



AUSTIN NEWSLETTER

Texas Farm Bureau's Weekly Newsletter for the 87th Legislature

January 15, 2021 | Regular Session, Issue 1 | 87th 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.

Next week's newsletter will begin providing information on bills that have been filed.

Please do not hesitate to contact the appropriate staff with any questions.

The Texas Farm Bureau Board of Directors adopted the following priorities for the 87th Session of the Texas Legislature:

Eminent Domain

Ensure property owners' rights are protected under eminent domain law.

Water

Protect the rights of landowners and agricultural producers to surface water and ground water. Oppose legislation that attempts to take any constitutionally-protected rights to water.

Taxes

Ensure state tax policy does not adversely impact or burden agricultural producers or the agricultural industry. Protect the current state tax provisions that limit the burden on producing food, fiber and other agricultural products for consumers.

Land Use Regulation

Protect the rights of agricultural producers to engage in normally-accepted agricultural practices on their land. Oppose unnecessary regulatory authority over rural land, including involuntary or coerced annexation.

Transportation

Ensure vehicle, trailer and driver license regulations do not adversely impact or burden agricultural producers or the agricultural industry.

Animal Care

Protect the ability of agricultural producers to utilize generally-accepted, scientifically-proven production practices for livestock, poultry and other animals present on agricultural operations.

Feral Hog Control

Support legalizing reasonable chemical controls for feral hogs. Support maintaining all current legal methods of controlling feral hogs.

Farm Animal Liability

Support modifications to the current Farm Animal Liability Act that recognizes the inherent risk in working with farm animals for both the ag producer and their employees.

Truth in Labeling

Support making it illegal to use deceptive labeling of food products to influence consumers to purchase the product.

Rural Connectivity

Support legislative efforts to facilitate the installation of broadband and cellular infrastructure in underserved rural communities.

Sunset Legislation

Ensure that sunset legislation of state agencies related to agriculture or TFB priority issues benefits our members.

As state agencies are reviewed every 12 years and legislation must pass to continue the agency, programs may also be moved or changed. The ag-related agencies under review include the Texas Department of Agriculture, Texas Animal Health Commission, Boll Weevil Eradication Foundation and Texas Parks and Wildlife Department.

Texas Farm Bureau State Legislative Team

This session, there are several new legislative staff members advocating for Texas Farm Bureau in the Austin legislative office. Following is a list of the staff who will be in Austin during the session with background information on each staff person.

Regan Beck Director of Government Affairs

Regan leads the Legislative, Political and Commodity and Regulatory Activities areas. He also coordinates the Legal Defense Fund activities and oversees AGFUND.

Regan grew up on a ranch and worked as a full-time rancher raising cattle, sheep, goats and hay prior to joining Texas Farm Bureau. He served as the Concho County Farm Bureau president and on numerous Farm Bureau state committees. He has served for 15 years on Texas Farm Bureau staff.

Billy Howe Associate Director of Government Affairs

Billy has advocated in Austin for Texas Farm Bureau since 1999. He spent 18 years in the Austin legislative office. He was state legislative director from 2002 to 2016. He was promoted to associate director of Government Affairs in 2016 and relocated to the Texas Farm Bureau headquarters in Waco.

Charlie Leal State Legislative Director

Charlie Leal joined Texas Farm Bureau as the state legislative director in December 2020. In this role, he is responsible for coordinating and directing the activities of the state legislative program in Austin to advance Farm Bureau's policies at the state level.

Prior to joining Texas Farm Bureau, Leal served as a budget and policy advisor to Gov. Greg Abbott. Leal has over 15 years of combined policy, legislative, campaign and government relations experience, including experience as staff for members of both the Texas House of Representatives and Texas Senate.

Leal was raised in deep South Texas in the farming town of Los Fresnos and is the grandson of a farm foreman. He grew up working summers on a local farm where he learned important values and life lessons.

Leal earned a bachelor's degree from Texas A&M University and was a member of the Corps of Cadets.

Joy Davis Associate Legislative Director

Joy Davis is an associate legislative director for Texas Farm Bureau's Government Affairs division. She joined the organization in March 2020.

Davis most recently worked for her family's business. They grow corn, wheat, oats, hay and raise cattle. They also have a custom fertilizer application, custom harvesting and commodity trucking business.

