TEXAS LEGISLATIVE STUDY GROUP
An Official Caucus of the Texas House of Representatives

Representative **Desk:**

LSG Floor Report For Major State Calendar – Thursday, April 11, 2019

Bill	Caption	Committee	Analysis & Evaluation	Recommendation
HB 2 By: Burrows	Relating to ad valorem taxation; authorizing fees.	Ways & Means Vote: 7 Ayes, 2 Nays, 0 PNV, 2 Absent	HB 2 would prohibit the ability of cities, counties and other local taxing units to raise total annual property tax revenue on existing structures by 2.5% or more. School districts, hospital districts, junior college districts, emergency services districts and local taxing units for which the Maintenance & Operations tax rate proposed for the year is 2.5 cents or less are exempt from HB2. Under current law, local jurisdictions' revenue growth is capped at 8% annually, and anything over that 8% "rollback rate" permits a petition to call for an election to roll back that spending level. This bill proposes a 2.5% cap on revenue growth, and rates greater or equal to 2.5% would trigger an *automatic* election to allow voters to consider the proposed rate. A bipartisan group of Texas Mayors has stated that a 2.5% cap would lead to budget cuts that threaten public safety and the quality of life that makes Texas attractive to the businesses and workers at the heart of our economic success. ➢ 10 mayors from North Texas/Dallas area were united in opposition. The Dallas News reports that **the city of Dallas spends nearly 60% of the city's general fund budget on public safety, including 100% of the city's property tax revenue** and nearly 30% of sales tax revenue. ➢ Former mayor Paul Harpole of Amarillo outlined the effect a $3.8 Million deficit a 2.5% cap would cause for his city: ▪ 7 fewer 'lane miles' of new streets ▪ 54 public safety jobs unfunded ▪ 100 fewer miles of residential street rehabilitation, and ▪ 10 fewer miles of arterial street overlay ➢ Houston provides a recent example of how a revenue cap can have bad consequences, and especially when it is coupled with mandatory elections. In 2004, voters approved cap that is the lower of either 4.5% of the combined rate of population growth and inflation. The cap was revised in 2006 to fund an additional $90 Million for public safety. Since then, as property values increased, the city has had to decrease tax rates to adhere to the formula. Meanwhile, last year, voters approved a "pay parity" proposition that requires the city to pay firefighters and police at the same rate, which would require revenue not available under the revenue cap, a shortfall that is the equivalent of 1,152 police officers' jobs. Although a 2.5% revenue cap could be harmful to public safety, street maintenance and other vital basic needs, CSHB 2 does contain a number of beneficial transparency **measures**: • Separates the appraisal notice process from the tax-setting process and requires increased communication and individualized tax notice forms for property owners.	**Unfavorable** Evaluated by: Eliot Davis (713) 855-3285 Eli@TexasLSG.org

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			• For counties with populations larger than one million, the Appraisal Review Board (ARB) would be required to establish special panels to consider protest hearings on higher-valued properties at the request of the property owner. • Removes from the annual appraisal notice, the estimate of the taxes that might become due under the new appraisal. • Requires the Comptroller to prescribe forms for use by the taxing units, indicating the rollback rate and the rate that would generate the same revenue as the prior year (established in statue as the "no-new-revenue rate") for the most recent five years. • It would additionally require the Comptroller to establish a reporting system for comment submission regarding the ARB. • Requires each taxing unit to display tax, budget and contact information on a generally accessible website. CSHB 2 provides some variations of the 2.5% formula aimed at smaller local government units to *partially* consider and account for growth. • The bill defines the "revenue enrichment amount" as the amount determined by the commissioner for the tax year accordingly: for the 2020 tax year, the amount would be $250,000; and for each succeeding tax year, the revenue enrichment amount would be equal to the revenue enrichment amount for the preceding tax year as adjusted to reflect the inflation rate according to the Consumer Price Index (CPI). It defines the "revenue enrichment rate" as the rate that would impose an amount equal to the revenue enrichment