

Capitol Update (4-23-25)

Greetings from your Texas Capitol! To put it simply, we are now deep in the throes of the legislative session. The Senate has been very busy in our best efforts to get good bills sent to the House of Representatives and eventually to Governor Abbott's desk to ultimately be signed into law. I have a lot to update you on, so let's dive in!



Rep. Chris Turner and I with the Mansfield Summit High School Jaguars to celebrate them winning the 5A Basketball State Championship. Congrats Principal Jason Mutterer, Coach Emund Prichett, Assistant Coaches Kevin Barona, Shane Earwood, Windley Laborte and team on Summit's first ever State Championship!

Legislation I Authored That Have Passed the Senate

In the past Capitol Updates I provided you with a thorough breakdown of all of the legislation I have filed this session. I wanted to take a moment to update you on the several bills I authored that have made it through the Senate and are now over in the House of Representatives. As well as which representative will be shepherding it through their chamber.

- **[SB 869](#)** – Texas Ethics Commission dismissal/ resolution timeline
- **[SB 871](#) & **[SJR 40](#)**– Rebalancing Emergency & Disaster Powers (House Sponsor – Rep. Shelby Slawson)**
- **[SB 875](#)** – ISD Electioneering Penalties
- **[SB 878](#)** – Adding Guardrails to the Ch. 380 & 381 Tax Abatements
- **[SB 879](#)** – Closed-Loop Geothermal Injection Well Permits Cleanup (House Sponsor – Rep. Drew Darby)

- [**SB 1145**](#) – Produced Water Land Application Regulation Consolidation (House Sponsor – Rep. Brooks Landgraf)
- [**SB 1146**](#) – Inactive Well Plugging Liability (House Sponsor – Rep. Drew Darby)
- [**SB 1147**](#) – Interstate Mining Compact Commission Withdrawal (House Sponsor – Rep. Paul Dyson)
- [**SB 1197**](#) – Prohibition of Drones over Spaceports (House Sponsor -Rep. Charlie Geren)
- [**SB 1243**](#) – Dissolution of Brazos Regional Public Utility Agency (House Sponsor -Rep. Shelby Slawson)
- [**SB 1758**](#) – Pilot Program to Find Effects on Aggregate Production Operations and Semiconductor Wafer Manufacturers (House Sponsor – Rep. Brooks Landgraf)
- [**SB 1759**](#) – Oil & Gas Emergency “Good Samaritan” Liability (House Sponsor – Rep. Paul Dyson)
- [**SB 1198**](#) – Designating Spaceports as Critical Infrastructure (House Sponsor -Rep. Eddie Morales)
- [**SB 2051 & SJR 68**](#) – Impeachment Reform (House Sponsor -Rep. Cody Vasut)
- [**SB 2053**](#) – Governor's Medal of Service Award (House Sponsor – Rep. Will Metcalf)
- [**SB 2204**](#) – Exempting Water Assistance Fund, Water Loan Assistance Fund, and Rural Water Assistance Fund (which have higher, more precise, standards) from Texas Grant Management Standards (TGMS) (House Sponsor – Rep. Caroline Fairly)
- [**SJR 37**](#) – Constitutional Amendment to Ban Non Citizen Voter (House Sponsor – Rep. Jarred Patterson)
- [**SJR 39**](#) – Creating a Veto Override Session

Texas Senate Unanimously Passes [SB 7**](#) – Increasing Investments in Texas’ Water Supply - Co-Authored**

Last session, the Texas Legislature created the Texas Water Fund to fund water supply expansion. This session, the Texas Senate has added an additional \$2.5 billion for the next biennium in the Senate’s version of the State Budget ([**SB 1**](#)) to address the water issue, while setting up a framework within [**SB 7**](#) to invest \$1 billion per year moving forward to meet the needs of our growing state.

[**SB 7**](#) by Sen. Perry, expands the scope of the Texas Water Fund to include infrastructure development projects to transport and integrate new water supplies. [**SB 7**](#) also modifies the Texas Water Fund Advisory Committee to broaden the committee’s oversight to include multiple water-related funds and programs. Additionally, the bill requires strengthened reporting requirements, including biennial reports on fund usage, water project progress, and infrastructure development. The passage of this bill into law will go a long way to addressing the long-term water needs of our state, though it is a big first step in a long journey.

