified for or on CSHB 1325, [click here](#). Then click on the Witness List for the May 7 meeting. The hearing coverage on the bill starts at 3:20 at this [link](#).

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

Taxes

HB 639 by Rep. Drew Springer (R-Muenster) was passed out of the House with a 117-21 vote on May 3 and referred to the Senate Property Tax Committee on May 6. This bill pertains to the eligibility of land used as an ecological laboratory (eco-labs) for open space valuation.

The 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 bill would raise the requirement to match what landowners already have to achieve to receive agriculture valuation.

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

Transportation

[CSHB 2837](#) by Rep. Terry Canales (D-Edinburg) and sponsored by Sen. Chuy Hinojosa (D-McAllen) is a multi-purpose transportation bill relating to the operation of and equipment for vehicles.

The bill contains several small changes that will be helpful to farmers and ranchers. One provision in the bill 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.

Another provision in the bill will allow slow moving vehicles to travel on an improved shoulder. This is a common sense fix to make sure the law aligns with what folks expect to be the law and make our rural roadways safer.

[HB 2386](#) by Rep. Kyle Kacal (R-Bryan) and sponsored by Sen. Lois Kolkhorst (R-Brenham) changed in committee for clarifying purposes. HB 2386 updates state law with federal law for CDL requirements for certain operators. If a vehicle is not being used for compensation or for the furtherance of a commercial enterprise; used intrastate; or if the vehicle is a covered farm vehicle under 49 CFR Section 390.5, a CDL will no longer be required.

This will allow the transport of horses and other animals to show and events.

TFB supports CSHB 2837 and HB 2386 (TFB Policy: Horses 119, lines 16-22; Farm Machinery 163, lines 6-9 and 13-18)

[HB 1262](#) by Rep. Keith Bell (R-Forney) and sponsored by Sen. Robert Nichols (R-Jacksonville) seeks to extend the registration period for farm and ranch trailers used for agricultural purposes. Currently, the frequency at which these trailers must be registered places a burden on trailer owners, state agencies and local governmental agencies.

HB 1262 was reported favorably from the Senate Transportation Committee on May 8.

TFB supports HB 1262. (TFB Policy: Truck Transportation 164, line 18)

[HB 2290](#) by Rep. Brad Buckley (R-Killeen) was unanimously passed out of the House on May 3 and referred to the Senate Transportation Committee on May 7.

HB 2290 relates to the placement of a slow-moving vehicle emblem. Currently, slow-moving vehicles are required to mount an emblem on the rear of the vehicle that is three to five feet above the road surface. This bill will remove the height requirement and allow the owner to mount the emblem at a height that does not impair the visibility of the emblem. This bill was originally highlighted in the eighth issue of the *Austin Newsletter*.

Edwards Aquifer Authority

CSHB 3656 by Rep. Andrew Murr (R-Junction) was passed out of the House with a 141-1 vote on May 3 and referred to the Senate Water and Rural Affairs Committee on May 7.

Landowners with permits from the Edwards Aquifer Authority for agricultural irrigation may not sever 50% of their permitted water right from the land. This requirement was put into place to ensure water would be available for agricultural use in the future.

However, as the state of Texas has grown, the area west of San Antonio has been developed. The current prohibition from severing the agricultural water right from the land creates a conflict when the land can no longer be farmed and the water cannot be converted to another use. Texas Farm Bureau supports amending the Edwards Aquifer Authority Act so that when land is developed, and no longer able to be used for agriculture, the water can be converted to another beneficial use.

TFB supports CSHB 3656. (TFB Policy: Groundwater 153, lines 150-153)

Trespassing and Vandalism

CSSB 1884 by Sen. Lois Kolkhorst (R-Brenham) was unanimously passed out of the Senate on May 7.

CSSB 1884 will strengthen trespass and vandalism laws for animals and animal or crop facilities to ensure a safe food supply. The bill makes it an offense if a person steals, releases, destroys, vandalizes or causes loss of animals, crops or their facilities without the owner's consent. Additionally, an offense is also committed if a person obtains control by deception or unauthorized control over materials, equipment, animals or crops for the purpose of depriving the owner.

The bill creates a Class A misdemeanor if there is more than \$2,500 in damages and a Class B if less than \$2,500. The bill further provides if an offense under this section is also an offense in another section of law, the person may be prosecuted under this provision or the other existing provision.

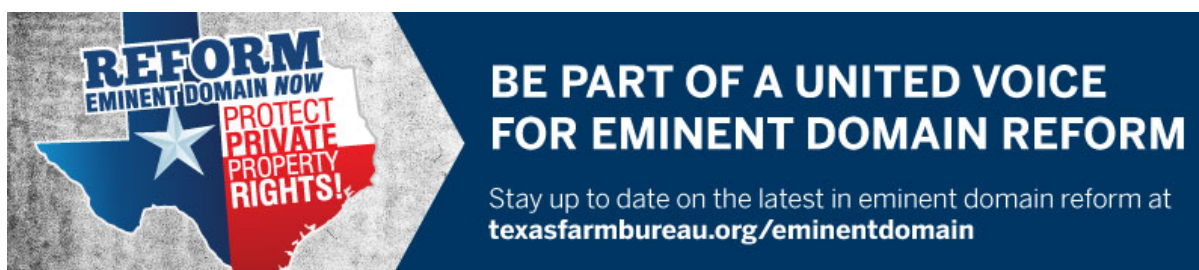
TFB supports CSSB 1884. (TFB Policy: Punishment 186, lines 10-15)

Annexation

HB 347 by Rep. Phil King (R-Weatherford) and sponsored by Brian Birdwell (R-Granbury) was passed out of the Senate on May 8 with a 25-6 vote.

This legislation allows all property owners the right to vote on whether a city can annex them. Currently, only counties with a population of 500,000 or more are given the right to vote prior to annexation. Counties less than 500,000 in population are able to "opt-in" to a vote prior to annexation only if 10% or more of the voters in the county petition for the vote to occur. HB 347 eliminates the need to petition for a vote by removing the distinction between these counties. The last update on this bill was given in the fourteenth issue of the *Austin Newsletter*.

TFB supports HB 347. (TFB Policy: Cities 171, lines 4-12)



Texas Farm Bureau State Legislative Team

Billy Howe, Associate Director of Government Affairs

Issue Areas: Natural Resources, Environmental Regulation, Ethics & Elections, Rural Affairs, and Appropriations

Email: bhowe@txfb.org

Austin Office Phone: 512-472-8288

Marissa Patton, Associate Legislative Director

Issue Areas: Agriculture, Eminent Domain, Land Use Regulation, and Appropriations

Email: mpatton@txfb.org

Mike Pacheco, Associate Legislative Director

Issue Areas: Criminal Justice, Energy, Labor, Taxes, Transportation, Utility Regulation, Tort, and Appropriations

Email: mpacheco@txfb.org

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Billy Howe: [@TFBGovAff_Billy](https://twitter.com/TFBGovAff_Billy)

Marissa Patton: [@TFBAUS_Marissa](https://twitter.com/TFBAUS_Marissa)

Mike Pacheco: [@TFBAUS_Mike](https://twitter.com/TFBAUS_Mike)

Texas Farm Bureau: [@texasfarmbureau](https://twitter.com/texasfarmbureau)

Contact

State Office

P.O. Box 2689
Waco, Texas 76702-2689
254.772.3030

Austin Office

600 W. 12th Street
Austin, Texas 78701
512.472.8288
Fax: 512.472.9120