amount. • The "unused increment rate" is defined as the aggregate of the five recent years' (positive) differences between each rollback rate minus each adopted tax rate per year since 2020. • CSHB 2 allows for some local consideration in that the rollback rate would allow for revenue enrichment amount (pegged to the CPI) and for the unused increment rate, on top of the 2.5% rollback. • Limits the definition of debt to mean *that has been approved at an election*. • Requires school districts to submit the rate to maintain the same amount of state and local revenue per weighted student that the district received in the school year in the preceding tax year. CSHB 2 introduces several measures relating to **Administrative Procedures** and increasing taxpayer accessibility to the **Appraisal Review** process: • Restricts the ARB's ability to appraise a contested property value greater than that reflected on appraisal roll. • Eliminates challenges before an appraisal review board by local governments to protest the value of an entire category of properties. • Prohibits the required concurrence of more than a majority of the members of the ARB or panel. • Permits owner to request arbitrator from within or outside of county in which protested property is located. • Prohibits the ARB from scheduling protest hearings after 7PM on weekdays and on Sundays • Requires and makes recommendations regarding Property Tax Administration advisory board including specified stakeholders and person knowledgeable in ratio studies. • Revises training requirements for Appraisal Review Board (ARB) members and requires specialized requirements and materials for arbitrators. • Further requires that Central Appraisal Districts (CADs) appraise according to aforementioned training materials. • Entitles property owner to an injunction prohibiting the taxing unit from adopting a rate if the unit or calculation does not comply with computation requirements.	

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			• Specifies that property owner is not required to pay the taxes while "action to enjoin" the collection of taxes is pending and entitles property owner to a refund plus legal fees if owner does pay and prevails in the action. • The comptroller would also be required to conduct a value study of school districts and if found invalid for three consecutive years, the comptroller would provide additional review of, and recommendations to, the appraisal district (enforced by Texas Department of Licensing and Regulation). **Disaster Provisions:** Contingent upon the governor's declaration of any portion of the taxing unit's area, an election is not required for following year in which the disaster occurs. It also allows a taxing unit to calculate its rollback tax rate as does a special taxing unit the tax year in which total values have recovered to their pre-disaster levels or five years, whichever comes first. **Concerns:** **As discussed previously, a 2.5% revenue cap, absent exemptions for public safety, streets, disasters and other fixed costs, would not even keep up with current local spending when population growth and inflation are factored into a local budget.** Revenue caps address the wrong half of a dual-variable equation; total tax revenue is the product of both the established tax rate as the bill attempts to address, and the property value. This constraint on local government will inevitably lead to crippling loss of funds for counties and municipalities and would only be partially offset by the proposed revenue enrichment rate and unused increment rate. **So long as property values continue to increase and affordable options decrease comparatively, market value will grow and the tax/revenue rate will have to be negatively adjusted in order to comply with the provisions of the bill.** This will be done at the expense of critical public services that cannot be fully realized in a static fiscal note. This bill contains some reasonable provisions for improving transparency and accessibility to the process, but none are worth the potential harm that would likely be felt by local governments, their constituents and the Texas economy. Additional substantive concerns include the cost to local governments of conducting automatic elections and the time lost in addressing serious revenue needs while waiting for elections to be held. Given the multiple experimental variables in the formulas, and the lack of forecasting where voter behavior is concerned, it is impossible to accurately estimate the degree of negative financial impact related to the provisions of CSHB2.	