Senate Bill 8 – Requiring Local Law Enforcement to Assist the Federal Government’s Deportation Efforts Passes the Senate with Bipartisan Support

[**SB 8**](#), by Sen. Schwertner, requires counties with populations of 100,000 or more to enter 287(g) agreements with US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). 287(g) agreements allow local law enforcement officers to receive training and delegated authority from ICE to act as ICE agents in certain circumstances. Counties with a population of 1,000,000 or fewer are not required, but can apply for reimbursement assistance grants through the Texas comptroller’s office to pay for their 287(g) agreement, if they choose to participate.

Thirty-six Texas counties already have a 287(g) agreement with ICE. Passage of [**SB 8**](#) into law will bring Texas counties with the largest jail populations into a 287(g) agreement with ICE to prevent illegal immigrants, some of whom are dangerous criminals, from simply being released into the community and instead being transferred to ICE for removal.

Texas Senate Passes [SB 38**](#) & [**SB 1333**](#) aimed to Stop Squatters in Texas - Co-Authored**

I have heard from several constituents with concerns over our state’s laws dealing with “squatters.” Squatting cases must be addressed quickly to restore an owner’s right to their property. During the Senate Committee on Local Government’s interim hearing, property owners testified that they were unable to find relief from law enforcement and the courts, in some cases for over a year, and at great personal cost.

In those cases involving no legal dispute over the owner's right to possession (i.e. non-payment of rent, no longer having legal access to the property, etc.), returning the property to the owner should be straightforward and efficient. Senate Bill 38, by Sen. Bettencourt, creates a fair, efficient, and predictable civil eviction process to remove unlawful occupants, including squatters, so courts can swiftly return possession to the rightful owner. This legislation is about returning property to property owners in those cases where there are no valid competing claims to possession without forcing them to subsidize months and months of free rent, property damage, and other costs.

Additionally, more complex squatter issues are on the rise and clarity is needed for law enforcement to assist. When property owners seek help from local law enforcement, the officers are often unwilling to interfere as these are typically considered civil cases. SB 1333, by Sen. Hughes would strengthen property owner rights by providing an initial step for property owners to recover their homes from squatters through a speedy resolution via law enforcement action. This would allow the property owner to request the removal of a person from their property if the person unlawfully entered and is occupying their property without the owner's consent and is not a family member or a current or former tenant.

SJR 18 (Perry) – Constitutionally Prohibiting a Capital Gains Passes the Senate 24-6 **- Co-Authored**

Although the Texas Constitution currently prohibits the imposition of an individual income tax, it does not explicitly prohibit the imposition of a tax on capital gains. The state's failure to prohibit the imposition of a capital gains tax leaves open the possibility that a future legislature could attempt to impose such a tax, potentially undermining Texas' economic competitiveness. Capital gains taxes, whether on realized or unrealized gains, could discourage investment, slow economic growth, and reduce job creation. This constitutional amendment would prohibit Texas from ever enacting a capital gains tax on realized or unrealized capital gains of an individual, family, estate, or trust. This amendment will ensure Texas remains a tax friendly state.

Additional Bills of Interest

We receive a lot of communication from constituents and Texans from all over the state about their opinion on bills moving through the legislative process. I thought I'd include a few these and other bills I thought might interest you that have been voted out of the Senate.

- [SB 75](#) (Hall) – SB 75 will create the Texas Grid Security Commission (TGSC) under the direction of the Texas Department of Emergency Management (TDEM) to evaluate all hazards to the ERCOT electric grid and vulnerabilities of essential service systems for municipalities.
- [SB 260](#) (Huffman) – This will increase the School Safety Allotment under the Foundation School Program from \$10 per ADA and \$15,000 per campus to \$28 per ADA and \$30,000 per campus.
- [SB 396](#) (Kolkhorst) – This bill will have the voter registrar send a confirmation notice to all voters who on November 30th of an even-numbered year had not voted in the previous 25 months. If a voter does not properly respond to the confirmation notice they are placed on the Suspense List and marked with an "S" next to their name. This bill helps Texas voting clerks keep voter rolls accurate.
- [SB 503](#) (Perry) – SB 503 will establish an online registry of livestock marks and brands maintained by the Texas Animal Health Commission (TAHC).
- [SB 586](#) (West) – Creates a program at Texas Historical Commission to recognize historical cemeteries that are at least 50 years old (unless THC makes an exception based on significance) and worthy of recognition and preservation for the cemetery's historical associations. Accepted cemeteries are eligible for an official Texas Historical Marker by purchase. The bill protects adjacent property owners by clarifying that such designations do not restrict in any way a property owner's use of land outside the cemetery's boundaries.
- [SB 819](#) (Kolkhorst) – SB 819 will put guidelines in place for new wind and solar installations to help balance the need for these structures with the state's responsibility to protect nature. The bill, while defaulting to approving projects, provides a mechanism for the state to acknowledge that some places in Texas are not suitable for these projects. The bill gives the Public Utility Commission (PUC) the opportunity to prohibit interconnection if the harm substantially outweighs the benefit to the state.
- [SB 964](#) (Hughes) – Under Texas law, either a license or a personal identification certificate may be used to satisfy the state's photo identification requirement when voting in an election. As a result, a noncitizen could become registered to vote and produce a Texas-issued license or identification certificate when voting,

