Legislative Study Group (LSG) Floor Report — Calendar for Monday, August 25, 2025

Major State Calendar — House Bills				
HB 17 By: Meyer	Relating to the requirements regarding notice of certain property tax-related information to be provided by taxing units and appraisal districts.	Ways & Means 8 Ayes 3 Nays 0 PNV 2 Absent	HB 17 claims to promote transparency in the local tax rate-setting process, but in reality, it seeks to cut local funding by presenting manipulated, out-of-context information to taxpayers. Conservative lawmakers often fault local governments for rising property tax bills and diminishing the impact of state-provided relief. Yet at the same time, they impose unfunded mandates on local entities while undercutting their ability to raise the revenue needed to meet those obligations — through exemptions, rate caps, and other restrictions — and fund essential services. Despite being labeled a "tax transparency" bill, this proposal is simply another attempt to limit local property tax collections for necessary services like police, fire, roads, and emergency services. Currently, local taxing units are required to post notice of a proposed tax rate hearing through their local newspaper or by mail. HB 17 requires local entities — including cities, counties, school districts, water districts, and other special districts — to mail a notice to each property owner in the entity. In addition, HB 17 requires additional information to the public notice so that, in the words of the author, "taxpayers could judge whether rates are reasonable." HB 17's added notice language includes a comparison between the proposed tax rate and what the tax rate would be if the entity only accounted for any change in population (or enrollment for school districts) and inflation. Of course, there are many more factors that localities take into account when forming a proposed tax rate. **Concerns** HB 17 is effectively an unfunded mandate. Mailing and postage alone can be a significant burden for large counties, smaller entities operating on tight budgets, and school districts already struggling to manage resources. Calculating the required formulas for the notice could also create additional workload. Yet, there is no additional support provided to help localities comply. HB 17 does not account for factors that can drive a tax rate increase beyond population growth and inflation, such as public safety personnel raises, specialized equipment like fire trucks, or insurance costs. Notice to renters are excluded, even though their rent is likely to rise if property taxes increase.	**Unfavorable**

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			The Consumer Price Index (CPI) — one of the main tools used to measure inflation — does not reflect the specialized goods and services cities purchase. While CPI tracks everyday items like groceries, it does not account for police cars, body cameras, medical supplies, or other highly specialized costs faced by cities and counties. As a result, using CPI as a main input for the rate formula provides a poor measure of actual costs. By tying tax rates only to population and inflation, the bill sets unrealistic expectations. For example, a natural disaster or unfunded mandate from the state government could require higher taxes, but taxpayers' focus would be on the lowest rate, creating confusion and frustration. Local entities are already subject to extensive public notice requirements when setting tax rates. Rather than adding another manipulated data point, we should rely on the constituents who elected local officials to govern while keeping the guardrails the state already has in place.	
HB 16 By: Leach	Relating to the operation and administration of and practices and procedures related to proceedings in the judicial branch of state government, including court security, court documents and arrest warrants, document delivery, juvenile boards, constitutional amendment election challenges, record retention, youth diversion, court-ordered mental health services, the powers	Judiciary & Civil Jurisprudence 10 Ayes 0 Nays 0 PNV 1 Absent	HB 16 is the updated version of vetoed SB 2878 (89R), which was a largely routine bill to update court structures, judicial administration, and legal procedures across the Texas judiciary. Typically, the House or Senate Chairs whose committees oversee the judiciary file such legislation to create new courts and implement administrative changes. HB 16 is a comprehensive bill that addresses various aspects of the judiciary, such as creating new courts and adjusting their jurisdiction and overall operations. It proposes wide-ranging reforms, including: • Creation and reorganization of courts: Establishes multiple new district and statutory county courts across Texas based on workload needs and population growth. • Judicial operations: Revises rules for visiting judges, judicial qualifications, court interpreter appointments, and magistrate authority. • Court administration and security: Enhances data collection from prosecutors, mandates emergency court security planning, and updates judicial compensation structures. • Jury reforms: Modernizes qualifications, exemptions, and permanent disqualification rules for grand and petit jurors. • Youth diversion and juvenile justice: Requires juvenile boards to prioritize alternatives to prosecution for children in residential care and expands diversion eligibility. • Additional major updates: Addresses mental health court filings, document certification standards, court fee structures, and the administration of the new business court. The Governor's veto statement on the bill expressed concerns that it would "allow unlimited automatic expunctions for completing any pretrial intervention program." In response, HB 16 excludes the amendment added by Rep. Anchia	**<u>Favorable</u>**

