



# AUSTIN NEWSLETTER

Texas Farm Bureau's Weekly Newsletter for the 89th Legislature

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January 24, 2025 | Regular Session, Issue 2

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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.

## **Dustin Burrows elected as Texas Speaker of the House**

On Tuesday, Jan. 14, Rep. Dustin Burrows (R-Lubbock) was elected speaker of the Texas House. Burrows was born and raised in Lubbock and was elected to the House in 2014. Burrows has been a longtime strong supporter of issues that are important to farmers and ranchers. The district he represents is home to 11 counties in the High Plains' region, which has a strong agricultural presence with cotton and cattle, among other commodities.

## **89th Legislative Session Senate Committee Assignments**

On Jan. 17, Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick released the 89th Session Senate Committee assignments. The following committees have jurisdiction over Texas Farm Bureau priority issue areas:

### **Senate Committee on Water, Agriculture and Rural Affairs**

Charles Perry, Chair (R)  
Kelly Hancock, Vice Chair (R)  
Brian Birdwell (R)  
César Blanco (D)  
Roland Gutierrez (D)  
Adam Hinojosa (R)  
Nathan Johnson (D)  
Lois Kolkhorst (R)  
Kevin Sparks (R)

### **Senate Committee on Local Government**

Paul Bettencourt, Chair (R)  
Mayes Middleton, Vice Chair (R)  
Molly Cook (D)  
Roland Gutierrez (D)  
Robert Nichols (R)  
Angela Paxton (R)  
Royce West (D)  
Royce West (D)

## **Senate Committee on Transportation**

Robert Nichols, Chair (R)  
Royce West, Vice Chair (D)  
Paul Bettencourt (R)  
Brent Hagenbuch (R)  
Juan "Chuy" Hinojosa (D)  
Nathan Johnson (D)  
Phil King (R)  
Borris Miles (D)  
Charles Perry (R)

## **Senate Committee on State Affairs**

Bryan Hughes, Chair (R)  
Angela Paxton, Vice Chair (R)  
Paul Bettencourt (R)  
Brian Birdwell (R)  
Bob Hall (R)  
Adam Hinojosa (R)  
Mayes Middleton (R)  
Tan Parker (R)  
Charles Perry (R)  
Charles Schwertner (R)  
Judith Zaffirini (D)

## **Senate Committee on Finance**

Joan Huffman, Chair (R)  
Juan "Chuy" Hinojosa, Vice Chair (D)  
Carol Alvarado (D)  
Paul Bettencourt (R)  
Donna Campbell (R)  
Brandon Creighton (R)  
Peter Flores (R)  
Bob Hall (R)  
Lois Kolkhorst (R)  
Robert Nichols (R)  
Angela Paxton (R)  
Charles Perry (R)  
Charles Schwertner (R)  
Judith Zaffirini (D)

## **Senate Committee on Natural Resources**

Brian Birdwell, Chair (R)  
Judith Zaffirini, Vice Chair (D)  
Carol Alvarado (D)  
César Blanco (D)  
Peter Flores (R)  
Kelly Hancock (R)  
Bryan Hughes (R)  
Tan Parker (R)  
Kevin Sparks (R)

Click [here](#) for the full list of Senate Committee assignments.

## **Environment**

**HB 1674:** Relating to the production, sale, and use of certain agricultural products containing perfluoroalkyl and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS).

[Kerwin, Helen \(R\)](#)

### **Summary:**

HB 1674 expands the current definition of a commercial fertilizer to include biosolids, compost, wastewater residuals, industrial or sewage septage, sewage sludge, and lagoon residuals used for agricultural purposes. The inclusion of these

materials as commercial fertilizers broadens the scope of what is regulated by the Texas Feed and Fertilizer Control Service.

The bill allows the service to restrict the manufacture, sale, distribution, or application of materials containing perfluoroalkyl and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) that test above certain concentration levels. Manufacturers must send monthly samples for independent analysis and dispose of batches exceeding the concentration limits as hazardous waste or via incineration.

If two or more samples from the same manufacturer exceed the limits within a year, a stop-sale order will be issued, and the manufacturer's permit will be suspended until compliance is demonstrated. Random on-site sampling may occur at the manufacturer's expense during the permit suspension. Failure to submit required samples multiple times in a year leads to similar actions as in the previous point. Manufacturers are required to self-test each batch before distribution and maintain records of these tests, publishing results on their websites.

The goal of the legislation is to mitigate potential health and environmental risks associated with PFAS substances.