LSG Floor Report For Constitutional Amendments Calendar – Thursday, April 11, 2019

HJR 11 By: González, Mary | Guillen | Sheffield | Murr | Walle	Proposing a constitutional amendment providing for the issuance of additional general obligation bonds by the Texas Water Development Board to provide financial assistance for the development of certain projects in economically distressed areas.	Natural Resources Vote: 8 Ayes, 0 Nays, 0 PNV, 3 Absent	The Economically Distressed Area Program (EDAP), within the Texas Water Development Board (TWDB), has been successful in providing safe, secure sources of water and waste water to many parts of Texas so far. However, there is a current need of over $440 million in projected costs solely based on applications to the TWDB from economically distressed areas whose minimal needs are not being met. HJR 11 would amend the Texas Constitution in order to authorize the TWDB in addition to the bonds authorized for the EDAP account, to issue additional general obligations bonds, at its determination, in an amount that does not exceed $200 million. HJR 11 requires that the bonds be used to provide financial assistance for the development of water supply, sewer service, and drainage projects in economically distressed areas of Texas.	**Favorable** Evaluated by: Merci Mohagheghi (713) 382-7007 Merci@TexasLSG.org

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			HJR 11 authorizes the bonds to be issued as bonds, notes, or other obligations as permitted by law and requires the bonds to be sold in forms and denominations, on terms, at times, in the manner, at places, and in installments, as determined by the TWDB. The bonds shall bear a rate or rates of interest that will also be determined by the TWDB, and will make the bonds authorized incontestable after execution by the TWDB, approval by the attorney general, and delivery to the purchaser or purchasers of bonds.	
LSG Floor Report For General State Calendar – Thursday, April 11, 2019				
HB 53 By: Minjarez | Miller | Clardy	Relating to the transitional living services program for certain youth in foster care.	Human Services Vote: 8 Ayes, 0 Nays, 0 PNV, 1 Absent	Teenagers in the care of the Department of Family and Protective Services require additional support, tools, and education to prepare them to transition out of care and live on their own. The Transitional Living Services Program offers opportunities to prepare current/former and aging out youth for adulthood. One of these programs is the Preparation for Adult Living (PAL) program which requires experiential life skills training for youth 14 years or older which is tailored to their specific needs. These trainings involve job preparation, medication management, how to open checking/savings accounts, etc. HB53 would add increased financial literacy content to the required trainings that aging out youth take to include: • the process of filing taxes • guarding information online (prevent credit theft and identity theft, etc.) • preparing a monthly budget which includes basic needs (rent, phone, internet) and how to manage those costs in their area of residence • obtain auto and/or property insurance Trainings on how to create a monthly budget are already included in the experiential life skills training but HB53 would codify this important content. In addition, HB53 adds content relating to civic engagement to the training. HB53 also requires that youth participating in the transitional living services program be given assistance to obtain mental health services. Youth aging out of foster care are more likely to experience homelessness, deal with mental health issues, encounter the justice system, and have less social support than their peers who were not in care. HB53 will include common sense training to the skills aging out youth should learn in preparation for living on their own.	**Favorable** Evaluated by: Ali Schoon (515) 313-3712 Ali@texaslsg.org
HB 1065 By: Ashby | Price	Relating to the establishment of a rural resident physician grant program.	Higher Education Vote: 10 Ayes, 0 Nays, 0 PNV, 1 Absent	In rural communities across Texas there is a shortage of physicians and only 4% of newly licensed physicians' practice in rural areas. These areas currently do not have major initiatives to attract physicians to these areas and Texas is the leader in rural hospital closures. The Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) also does not have an established Rural Resident Physician Grant Program and this bill addresses that issue. A Rural Resident Grant Program would create dual incentives for residency students that offers clinical settings in a rural program as well as include the urban health setting experience in order to offer students the chance to experience healthcare in a different setting. Rural Training Programs (RTPs) can form essential partnerships with urban areas that are needed to establish national accreditation for these rural towns that they currently lack. HB 1065 amends the Education Code to have THECB establish a Rural Resident Physician Grant Program to aid with the shortage of physicians in these rural communities by allowing the grant to be awarded to residency programs at teaching hospitals and other healthcare entities.	**Favorable** Evaluated by: Marissa Gorena (956) 867-7232 Marissa@TexasLSG.org

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			There is a fiscal note that is attached to this bill that indicates a negative impact of $1,123,494 which accounts for administrative costs, costs associated with maintaining the residency position, and the salary of the resident physician which would be monitored by THECB.	