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	of the Texas Supreme Court, jurors, and the special prosecution unit; increasing a criminal penalty; authorizing fees.		during the regular session that made expunging criminal records mandatory for individuals who successfully complete a pretrial intervention program. Other key changes include: • Removal of Independent Bills: Provisions that passed as standalone bills were removed from the omnibus bill. • Supreme Court Rulemaking: Added provisions to ensure that the Texas Supreme Court has full rulemaking power in civil actions. • Hidalgo County Court: The creation date for a court in Hidalgo County was moved up to align with the bill. • Presiding Judge Pay: The bill addresses a pay discrepancy for presiding judges in the 11 administrative regions. HB 16 presents a strong and necessary framework for judicial reform in Texas, aiming to create a more efficient, secure, and equitable legal system for all Texans. The bill's comprehensive approach, which addresses a range of critical issues from court operations to juvenile justice, reflects a dedicated effort to modernize and improve the State's judiciary.	
Major State Calendar — Senate Bills				
SB 10 Sponsor: Meyer By: Bettencourt	Relating to the calculation of the voter-approval tax rate for certain taxing units.	Ways & Means 7 Ayes 3 Nays 0 PNV 3 Absent	SB 10 lowers the maximum rate that counties and municipalities with populations over 75,000 can adopt without an election, undermining local control and unfairly targeting the 50 largest counties and 52 largest cities in Texas. In 2019, the Legislature lowered the voter-approval tax rate from 8% to 3.5%. SB 10 would reduce it even further, to 2.5%, but only for counties and municipalities with populations over 75,000. The justification offered is that localities should have no concern if they can defend their higher rate to voters. However, this reasoning overlooks two key factors: the impact of routine inflation and the significant costs of administering elections. Public safety — fire, police, and emergency medical services — makes up the largest share of city and county budgets, sometimes reaching 75%. Other major expenses include street repair, parks, and other essential services. Many fire and police chiefs have voiced opposition to the bill, noting that automatic 5% raises for first responders are common. If public safety already accounts for 50% of a budget, those raises alone could push spending over the 2.5% threshold, automatically triggering an election. In some cases, emergency services cover multiple jurisdictions, meaning the same fire squad could require three separate elections. All of this adds significant costs for local governments and taxpayers. Other entities that aren't impacted by the bill shared concerns during public testimony as well. The City Manager of Kerrville opposed the bill because of the precedent it sets, fearing smaller entities will be targeted next.	**<u>Unfavorable</u>**

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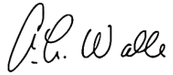
			The state is putting cities and counties between a rock and a hard place, while also prohibiting any reduction in police spending. As a result, local governments may be forced to raise other revenue sources, such as sales taxes, fees, and fines, which would disproportionately burden low-income residents. One justification for the 2.5% cap is that it is below the current inflation rate. However, inflation can rise, meaning the cap could quickly erode the ability of local governments to keep pace with normal cost increases. It's also important to note that the Consumer Price Index (CPI) — one of the main tools used to measure inflation — does not reflect the specialized goods and services cities purchase. While CPI tracks everyday items like groceries, it does not account for police cars, body cameras, medical supplies, or other highly specialized costs faced by cities and counties. Ultimately, SB 10 is simply another attempt to limit local property tax collections for necessary services like police, fire, roads, and emergency services, unfairly targeting the state's largest cities and counties which conservative lawmakers often fault local governments for rising property tax bills and diminishing the impact of state-provided relief. Yet at the same time, they impose unfunded mandates on local entities while undercutting their ability to raise the revenue needed to meet those obligations — through exemptions, rate caps, and other restrictions — and fund essential services. Conservative lawmakers often fault local governments for rising property tax bills and diminishing the impact of state-provided relief. Yet at the same time, they impose unfunded mandates on local entities while undercutting their ability to raise the revenue needed to meet those obligations. SB 10's rate cap is another attempt to constrain local governments' ability to fund essential services.	
General State Calendar — House Bills				
HB 27 By: Harris	Relating to a groundwater study of certain aquifers underlying the territory of the Neches and Trinity Valleys Groundwater Conservation	Natural Resources 11 Ayes 0 Nays 0 PNV 2 Absent	HB 27 requires the Texas Water Development Board (TWDB) to complete a study of East Texas aquifers before large-scale new export permits are approved. Proposed large-scale groundwater production and export projects in the Neches and Trinity Valleys Groundwater Conservation District have potential to impact the Carrizo-Wilcox Aquifer. Accordingly, HB 27 prohibits any new permits or amendments to current permits while a study is conducted. The study must analyze the annual maximum amount of groundwater that can be used in perpetuity, compare the results of the analysis to the amount of modeled available groundwater, and assess the hydrological effects of the proposed groundwater projects. TWDB must complete this and report findings by January 12th, 2027 to the governor, the lieutenant governor, the speaker of the house of	**<u>Favorable</u>**



