



# My five cents...

A weekly column from Sen. Robert Nichols

by Sen. Robert Nichols, Senate District 3

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Today is the first of many deadlines the legislature will reach over the next two and a half weeks. It's the last day for the House to pass House Bills on second reading. After today, the House will only pass Senate Bills until the Legislature adjourns Sine Die on June 2. Historically, only about one in five bills filed actually become law.

Here are five things happening around your state:

## **1. Bill creating Dementia Prevention and Research Institute goes to the Governor**

In the first weeks of this legislative session, I voted for Senate Bill 5 by Senator Huffman, which establishes the Dementia Prevention and Research Institute of Texas (DPRIT). DPRIT will bring together researchers to create and expedite innovation in dementia, Alzheimer's, and Parkinson's treatment and invest \$3 billion over the next ten years. The money will be used to award grants for research in these areas. The Institute will work collaboratively with institutions of higher education in this state to further its goals. The House has also passed SB 5 and now the bill will go to the Governor's desk to be signed into law. I am grateful that our state has made such a significant investment in this program. DPRIT will bring together researchers to develop critical resources for enhanced dementia, Alzheimer's, and Parkinson's care.

## **2. State prohibition on foreign land ownership bill passes both chambers**

Many Texans have expressed concerns regarding the purchase of Texas land and natural resources by entities from foreign nations, many of which have been designated as a threat to the country or state. Senate Bill 17 by Senator Kolkhorst, which passed the House this week, aims to end ownership of Texas land by hostile foreign actors. The U.S. Director of National Intelligence maintains an updated list of nations who qualify as a threat to the U.S. That list currently includes China, Iran, North Korea and Russia. Senate Bill 17 would prohibit governmental entities, corporations, and individuals from countries on that list from purchasing property in Texas. In June, the New York Times reported that the federal government was taking similar steps as foreign actors have increasingly bought land in close proximity to military bases or other locations important to national security. The House and Senate passed slightly different version of SB 17, so those differences will have to be reconciled before the bill goes to the Governor to become law.

### **3. Port Neches-Groves High School's Unified track team wins state**

Port Neches-Groves High School is leading the way in inclusion with their Unified Sports Program. The program is a joint venture between University Interscholastic league (UIL) and Special Olympics Texas. The program brings together athletes with and without intellectual disabilities to train and compete together. On April 25, the Port Neches-Groves Unified Track and Field Team won their first-ever state title. So far, Port Neches-Groves is the only team in the area with a unified team. Students testified to their growth both athletically and personally. I would like to commend Port Neches-Groves on the success of their program!

### **4. Senate considers bill to relocate the "Travis Letter" to the Alamo**

Representative Cody Harris, from Palestine, filed HB 1397 which establishes custody and display for several of Texas' foundational documents. This includes the Texas Declaration of Independence, the Texas Constitution, and the "Victory or Death" letter by William B. Travis. Under current law, the custody and care of these documents are not expressly granted to one entity. This bill designates "care, custody, and secure display" of these artifacts to the Texas State Library and Archives Commission (TSLAC). The bill also directs TSLAC to work with the Texas Historical Commission and State Preservation Board to coordinate an appropriate location for display at the Capitol Complex and when feasible, the Alamo complex. The bill has passed the House, and this week passed committee in the Senate.

### **5. Financial Crimes Bill signed by the Governor**

This session I have authored a package of bills related to the Financial Crimes Intelligence Center or FCIC. The FCIC is a statewide task force based out of Smith County. The FCIC combats growing issues including card skimming, fuel theft, check fraud and other organized financial crimes. One of the bills I authored expands the statutory scope of the agency to include all forms of payment fraud. This week the Governor signed SB 1499 into law after successful passage in both chambers. The FCIC has investigated and brought to justice criminals who have defrauded Texans from across the state. I was honored to work with this agency and appreciate their commitment to prevention, investigation, and deterrence of organized financial crimes.

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