HB 1279 By: Allen	Relating to jury instructions regarding parole eligibility.	Criminal Jurisprudence Vote: 7 Ayes, 0 Nays, 0 PNV, 2 Absent	Felony offense courts are required by law to read a statement to the jury before sentencing that describe the possibility of parole and how good-time credits might be applied to reduce confinement. Current jury instructions state that good-time credits may reduce the time of confinement for a certain set of aggravated offenses even though these offenses are statutorily ineligible for a reduced sentence. What is not being clearly communicated to juries is that good-time credits can only impact the parole eligibility date, not the reduction of time spent incarcerated. HB 1279 is a clean-up bill to ensure that statutory language is correct, clarifying that it is parole, not good-time credit, that can be applied to reduce confinement.	**Favorable** Evaluated by: Merci Mohagheghi (713) 382-7007 Merci@TexasLSG.org
HB 929 By: Anchia | Blanco	Relating to the duties of a magistrate to inform an arrested person of consequences of a plea of guilty or nolo contendere.	Criminal Jurisprudence Vote: 8 Ayes, 0 Nays, 0 PNV, 1 Absent	HB 929 would require that magistrates to inform the person arrested that a plea of guilty or nolo contendere for the offense charged may affect the person's eligibility for enlistment or reenlistment in the United States armed forces or may result in the person's discharge from the United States armed forces if the person is a member of the armed forced. Military courts are not required to appoint counsel to their defendants which makes the magistrate their only source of instruction, which is required by the 6th amendment. HB 929 ensures that the men and women in uniform are fully informed of the consequence of their plea of guilty or nolo contendere.	**Favorable** Evaluated by: Merci Mohagheghi (713) 382-7007 Merci@TexasLSG.org
HB 1767 By: Murphy | King, Phil | Deshotel | Hernandez | Darby	Relating to the consideration of employee compensation and benefits in establishing the rates of gas utilities.	State Affairs Vote: 11 Ayes, 0 Nays, 0 PNV, 2 Absent	Gas utilities, like all other employers, compete to attract and retain knowledgeable employees. In order to do so, some companies use comparative market studies of similar job positions to be sure that they are providing appropriate total compensation (base salary pay + contingent pay). For utilities, contingent pay, which is often referred to as incentive compensation or bonuses, is tied to various performance metrics, such as safety, customer satisfaction, company earnings, and expense controls, and to the utility's financial performance. The Railroad Commission has decided in several rate cases, that incentive/contingent compensation that is tied to the utility's financial performance is not recoverable in rates from rate payers because an improvement in the utility's financial performance benefits shareholders and not ratepayers. To the extent the utility meets it burden of proof to show that incentive/contingent pay is tied to improvements, in for example, the safety and quality of service delivered to ratepayers, those expenses are recovered from ratepayers. Presently, cities as regulatory authorities and the Railroad Commission determine the reasonableness of the salaries, wages, bonuses, incentive/contingent pay that the utility may pass on to ratepayers. It is part of the rate setting process for regulated utilities to ensure rates paid by consumers are just and reasonable for the services provided. HB 1767 would remove that oversight. Because gas utilities are monopolies in the areas in which they provide service, regulation serves as a substitute for competition. That is why the cities as local regulators and the Railroad Commission, in reviewing a utility's request to increase rates, ensure that the salaries and benefits a utility pays its employees is consistent with market conditions for similar employees and ensure that only the utility's reasonable and necessary expenses are passed on to ratepayers. Instead, HB 1767 would eliminate from review by the regulatory authorities – cities and the Railroad Commission, consideration of compensation and benefit expenses, meaning base salaries, wages, *incentive compensation,* and benefits, in setting rates and would deem them reasonable simply on a showing that a study commissioned by the	**Favorable, with Concerns** Evaluated by: Merci Mohagheghi (713) 382-7007 Merci@TexasLSG.org