neither of which makes it immediately clear to election officials that the holder of the ID is a noncitizen and ineligible to vote. SB 964 will require “NOT ELIGIBLE TO VOTE” to be on State IDs and Drivers Licenses for non-citizens.

- [SB 1188](#) (Kolkhorst) – This bill will require medical record holders to store all electronic health records (EHR) information of Texas residents at a location within the United States, accessible only to people who need it within the scope of their work, and that the data is otherwise protected.
- [SB 1397](#) (Hall/ Birdwell) – This will create an additional judicial district in Ellis County (504th Judicial District) to support the growth in Ellis County.
- [SB 1596](#) (Hagenbuch) – With this recent effort by the federal government to reclassify a pistol equipped with a stabilizing brace as a short-barreled rifle, and in anticipation of future reclassifications, state law needs to be amended to clarify that short-barrel firearms are not prohibited. SB 1596 seeks to address this issue by removing a short-barrel firearm from the list of prohibited weapons in the Penal Code. Illegal possession of a short-barrel firearm will still be a federal felony without a federal stamp.

Lt. Governor Priority Legislation that has Passed the Senate

The Texas Senate has been moving with a purpose this session. Before we left for the Easter Holiday, the Senate had passed 510 bills over to the House, including 37 of the Lt. Governor’s top 40 priority bills.

Senate Bill 1 – Senate’s Budget for Texas

Senate Bill 2 – Providing School Choice

Senate Bill 3 – Banning THC in Texas

Senate Bill 4 – Increasing the Homestead Exemption to \$140,000 (\$150,000 for Seniors)

Senate Bill 5 – Combatting Dementia and Alzheimer’s – Establishing DPRIT (Dementia Prevention and Research Institute of Texas)

Senate Bill 6 – Increasing Texas’ Electric Grid Reliability

Senate Bill 7 – Increasing Investments in Texas’ Water Supply (more information on Pg. 2)

Senate Bill 8 – Requiring Local Law Enforcement to enter into 287(g) Agreements to Assist the Federal Government’s Deportation Efforts (more information on Pg. 2)

Senate Bill 9 – Reforming Bail – Keeping Violent Criminals Off Our Streets

Senate Bill 10 – Placing the Ten Commandments in School

Senate Bill 11 – Protecting the Freedom to Pray in School

Senate Bill 12 – Establishing a Parental Bill of Rights in Public Education

Senate Bill 13 – Guarding Against Inappropriate Books in Public Schools

Senate Bill 14 – Creating the Texas Department of Government Efficiency to Further the State’s Efforts on Identifying/Eliminating Unnecessary Rules and Reduce Costs/ Improve Effectiveness at the State Level

Senate Bill 15 – Removing Barriers to Housing Affordability

Senate Bill 16 – Stopping Non-Citizens from Voting

Senate Bill 17 – Stopping Foreign Adversary Land Purchases

Senate Bill 18 – Stopping Drag Time Story Hour

Senate Bill 19 – Stopping Taxpayer Funded Lobbying

Senate Bill 20 – Stopping AI-Generated Child Pornography

Senate Bill 21 – Establishing the Texas Bitcoin Reserve

Senate Bill 22 – Strengthening the Texas Moving Image Industry Incentive Program

Senate Bill 24 – Educating Texas Students on the Horrors of Communism

Senate Bill 25 – Making Texas Healthy Again by Addressing Health and Nutrition Standards to Promote Healthy Living

Senate Bill 26 – Increasing Teacher Pay

Senate Bill 27 – Establishing a Teacher Bill of Rights

Senate Bill 28 – Banning Lottery Couriers

Senate Bill 29 – Texas: Open for Business - Modernizing the Texas Business Organizations Code to Increase the Certainty for How Corporate Decision-making is Reviewed by the Courts

Senate Bill 30 – Preventing Abusive Lawsuit Practices to Bring Back a Fair and Transparent Legal Process in our Courts

Senate Bill 32 – Increasing the Business Personal Property Tax Exemption from \$2,500 to \$25,000, and from a *de minimis* Exemption to a Universal Exemption.

