

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
Cristie Ingram | (512) 463-0107
Cristie.Ingram@senate.texas.gov

Major Steps for taxpayers in Future disaster appraisal relief in Passes Senate back to House
HJR34, HB492 & HB3384 provides property tax breaks in the aftermath of a natural disaster

Austin, TX - The Texas Senate has passed a package of legislation, authored by Representative Hugh Shine (R-Temple) and sponsored by Senator Paul Bettencourt (R-Houston) and Senator Larry Taylor (R-Friendswood), to ensure that property owners impacted by natural disasters may receive automatic disaster reappraisal. Following Hurricane Harvey, many taxpayers were faced with paying property taxes on the full value of their property which in some cases had been destroyed. **“Nothing makes taxpayers madder than paying full property taxes on damaged or destroyed property,”** added Senator Bettencourt.

The current permissive set of regulations led to some property taxpayers getting reappraisal relief while others, just across Buffalo Bayou in Houston, did not. For example, only 10 out of roughly 500 taxing jurisdictions granted disaster reappraisal. This legislation has had overwhelming bipartisan support in both chambers and is in the House for final votes and passage to Governor Abbott at this time. Representative Hugh Shine deserves much credit for an extensive workgroup on the issue that he led during the last interim.

Those who have lived through a disaster like Hurricane Harvey know how emotionally and financially taxing the recovery process is,” said Senator Larry Taylor. **“The last thing a family should be worrying about in the aftermath of a catastrophe is paying property taxes on home value that simply no longer exists. That’s why I am proud to sponsor HB 492 and I am confident the bill will help disaster victims focus on recovery and healing after a storm, not burdensome tax payments.”**

HB492 is similar to legislation previously passed in the Texas Senate, SB 1772, which allows Texas taxpayers to apply to the Chief Appraiser to give a qualified property an automatic temporary damage exemption based upon the level of structural damage incurred. HJR 34 will amend the Texas Constitution and give voters the final say in a November election whether or not to add this automatic relief to the Texas Constitution. HB 3384 will allow County Appraisal Districts that are damaged structurally or in business systems to apply to the Comptroller for an audit for assistance. SB 1772 was on House Calendars but was not voted on Tuesday night, so HB 492 and HB 3384 were passed by the Texas Senate Wednesday evening as backup bills.

“At a meeting of 1,400 flooded taxpayers at St. John Vianney Catholic Church just a few weeks after Hurricane Harvey, Lt. Governor Dan Patrick, Senator Joan Huffman, and myself listened to the plights of homeowners flooded for the first time by the downstream flooding of Barkers and Addicks Reservoirs,” continued Senator Bettencourt. **“Everything discussed in that meeting will have come to fruition when these three bills finally pass. Thus, in the future when the governor signs a disaster declaration, people can apply for their disaster reappraisal and get it automatically,”** he concluded.

The Senate Property Tax Committee also held hearings on disaster reappraisal, as well as property tax reform and relief, during the interim.

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