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			utility shows the utility's compensation package is comparable to a some market-compensation study. HB 1767 applies to all employees, from hourly workers to top level executives, including the CEO of the company. The utilities contend that HB 1767 would ensure that compensation is in line with the market, ensure the rate regulations of gas utilities are predictable and more efficient, and reduce litigation concerning compensation (as utility customers foot the bill for lawyers, including the utility's lawyers), and keep rates low for customers. However, issues of compensation, save for issues regarding incentive/contingent compensation related to financial goals – as opposed to improvements in the safety and quality of service – are seldom litigated and are typically not controversial. So, it is unclear where the reduction in litigation/lawyers' fees, would occur. Currently, the utility bears the burden of proof to establish that its expenses, including salaries, wages, benefits, bonuses, incentive/contingent compensation, are reasonable and necessary. And currently, the cities as local regulatory authorities and the Railroad Commission undertake a review of a utility's base salaries, wages, *incentive compensation,* and benefits. HB 1767 not only eliminates that review, but also increases the city's and the Railroad Commission's burden by shifting the burden of proving up the necessity and reasonableness of expenses away from the utility. HB 1767 dictates that a city, as the regulatory authority, must overcome the presumption that the employee compensation is reasonable if the utility's compensation expenses are consistent with a recent market study. This would be counter to current precedent. Instead of the utility having to show that its salaries, wages, benefits, bonuses, incentive/contingent compensation, are reasonable and necessary, those expenses would be presumed reasonable and necessary, and cities and the Railroad Commission would bear the burden of proof. The proposed use of market-compensation studies as the sole standard for establishing recoverability of employee compensation and benefits expenses would change the regulatory paradigm that utilities bear the burden of proof to demonstrate that amounts included in rates are reasonable and necessary.	
HB 1465 By: Moody | Murr	Relating to a study on expanding recovery housing in this state.	Public Health Vote: 8 Ayes, 2 Nays, 0 PNV, 1 Absent	The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMSHA) has identified stable housing as critical to successful recovery. However, nearly a third of individuals entering substance use treatment reported housing insecurity in the month prior. Recovery housing is an umbrella term used to describe programs that simultaneously offer both residential and recovery support. Other terms that fall under the term "recovery housing" include sober living, recovery homes, and Oxford homes. The 2017 report from The President's Commission on Combating Drug Addiction and the Opioid Crisis identifies recovery housing as an important way to counteract the opioid crisis and this recommendation was backed up with funding for recovery housing in the SAMSHA State Opioid Response (SOR). Nearly, 1 in 9 Texans are affected by Substance Abuse Disorder and in 2014, the state spent over $2 billion in opioid-related healthcare costs. If Texas utilizes recovery housing in an appropriate and effective way, federal funds could help lower the numbers of Texans affected by substance abuse disorder. However, Texas has not yet studied the status of recovery housing in the state. HB 1465 requires HHSC to conduct a study on recovery housing status and needs in the state of Texas. This study should incorporate findings from: related state and federal regulations, focus groups involving community stakeholders, input from both urban and rural stakeholders, site visits to various models of recovery housing in both urban and rural areas, and scholarly research. Results and recommendations from this study shall be presented to the Legislature in the form of a report by December 1, 2020. Provisions of HB 1465 will be conducted using existing resources.	**<u>Favorable</u>** Evaluated by: Sharon Jacob 920-675-9865 Sharon@TexasLSG.org