Senate Bill 33 – Stopping Cities from Using Taxpayer Dollars to Fund Abortion-Related Travel

Senate Bill 34 – Providing More Tools for Wildfire Response

Senate Bill 35 – Competing for Quality Roads Through Larger Scale Design-Intensive Projects

Senate Bill 36 – Establishing a Homeland Security Division within Texas DPS

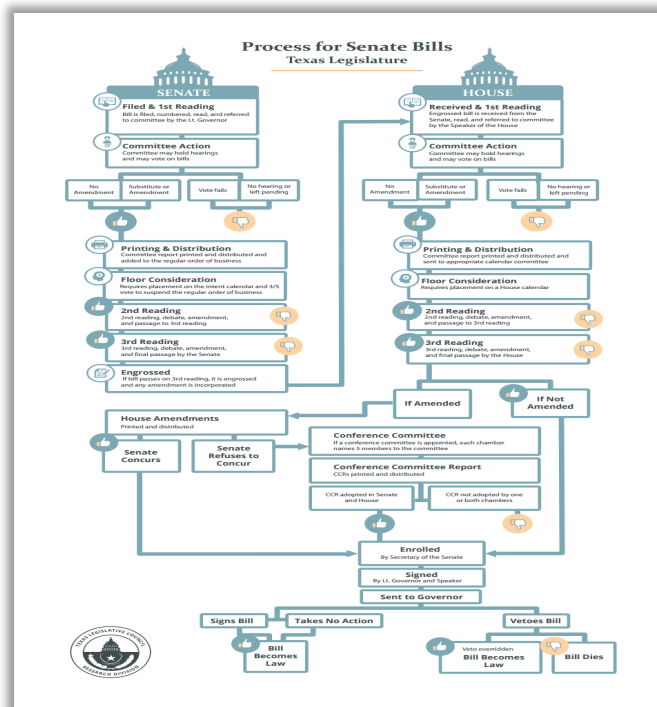
Senate Bill 37 – Reforming Higher-Ed Faculty Senates

Senate Bill 38 – Stopping Squatters (more information on Pg. 3)

Senate Bill 40 – Stopping Cities from Using Taxpayer Dollars to Fund Bail

Tracking Legislation

In the final six weeks of a session, bills move more and more rapidly through the Legislature. Because my staff frequently receive calls at the Capitol and District offices asking about the status of specific bills or issues, we wanted to share this helpful infographic outlining what can sometimes be a convoluted process. While swift at times, this process is purposefully transparent, and I think it's essential for citizens to follow along 24/7. Everything outlined in this chart can be found at <https://capitol.texas.gov/>. I hope this is helpful!



Don't worry—you can click the image above for a full-size version of the chart.



April 16th was Juvenile Justice Day at the Capitol. Among those pictured here with my colleagues Sen. Kolkhorst and Sen. Perry (immediately to my left) are Chelsea Smith, Chief Juvenile Probation Officer, Ellis County, Tina Lincoln, Chief Juvenile Probation Officer, Hill County, and Heather Bachhofer, Chief Juvenile Probation Officer, Somervell County.

Honorary Pages, Pastors of the Day, Doctors of the Day, and Legislative Days

I wanted to take another opportunity to mention that the Senate provides a unique opportunity for young Texans to come to the Capitol for a day to be an Honorary Page. While here, the pages assist in making deliveries to various Senate offices, have the opportunity to work on the Senate floor if the Senate is in session on the day of their visit, and get their photo taken with their respective Senator. If you would like more information on having your child be an Honorary Page, please contact Kirstee Bock in my Capitol office at 512-463-0122.

It’s also my privilege to ask clergy from my district to come to Austin to serve as the “Pastor of the Day” to offer the invocation before the Senate and family practice physicians from my district to serve as the “Doctor of the Day” for the whole Capitol.

And of course, I always feel grateful to see constituents from Senate District 22 at the Capitol—students, citizens, and city and county leaders alike. My staff and I appreciate your visits to the office; your input is extremely valuable and vital to the legislative process.



Above left, pictured here with Medical Student Paul Koester of Waco (left) who accompanied the Doctor of the Day, Dr. Madhusmita Panda, on April 2nd; Above right, Dr. Jeffrey Urieto of Mansfield served as the “Doctor of the Day” for the Legislature on April 16th

As always, I hope our Capitol Update is informative and that you'll share it with your friends, family, and colleagues in Senate District 22, who may subscribe to the Capitol Update [by clicking here](#). If you missed any of my previous Capitol Updates and want to read them too, you can find them [here](#)!

God bless,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Brian Birdwell".

Brian Birdwell
State Senator, District 22

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