



AUSTIN NEWSLETTER

Texas Farm Bureau's Weekly Newsletter for the 88th Legislature

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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.

Update on Previously Reported Bills

[HB 2:](#) Relating to providing property tax relief through the public school finance system and property tax appraisal and administration.

[Meyer, Morgan \(R\)](#)

Summary:

HB 2 is the House's property tax relief plan. HB 2 aims to allocate \$12 billion of the budget surplus to cut school districts' M&O rates by \$0.15 cents, resulting in a M&O rate of \$0.66 by the year 2025.

HB 2 would set the current appraisal cap on all real property to 5%. Unlike current law, this cap would also apply to commercial properties.

Update:

The engrossed version of HB 2 includes manufactured homes as part of the real property to be subject to the new 5% appraisal caps.

HB 2 was voted favorably from the Committee on House Ways and Means with a 10-1 vote. It then went to the House floor where it was passed by the House with a 139-5 vote. It is now headed to the Senate for consideration.

TFB **supports** the bill. (TFB 2023 Policy: Property Taxes Section 144, page 39, line 21.)

[HB 9](#) and **[HJR 125:](#)** Relating to the development and funding of broadband and telecommunications services.

[Ashby, Trent \(R\)](#)

Summary:

HB 9 sets up a new funding mechanism for the Texas Broadband Infrastructure Fund. The bill would create the Texas Broadband Infrastructure Fund to provide \$5 billion in state funding to ensure expansion of broadband throughout rural Texas.

The legislation would also fully fund the Universal Service Fund that ensures connectivity throughout rural Texas. The creation of this fund and dedication of the funding would have to be approved by constitutional amendment: HJR 125 by Rep. Ashby.

Update:

HB 9 was reported favorably from the Committee on House State Affairs with a 12-0 vote.

HJR 125 was reported out of House committee on State Affairs with vote of 12 ayes, 0 nays, 0 present not voting, 1 absent.

TFB **supports** HB 9. (TFB Policy: Utilities Section 148, Page 53, Lines 50-53, Rural Living 183, Page 119, Lines 46-53)

HB 73: Relating to landowner liability arising in connection with livestock or agricultural land.

[Murr, Andrew \(R\)](#)

Summary:

Under HB 73, landowners and those who lease land for livestock (lessees) are not liable for any accident involving their livestock under certain circumstances. The new language casts a wider net of protection for those who own or lease land. While current law provides some protection, HB 73 expands the coverage to include **any** accident that involves livestock.

Update:

HB 73 passed the House of Representatives with a 148-0 vote.

TFB **supports** HB 73. (TFB 2023 Policy: Livestock Section 120, Page 15, Lines 43-44; Property Section, Page 126, Lines 7-9; Real Property Rights Section 150, Page 61 Lines 155-157; Punishment Section 186, Page 122, Lines 19-20, Property section 190, Page 126, Lines 7-9.)

HB 92: Relating to the authority of a municipality, county, or property owners' association to prohibit or regulate certain activities on residence homestead property.

[Landgraf, Brooks \(R\)](#)

Summary:

HB 92 ensures that property owners would have the right to produce their own food and provide for their own families. The bill would also allow for regulations related to health and safety.

Update:

The Committee Substitute (Committee Sub) which passed the House contains multiple changes to the introduced version of the bill:

1. Unlike the introduced version of the bill, the Committee Sub does not protect against the regulation of wind-powered energy devices on a residence homestead property.
2. The Committee Sub allows for the prohibition of growing fruits or vegetables in the front yard of homes.
3. The Committee Sub changes the term "fowl" to "chicken" throughout the bill, making its application more specific.

HB 92 was passed by the House of Representatives with a 137-11 vote.

TFB **supports** HB 92. (TFB Policy: Real Property Rights Section 150, Page 58, Section 2-5; Real Property Rights Section 150, Page 60, Lines 107-108)

[HB 1788](#): Relating to the labeling of analogue and cell-cultured products.

[Buckley, Brad \(R\)](#)

Summary:

The bill requires "analogue products" (food products made from processed plant products, insects, or fungus with food additives to mimic meat, poultry, or egg products) to be clearly labeled with one of the following: "analogue; meatless; plant-based; made from plants; or a similar qualifying term."

This bill requires all cell-cultured products to be labeled as either cell-cultured, lab grown, or a similar qualifying term.

Update:

The Committee Substitute for HB 1788 includes the physical requirements of the required language on the label, including the sizing of the words and location.