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HB 1364 By: Wu	Relating to the age of a child at which a juvenile court may exercise jurisdiction over the child and to the minimum age of criminal responsibility.	Juvenile Justice & Family Issues Vote: 7 Ayes, 1 Nays, 0 PNV, 0 Absent	Currently, courts have jurisdiction over a juvenile who is in custody for committing a crime from the age of 10 to 17 years old. The number of 10 and 11-year-olds in detention is a small percentage (1% in 2018) of the total children in detention. HB1364 raises the lower age of the court's jurisdiction to 12 years of age. If a child younger than 12 years allegedly commits a first or second-degree felony, HB1364 allows for a jurisdictional hearing to consider if alternative options are sufficient or if it is appropriate and in the best interest of the child to go through the juvenile justice system. HB1364 also allows for juvenile jurisdiction over 18-year-olds who are charged for an offense committed prior to their 12th birthday. As written, HB1364 allows 18-year-olds who are being charged for exhibiting delinquent conduct or conduct in need of supervision prior to turning 17 to be under the jurisdiction of the juvenile justice system. At this time, the author intends to strike this portion with an amendment. Many of these 10 or 11-year-olds are in custody for minor violations, misbehaving at school, or exhibiting conduct in need of supervision. Half of the 10 and 11-year-olds who were detained in 2018 had mental health issues or were children with special needs. Children are better served in their communities with systems of support rather than in detention which has lasting negative impacts on their development. Children who encounter the juvenile justice system are more likely to experience homelessness, recidivism, or substance abuse issues along with exposure to significant trauma. Raising the lower age of criminal responsibility will result in a cost savings of $1,195,274 for the state over the biennium. In addition, local probation programs will experience cost savings because they provide the majority of probation services for this population.	**Favorable** Evaluated by: Ali Schoon (515) 313-3712 Ali@texaslsg.org
HB 1480 By: VanDeaver | Ashby | Bernal | Tinderholt | Metcalf	Relating to assessment of public school students, providing accelerated instruction, appropriately crediting certain student performance, and eliminating requirements based on performance on certain assessment instruments.	Public Education Vote: 12 Ayes, 0 Nays, 0 PNV, 1 Absent	There is a required amount of End-of-Course (EOC) assessments in Texas and at the federal level, but Texas places such a high emphasis on standardized testing that the number of required assessments is higher in Texas than is required at the federal level. Texas currently requires 17 types of standardized assessments for the 3rd-8th grade and an additional 5 for students in high school while federal law only requires 14. It is estimated that the TEA spent over $1million, excluding test administration costs, solely on Education Testing Services (ETS) to create the state required assessments in 2018. Additionally, in the current Education Code, students in the 3rd, 5th, and 8th grade who do not meet passable standards for the STARR are not allowed to advance to the next grade level. Those students are then assigned to Grade Placement Committees (GPCs) for further review. HB 1480 aims to amend the Education Code by removing the additional tests that are not federally required which include: • Social Studies • US History Assessments • English III • Algebra II EOC's HB 1480 also allows for local control and individualized plans for students and does not only remove the additional assessments and exams. This bill removes the requirement for grade level advancement of a student to not be dependent on the student passing an assessment instrument, as well as establishes the adoption of Accelerated Learning Committees (ALC's) instead of GPC's. The committees will be overseen by the local school board and not the TEA commissioner. HB 1480 adds the Texas Success Initiative (TSI) diagnostic assessment to the substitute assessments that allows course credit upon satisfactory completion that will also fulfill the requirement by an EOC in an equivalent course. HB 1480 allows for students who choose the substitute assessments the chance to retake them if they fail.	**Favorable** Evaluated by: Marissa Gorena (956) 867-7232 Marissa@TexasLSG.org