Prior to that, she was the campaign manager and chief of staff for State Rep. DeWayne Burns during two legislative sessions.

Davis has been heavily involved with TFB. She competed in TFB's Young Farmer & Rancher (YF&R) Discussion Meet, served as the chair of the YF&R Advisory Committee and participated in the organization's AgLead program. She also served on the Johnson County Farm Bureau board of directors and was a member of the American Farm Bureau Federation's Partners in Ag Leadership Program.

Harold Stone Associate Legislative Director

Harold is the newest member of the TFB Austin legislative team as an associate legislative director.

Harold has over 30 years of experience working in and around the Texas Legislature. Harold started his legislative career in the Texas Senate Finance Committee. For much of his career, Harold has worked for and managed the intergovernmental affairs office of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. Most recently he served as chief of staff for State Sen. Pete Flores.

Harold was raised on his family's farm in Longview and is a graduate of Texas State University.

Miranda Schavrien Legislative Secretary

Miranda Schavrien is the secretary for Texas Farm Bureau's legislative office in Austin. Miranda will start on Jan. 20.

Miranda has had a deep interest in agriculture going back to her days participating in FFA in rural central Florida. Miranda received a bachelor's degree in Agriculture Education from the University of Florida and a master's degree in Agriculture Development from Texas A&M University. Miranda began her professional career in March 2019 with the National Cattlemen's Beef Association and most recently she was a communications specialist at the Texas Animal Health Commission.

Ashley Hamilton Legal Intern

Ashley Hamilton is a legal intern for Texas Farm Bureau's Government Affairs division. Ashley works in the legislative office in Austin where she drafts bill summaries for the Austin Newsletter and assists the legislative team with legislation pertinent to TFB priorities.

She was born and raised in West Texas—spending most of her summers and weekends on family farm and ranch property in Motley County.

Ashley received her bachelor's degree in Agricultural and Applied Economics from Texas Tech University in 2018. She is concurrently pursuing two graduate degrees: a master of science degree and thesis in Agricultural and Applied Economics and a Doctor of Jurisprudence degree from Texas Tech School of Law.

She plans to pursue a career in property law, focusing on agricultural land and water rights.

Alexandra Harris Legislative Intern

Alexandra Harris is a shared legislative intern for Texas Farm Bureau's Government Affairs division and the Texas Ag Council. She works in the Austin legislative office where she assists the legislative directors in tracking and monitoring legislation pertinent to both TFB and Texas Ag Council priorities.

Her upbringing as the eldest of a fifth-generation farmer and rancher in West Texas and South Eastern New Mexico fuels her interest in becoming an advocate for agriculture.

Alexandra is currently a senior at West Texas A&M University. After obtaining her bachelor's degree in Agriculture Media & Communication, she plans to attend law school with the intention of practicing in the agricultural industry.

Contact Information

Billy Howe, Associate Director of Government Affairs

Issue Areas: Natural Resources, Environmental Regulations, Ethics & Elections, and Appropriations

Email: bhowe@txfb.org

Austin Office Phone: 512.472.8288

Waco Office Phone: 254-751-2208

Charlie Leal, State Legislative Director

Issue Areas: Tort, Utility Regulation, Rural Affairs, Transportation Infrastructure, and Appropriations

Email: cleal@txfb.org

Austin Office Phone: 512.472.8288

Joy Davis, Associate Legislative Director

Issue Areas: Eminent Domain, Agriculture, Taxes, Trucking Regulations, Labor, and Appropriations

Email: jdavis@txfb.org

Austin Office Phone: 512.472.8288

Harold Stone, Associate Legislative Director

Issue Areas: Wildlife, Land Use Regulation, Criminal Justice, Energy Regulation, and Appropriations

Email: hstone@txfb.org

Austin Office Phone: 512.472.8288

FOLLOW US ON TWITTER!

If you would like immediate updates on the action in Austin, follow the Austin Legislative Staff on Twitter.

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

Charlie Leal: [@TFB_Charlie](https://twitter.com/TFB_Charlie)

Joy Davis: [@TFB_Joy](https://twitter.com/TFB_Joy)

Harold Stone: [@TFB_Harold](https://twitter.com/TFB_Harold)