**TFB is currently neutral on HB 1674.** TFB policy does not oppose the process created by HB 1674 to ensure municipal sludge used as fertilizer is safe. However, the levels provided may or may not be what is scientifically proven to be safe. Therefore, TFB is neutral on the bill while gathering additional information.

TFB 2025 Policy: Waste Disposal Section 158, Page 91, Lines 128-138

## **Renewable Energy**

**SB 819:** Relating to renewable energy generation facilities.  
[Kolkhorst, Lois \(R\)](#)

### **Summary:**

SB 819 establishes a regulatory framework for renewable energy projects (wind and solar developments) in Texas. Currently, there is little regulation or oversight over wind and solar developments at the state level.

The bill requires the Public Utility Commission of Texas (PUC), with an environmental impact review from Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD), to establish oversight over renewable energy projects. A permit would be required for a renewable energy development that produces more than 10 megawatts of power (approximately 50 acres of solar or 3-4 wind turbines).

Notification of the permit application must be provided to the county judge for all counties within 25 miles of the facility and public meetings on the project must be held. The developer must publish notice of the meeting, along with a website with details of the proposed project, in a local newspaper.

All details about the project would be required to be submitted with the permit application, and a website with information about the proposed project must be made available. Before applying for the permit, the renewable energy developer must obtain an environmental impact review from TPWD.

Current renewable energy developments would not be subject to the permitting requirement UNLESS they expand their electric generation by 5 megawatts or more OR "materially changes" the development.

Solar developments would have to be 100 ft from the property line and 200 ft from any habitable structure unless permission is granted from neighboring landowner and structure owner. Wind developments would have to be at least 3,000 feet away from the property line unless permission is granted from the neighboring landowner.

SB 819 establishes a "Cleanup Fund," consisting of private contributors, legislative appropriations, and environmental impact fees. The environmental impact fee is imposed on every permit held, and the PUC will determine the amount of the fee by considering each project's efficiency, size, and environmental impact score given by TPWD.

Environmental impact reviews will consider: the facilities conservation of natural resources, the amount of land being used which is typically used for agriculture and wildlife, and if the project is using agricultural best practices. TPWD is required to coordinate with Texas A&M AgriLife Extension on what agricultural best practices are. The review will also include an environmental impact score.

The bill will also prohibit tax abatement agreements from cities, counties, and local taxing entities.

**TFB supports SB 819.**

TFB 2025 Policy: Renewable Energy Section 147, Page 55, Lines 40-46)

## Foreign Land Ownership

**SB 307:** Relating to the purchase of or acquisition of title of real property by certain aliens or foreign entities.

[Kolkhorst, Lois \(R\)](#)

### Summary:

SB 307 would prohibit the purchase or acquisition of agricultural land by certain foreign individuals or entities. The bill applies to foreign individuals or entities from countries identified by the U.S. Director of National Intelligence as a country that poses a risk to the national security of the United States, based on the three most recent Annual Threat Assessments of the U.S. Intelligence Community.

This bill grants the Office of the Texas Attorney General the authority to investigate violations of the law and provides recourse for the land to be sold and proceeds returned to the individual or entity.

Certain exceptions are noted for U.S. citizens, lawful permanent residents, and leasehold interests under specific conditions.

The provisions of SB 307 are narrower in scope than the original version of SB 147, filed by Senator Kolkhorst in the 88th legislative session. The initial version of SB 147 aimed to ban ownership of any real property by any foreign individual or entities from China, Iran, North Korea, or Russia. Several amendments were made to that SB 147, but it ultimately failed to receive a vote in the house.

### TFB supports SB 307.

TFB 2025 Policy: Real Property Rights Section 151, Page 65, Lines 142-147; Real Property Rights Section 151, Page 67, Lines 261-263

## Water

**HB 1400:** Relating to creation of the groundwater science, research, and innovation fund to be administered by the Texas Water Development Board.

[Harris, Cody \(R\)](#)

### Summary:

HB 1400 is the companion bill to [SB 718](#), authored by Sen. Lois Kolkhorst. The language is identical. HB 1400 would create a special fund for groundwater science, research, and innovation. The fund will allow the Texas Water Development Board to provide grants to groundwater conservation districts to enhance groundwater

science that will assist in understanding local groundwater conditions, efficiency, conservation, recharge, and water quality.

The districts receiving aid must provide data and research findings to the board.

The bill mandates that at least 35% of the funds be allocated for programs or projects to smaller districts with populations of no more than 100,000 and revenues under \$250,000. Districts receiving grants may be required to provide matching funds up to 25% of the grant amount.

**TFB supports HB 1400.**

TFB 2025 Policy: Groundwater Section 154, Page 75, Lines 100-101

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