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HB 558 By: Thompson, Senfronia	Relating to court-ordered support for a child with a disability.	Juvenile Justice & Family Issues Vote: 8 Ayes, 0 Nays, 0 PNV, 0 Absent	Children who are the most severely disabled are sometimes awarded child support past their 18th birthday so that they can receive the resources and support they desperately need. However, ordering child support directly to the individual causes this adult disabled child to be at risk of losing their disability benefits through the federal government. HB558 allows courts to place court-ordered child support into a special needs trust to be used for the benefit of the adult child with disabilities; allowing their disability benefits to continue. Many courts are already ordering child support payments to be paid to a special needs trust, however, some courts are not because this practice is not in statute. HB558 expressly allows, in statute, for the courts to implement this practice based on their discretion. HB558 does not allow for fees to be collected by the state disbursement unit from this special needs trust.	**Favorable** Evaluated by: Ali Schoon (515) 313-3712 Ali@texaslsg.org
HB 435 By: Shaheen | Thierry	Relating to the maintenance of information entered into a fee record.	Judiciary & Civil Jurisprudence Vote: 8 Ayes, 0 Nays, 0 PNV, 1 Absent	During a court case, whether criminal or civil, a court can assess and determine the parties to pay legal court fees. The court can attempt to collect those fees for an indefinite amount of years. However, after certain time people can become incarcerated or even pass away. There are concerns that the costs of collecting the fees are actually greater than the fees themselves and counties have to report the debt from those fees and costs on their audits and carry it until they can be collected even if they are uncollectible. CSHB 435 aims to address this issue by allowing counties to make an appeal for the debt that has not been collected in 15 years. The county would be able to make a request to mark that debt as uncollectible debt and write it off on their audits. The bill also marks the debt uncollectible from the payer once the court writes it off from their audits.	**Favorable** Evaluated by: Santiago Cirnigliaro (713) 435- 9049 Santiago@TexasLSG.org
HB 273 By: Swanson	Relating to the time for providing a ballot to be voted by mail to a voter.	Elections Vote: 9 Ayes, 0 Nays, 0 PNV, 0 Absent	Currently, if a mail-in ballot application is sent and approved 44 days before elections day, the early voting clerk has until 30 days before election day to mail out ballot materials. However, if the application is sent and approved 45 days before election day the clerks have 7 days to mail the ballot materials. This process causes confusion for election clerks and prioritizes most recent received applications. HB 273 amends the election code to state that if a domestic mail-in ballot application is received 37 days before election day, the clerks have until 30days before election day to send out ballot materials. If the mail-in ballot is received between 30 - 11 days before election them clerks have 7 days to send ballot materials. HB 273 gives early voting clerks more time to send those who are eligible for mail-in ballots their materials. This also allows clerks to better prioritize sending the ballot materials to military and overseas ballots by the 45th day before the election, as required by federal law. HB 273 is not requiring clerks to wait 30days before election day to send out ballot materials, it provides the option which allows them to more effectively provide the mail-in balloting materials for those eligible.	**Favorable** Evaluated by: Donisha Cotlone (832) 496-4424 Eli@TexasLSG.org
HB 1828 By: Martinez	Relating to prohibiting the sale and purchase of certain aquatic products; creating a criminal offense; increasing a criminal penalty.	Culture, Recreation & Tourism Vote: 9 Ayes, 0 Nays, 0 PNV, 0 Absent	HB 1828 establishes sufficient deterrents for the unlawful commercial sale or purchase of aquatic products by establishing a criminal offense and applicable penalties based on aggregate weight, ranging from Class B misdemeanor to state jail felony. Current penalties assessed on a per fish basis and heavy local docket loads has led to weak enforcement. This bill proposes the following offenses/penalties: revises Class B misdemeanor: 10-50 lbs resulting in $500 penalty 50-100 lbs $1000 penalty Class A misdemeanor: 100-200 lbs $1500 penalty 200-300 lbs $2000 penalty Felony: 300-500 lbs $3000 penalty (in addition to confinement) 500+ lbs $4000 penalty (in addition to confinement)	**Favorable** Evaluated by: Eliot Davis (713) 855-3285 Eli@TexasLSG.org