HB 1788 was voted favorably as substituted out of the House Public Health Committee with a 9-0 vote.

TFB **supports** HB 1788. (TFB 2023 Policy: Livestock Section 120 Page 15, Lines 45-55; Marketing Section 134, Page 26, Lines 68-70)

[HB 2127](#): Relating to state preemption of certain municipal and county regulation.

[Burrows, Dustin \(R\)](#)

Summary:

HB 2127 ensures consistency and predictability in the regulatory processes of local entities. If cities and counties attempt to enforce an ordinance inconsistent with state law, the ordinance would be void and unenforceable.

Update:

HB 2127 passed by the House of Representatives with a 92-55 vote.

TFB **supports** HB 2127. (TFB 2023 Policy: Agricultural Chemicals Section 136, Page 29, Lines 93-95; Feed and Fertilizer Law Section 137, Page 31, Lines 48- 49; Cities Section 171 Page 104, Lines 7-12; Cities Section 171, Page 104, Lines 19- 21; Cities Section 171, Page 105, Lines 43-47)

[SB 156](#): Relating to the regulation of groundwater conservation districts.

[Perry, Charles \(R\)](#)

Summary:

SB 156 creates a process for petitioning to change the rules within a Groundwater Conservation District (GCD), makes the awarding of attorney fees permissive for the judge, and requires public notice of a permit application that may affect adjacent landowners due to spacing rules.

Update:

SB 156 was voted favorably out of committee on Senate Water, Agriculture and Rural Affairs with an 8-0 vote.

SB 156 passed the Senate with a 30-0 vote. It was received in the House and referred to House Committee on Natural Resources.

TFB **supports** SB 156. (TFB 2023 Policy: Real Property Rights 150, Page 58, Lines 2-5; Groundwater 153, Page 69, Lines 33-36; Page 70 45-48; 57-59.)

[SB 1133](#): Relating to a program to compensate landowners for property damage caused by certain criminal activities.

[Blanco, Cesar \(D\)](#)

Summary:

SB 1133 establishes a program to assist farmers and ranchers whose land has been damaged by criminals, trespassers, and traffickers trying to escape law enforcement. The bill will help address an ongoing issue agricultural landowners are dealing with on a daily basis.

Update:

The engrossed version of SB 1133 specifies that the Attorney General's Office would administer the program and that all awards must not exceed \$75,000.

TFB **supports** SB 1133. (TFB 2023 Policy: Real Property Rights 150, Page 60, Lines 65-67; Punishment Section 186, Page 122, Lines 22-26)

New Bills

[SB 758](#) and [HB 3323](#): Relating to the food system security and resiliency planning.
[West, Royce \(D\)](#) and [Goodwin, Vikki \(D\)](#)

Summary:

SB 758 establishes a Texas food system security and resiliency planning council. The council is tasked with creating the State Food System Security Plan, which reviews the availability of food at a sufficient and reasonable cost within the State of Texas. The council will make legislative recommendations related to food resiliency and the availability of food in Texas. The bill also creates a grant program aimed at increasing food security.

TFB **supports** SB 758 and HB 3323. (TFB Policy: Agricultural Promotion; Information 133, Pg. 24, Lines 9-13 Research Section 135, Page 27, lines 10-11; lines 29-31)

[SB 1481](#): Relating to the exercise of eminent domain authority by the Texas Facilities Commission to build a wall along the state's international border.
[Creighton, Brandon \(R\)](#)

Summary:

SB 1481 grants authority for the Texas Facilities Commission (TFC) to acquire land through eminent domain for the placement of a border wall throughout this state's international border with Mexico.

TFB **opposes** SB 1481 because it grants additional eminent domain authority to the state. (TFB Policy: State's Rights Section 104, Page 3, Lines 22-24; Eminent Domain Section 151, Page 65, Lines 144-146)

HB 4444: Relating to the conservation and waste of groundwater.

[King, Tracy \(D\)](#)

Summary:

The proposed committee substitute for HB 4444 fixes the issues with the definitions of waste and beneficial purpose that were concerning to Texas Farm Bureau and other ag groups. The previous language may have allowed groundwater conservation districts to evaluate the farming and ranching practices of the operation to determine if groundwater was being wasted or put to a beneficial purpose.

TFB previously opposed HB 4444. But with the changes made by the committee substitute, TFB is now **neutral** on HB 4444.

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