

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.

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 concur on House or Senate amendments.

Texas Farm Bureau Leader Day in Austin & Eminent Domain

As part of our strategy in the grassroots action plan on eminent domain reform, the Texas Farm Bureau state board of directors approved having a statewide "Leader Day." The purpose was to make a final push for eminent domain reform in the closing weeks of the legislative session. TFB Leader Day was held this Thursday, May 16, in Austin. We are pleased to report that there were more than 80 counties represented by County Farm Bureau leaders in the state Capitol.

With this strong attendance, county leaders were able to meet with every legislator's

office to advocate for eminent domain reform. In a turn of good fortune, SB 421 was scheduled for a vote in the House Committee on Land & Resource Management on Thursday morning, while members were present in the Capitol. Ironically, the committee met in the Capitol Agriculture Museum. The room was full of Texas Farm Bureau members and their presence showed the committee members our grassroots' passion and dedication to eminent domain reform. At this hearing, the committee voted to advance a House committee substitute for SB 421 to the full House.

This session, Texas Farm Bureau has had a strong commitment to using our grassroots to advocate for eminent domain reform. Texas Farm Bureau hosted its annual Leadership Conference, had nine weeks of volunteers and field staff traveling to Austin for grassroots eminent domain meetings and finally Leader Day. In total, 526 county leaders have traveled to Austin. Our organization and membership have contributed countless hours advocating for meaningful eminent domain reform.

Eminent Domain Update

CSSB 421 by Sen. Lois Kolkhorst (R-Brenham) and sponsored by Rep. Tom Craddick (R-Midland) was favorably reported out of the House Land & Resource Management Committee on May 16 with the recommendation that the bill be sent to Local and Consent Calendar.

The House committee substitute for SB 421 has some provisions that are detrimental to landowners. Therefore, TFB is officially neutral on the bill and supports moving the bill forward in the legislative process. We expect the bill to be sent to a conference committee where TFB will work to get a bill that provides landowners with a fair and transparent eminent domain process.

SB 421 must be voted out of the House next Tuesday or Wednesday, depending whether the bill is placed on the General or Local and Consent Calendar. Then, the conference committee would have to adopt a conference committee report by Saturday, May 25. The next day, Sunday, May 26, is the last day for both the House and Senate to adopt conference committee reports.

Industrial Hemp

CSHB 1325 by Rep. Tracy King (D-Uvalde) and sponsored by Sen. Charles Perry (R-Lubbock) was unanimously voted out of the Senate on May 15.

This bill legalizes and sets up regulation for the growing and processing of hemp. The bill enables Texas to comply with the provision of the 2018 Farm Bill by creating a production

plan and a state hemp program. Farmers will be required to participate in the state hemp program in order to cultivate, handle or process hemp in Texas.

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

Rural Healthcare

HB 1065 by Rep. Trent Ashby (R-Lufkin) and sponsored by Sen. Lois Kolkhorst (R-Brenham) was passed from the Senate on May 14 with a 29-2 vote. This bill address the shortage of physicians in rural communities.

Currently, the majority of physicians fail to complete their graduate medical education in rural areas because of the number of caseloads, diversity of cases and residency staffing requirements. HB 1065 seeks to address this issue by creating a competitive grant program that would provide graduate medical positions in rural and nonmetropolitan areas.

These grants would provide an incentive for medical graduates to take positions in underserved areas. This bill was first summarized in the fifteenth issue of the *Austin Newsletter*.

TFB supports HB 1065. (TFB Policy: Health 182, lines 9-10)

Transportation

CSHB 2837 by Rep. Terry Canales (D-Edinburg) and sponsored by Sen. Chuy Hinojosa (D-McAllen) was unanimously passed out of the Senate on May 15. This bill is a multi-purpose transportation bill relating to the operation of vehicles and equipment for vehicles.

The bill contains several small changes that will be helpful to farmers and ranchers regarding the placement of slow-moving vehicle emblems, legally driving on the shoulder of the road and brake requirements on trailers.

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

Horse Racing

HB 1995 by Rep. Tracy King (D-Uvalde) and sponsored by Sen. Chuy Hinojosa

(D-McAllen) was voted out of the Senate with a 24-7 vote and was sent to Gov. Abbott on May 6. 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. This bill was first reported on in the sixteenth issue of the *Austin Newsletter*.

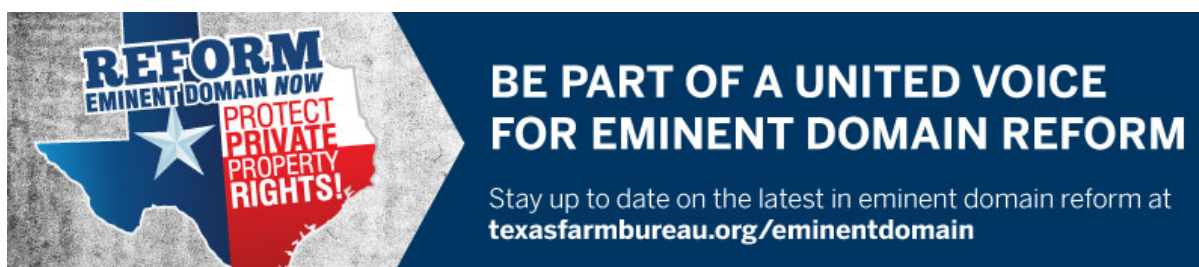
HB 3366 by Rep. Kyle Kacal (R-Bryan) and sponsored by Sen. Lois Kolkhorst (R-Brenham) was favorably reported from the Senate Water and Rural Affairs Committee and recommended for Local and Uncontested Calendar on May 13. This bill will help Texas' horse industry by easing concerns about the funds for the Texas-bred program.

The bill creates an escrow account for the money in the Texas-bred incentive fund. This will ensure protection for the incentive fund and deliver it to the audience targeted by the Legislature. The creation of the escrow account will set the money outside the racing commission's budget, therefore, reflecting a more accurate picture of the Texas Racing Commission's budget. HB 3366 will help reduce costs to the Texas Racing Commission and the fees it assesses to the Texas racing industry.

HB 2463 by Rep. Tracy King (D-Uvalde) and sponsored by Sen. Lois Kolkhorst (R-Brenham) was passed out of the House with a 91-38 vote on May 10 and has since been voted favorably from the Senate Water and Rural Affairs Committee. This bill seeks to provide a mechanism for purse matching by requiring certain tax revenue to be deposited to a horse industry escrow account for use as purses.

HB 2463 requires the deposit of state sales and use taxes collected on the sale, storage or use of horse feed, horse supplements and horse tack into the Racing Commission Escrowed Purse Trust Account. The bill ensures at least \$50 million of this revenue is deposited into this account.

TFB supports these bills. (TFB Policy: Horses 119, lines 24-27)



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