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HB 162 By: White	Relating to suspending the driver's licenses of certain persons convicted of driving while intoxicated offenses.	Homeland Security & Public Safety Vote: 9 Ayes, 0 Nays, 0 PNV, 0 Absent	When a Texas driver gets caught driving with a suspended license, they get a fine. When the driver goes to court to pay said fine, they receive an additional suspension on their license for the assumption of their driving with a suspended license. This current system has discouraged drivers from paying their fines since they get an extended suspension and Texans continue to drive with a suspended license since they have unpaid fines. HB 162 aims to amend the transportation code by making the additional suspensions applicable only to drivers who have their license suspended for Driving while Intoxicated. In the past 3 years, there has been a consistent 145,000 drivers who are fined for driving with a suspended license due to driving while intoxicated. The goal of the bill is for only people who have their license suspended for a DWI would receive an additional suspension if they are caught while driving with their suspended license due to that DWI and have the other Texan citizens driving legally again after their suspension is lifted.	**Favorable** Evaluated by: Santiago Cirnigliaro (713) 435- 9049 Santiago@TexasLSG.org
HB 51 By: Canales	Relating to the creation and promulgation of certain standard forms for statewide use in criminal actions.	Criminal Jurisprudence Vote: 9 Ayes, 0 Nays, 0 PNV, 0 Absent	HB 51 would require the Office of Court Administration to create nine standardized court forms for waivers and acknowledgements in an effort to create more uniformity. The specific forms that this would impact are: waiving a jury trial and entering a plea of guilty or nolo contendere in a felony case; waiving a jury trial and entering a plea of guilty or nolo contendere in a misdemeanor case; a trial court to admonish a defendant before accepting the defendant plea of guilty or nolo contendere; acknowledging that the defendant who receives admonitions in writing understand the admonitions and is aware of the consequences of the defendant's plea; a trial court to enter into the record the court's certification of a defendant's right to appeal; waiving the defendant's right to discovery; acknowledging the disclosure, receipt and list of all evidence provided to the defendant; documenting the punishment that the prosecutor recommends as part of a plea bargain agreement, if the punishment assessed by the court does not exceed the punishment recommended by the prosecutor and agreed by the defendant; and waiting a defendant's right to an expunction or to an order of nondisclosure of criminal history record information. HB 51 would also require that the supreme court to set a date by which all courts with jurisdiction over criminal actions must adopt and use the forms created, and if updated, the date by which those courts are required to adopt and use them. All courts are required to accept these forms unless the form has been completed in a manner that causes a substantive defect that cannot be cured.	**Favorable** Evaluated by: Merci Mohagheghi (713) 382-7007 Merci@TexasLSG.org
HB 1554 By: Smithee | King, Ken | Kacal | Zedler | Cole	Relating to the language of personal automobile or residential property insurance policy documents and related materials.	Insurance Vote: 8 Ayes, 0 Nays, 0 PNV, 1 Absent	HB 1554 adds a section of code to the Insurance code stating companies may provide a consumer copy of their insurance policy and other related supporting documents in a language other than English. If there is a dispute filed, English copy of the policy is the overruling policy. HB 1554 also contains language that would have the non-English copy of the policy state that the English policy would be the overruling policy regarding coverage. Addition of this language to insurance code would provide more clarity for those not proficient in English in regard to coverage.	**Favorable** Evaluated by: Elizabeth Churaman (281)-686-4544 Elizabeth@texaslsg.org
HB 1555 By: Smithee	Relating to the status of personal automobile or residential property insurance policy summary documents.	Insurance Vote: 8 Ayes, 0 Nays, 0 PNV, 1 Absent	HB 1555 adds a section of code that a policy summary, a plain language document relating to facets of insurance coverage, is not recognized as part of the policy or an endorsement of coverage. This document would be admissible in court if there is suspected misrepresentation by the covering agency but is not proof of policy coverage. This plain language document will be a more digestible, every day, plain language outlining facets of policy coverage for the consumer.	**Favorable** Evaluated by: Elizabeth Churaman (281)-686-4544 Elizabeth@texaslsg.org

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