

State of Texas
Texas Senate

P.O. Box 12068
AUSTIN, TEXAS 78711-2068
(512) 463-0107
FAX (512) 463-8810



11451 KATY FREEWAY, SUITE 209
HOUSTON, TEXAS 77079
(713) 464-0282
FAX (713) 461-0108

Paul Bettencourt
DISTRICT 7

Paul.Bettencourt@senate.texas.gov

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Contact Information
Lauri Saathoff | (512) 463-0107
Lauri.Saathoff@senate.texas.gov

Senator Bettencourt's Proposed Pension Amendment Causes Consternation at Houston City Hall
Simple amendment would require the mayor and city to honor the result of a public pension referendum

Houston – Senator Paul Bettencourt (R-Houston) today responded to Mayor Turner's remarks yesterday that simply requiring the City Hall to honor any future public vote on switching new City of Houston employees' pension plan from defined benefits to 401(k) style defined contribution pension plans **"that does just gum up the process."** The amendment, by Senator Bettencourt, simply says that if an election is held on this issue that the city will respect the wishes of the voters.

"I am amazed that my simple amendment, which does nothing more than say the City of Houston must honor the results of a citizen driven petition referendum, has caused so much consternation at City Hall," said Senator Bettencourt. **"My position is clear: Let the people vote."**

Petitions signed by roughly 35,000 Houstonians have been submitted to the City of Houston by Texans for Local Control calling for a vote on the type of pension plans that will be offered to new employees in the future. Since these plans involve the investment of billions of taxpayers' dollars, they should have voice on this matter and, pending certification by the City Secretary, will mean that the question of putting newly hired employees into defined contribution plans will be on the ballot on the next uniform election date. Currently 20,000 valid signatures are needed to call for a city charter election in Houston.

"Mayor Turner stated that the purpose of his press conference was to ask the general public for its help and for them to weigh in on the process," continued Senator Bettencourt. **"I can think of no better way to allow the public to participate in the process than to respect the results of the citizen petition referendum already signed by 35,000 Houstonians calling for this issue to be put to a vote."**

The proposed amendment language came from Senate Bill 1752, which was filed by Senator Bettencourt earlier in the session, which says that public voters on charter amendment referendums to move new hires to defined contribution 401(k) plans that 96 percent of the private sector has will be honored under state law.

"Respecting the people's vote is the bedrock of American democracy," Senator Bettencourt continued. **"All you have to see is the billions of dollars of pension liabilities in Dallas, our \$8 billion plus pension problem in Houston to know it is past time to switch new employees to plans the taxpayer can afford. All the consternation at City Hall that exists on letting the people vote on a referendum isn't in the taxpayers' interest. Ignoring them has repeatedly caused constant litigation. A new direction is required to alleviate it."**

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