



Senator Birdwell's Capitol Update **Special Session Edition (Part II)** **8/4/17**

Greetings from your Texas Capitol! Today is the 18th day of the special legislative session, leaving 12 days for the House and Senate to complete their business. As outlined in our last [Capitol Update](#), the Senate worked diligently in the first nine days of the special session on the items outlined in Governor Greg Abbott's call. As the House is addressing these issues, the Senate is coordinating which bills will move forward out of which chamber—a standard procedural discussion. During this time, I've had the opportunity to remain busy with other policy meetings in my Capitol office, including Burleson Mayor Ken Shetter and Health and Human Services Executive Commissioner Charles Smith, and even welcomed a local pastor from Senate District 22 to lead the Senate in our daily opening prayer.



Pastor Maurice Simpson, First Mountain Zion Baptist Church in Cleburne, and his wife Rose.



Discussing options for additional state mental health beds with HHSC Exec. Commissioner Charles Smith.

In addition to taking these meetings and tackling other state business, I convened the Senate Committee on Nominations to hear from one nominee in-person and to discuss several additional nominees. While the Texas Constitution provides the governor with the sole authority to call a special session and define its subject matter, Nominations is a unique committee in its capacity to meet at any time that the legislature is in session. As a short list of individuals was nominated and required the advice and consent of the Senate, it was important for Nominations to convene and continue its inherent duties.

Called to testify was Mr. Tom Smelker, who was nominated by Texas Comptroller Glen Hegar to serve as the Administrator of the Texas Bullion Depository. This was a unique hearing not only because of its timing outside the regular legislative session, but because only a few individuals are nominated for state boards and commissions by officials other than the governor. These nominating officials include the Lieutenant Governor, Speaker of the House, Attorney General, the collective justices of the Texas Supreme Court, and, as in the case of Mr. Smelker, the Comptroller of Public Accounts.

The role to which Mr. Smelker has been appointed is a new one, outlined in statute through House Bill 483 from the 2015 legislative session. This legislation officially established the first ever state-administered precious metals bullion depository—officially the [Texas Bullion Depository](#). If confirmed by the Senate, Mr. Smelker will serve as the first head of the depository, answering directly to the Comptroller and through the legislative directives of HB 483.



Chairing the Senate Committee on Nominations on Thursday, August 3rd.

In closing, I want to reiterate that just like in the regular session, my team and I want to hear from you on these issues during the special session. Though I hear from countless citizens on many subjects, input from those I serve is always fully considered, regardless of differing politics or viewpoints.

Thank you again for reading this update from 'Team Birdwell.' I hope you found it to be 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](#).

God Bless,

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