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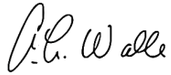
	District by the Texas Water Development Board before the issuance of permits or permit amendments by the district.		representatives, and each standing legislative committee with primary jurisdiction over groundwater a report on the results of the study. HB 27 aims to ensure the aquifer does not suffer from unintended consequences of growth. Taking such methodical steps can help to benefit the ongoing water supply shortage in Texas.	
HB 23 By: Harless | Oliverson | Swanson | Hull | Ashby	Relating to the exemption from ad valorem taxation of property owned by certain nonprofit corporations, located in a populous county, and used to promote agriculture, support youth, and provide educational support in the community.	Ways & Means 8 Ayes 0 Nays 0 PNV 5 Absent	HB 23 allows the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo to develop properties without jeopardizing its property tax-exempt status. The non-profit Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo (HLSR) currently benefits from a property tax exemption and owns several properties in Harris County. HLSR seeks to continue developing these properties to support its annual show and its broader organizational mission. However, there is currently a lack of clarity regarding how the charitable organization property tax exemption applies when such organizations engage in property development. HB 23 establishes a specific property tax exemption that, at present, would apply only to the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo. The bill provides that an organization operating exclusively for charitable, educational, and scientific purposes — and whose activities include promoting agriculture, supporting youth, and providing educational support in a community with a population of 3.3 million or more — is exempt from all ad valorem taxation. This bill allows the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo, a charitable organization, to retain its tax-exempt status, so long as it continues to operate in support of its charitable mission.	**Favorable**
General State Calendar — Senate Bills				
SB 15 Sponsor: Hefner By: King	Relating to certain files maintained by a law enforcement agency regarding certain employees of the agency.	Homeland Security, Public Safety & Veterans' Affairs 7 Ayes	SB 15 is the revised version of SB 781 (89R), a bill intended to restrict public access to police records. While SB 781 (89R) passed the Senate, it was ultimately killed by its House sponsor after a point of order was raised. **The New "Department File"** SB 15 establishes a new, mandatory, and confidential system of record keeping for every TCOLE licensee, known as a "department file." Licensees include police, jailers, and public safety telecommunications staff.	**Unfavorable**



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		1 Nays 0 PNV 3 Absent	This file is different from an officer's personnel file, which is public and includes disciplinary actions, annual reviews, and commendations. A "department file" would be confidential and include anything else that is not contained in a personnel file; most importantly, it would include documents related to alleged misconduct for which the law enforcement agency determines there is insufficient evidence (pursuant to the TCOLE definition of misconduct at Occupations Code 1701.001) to sustain disciplinary action at the level of suspension, termination or demotion. This doesn't mean the complaint was false or that the alleged misconduct didn't occur. "Department file" access is limited to the officer, TCOLE, and another law enforcement agency during a hiring process. During this special session, access has been added for the Commission on Jail Standards, Sandra Bland investigators, District Attorneys pursuant to the Michael Morton Act, and any access required by law. This is a significant change from current law, which allows temporary exemption for ongoing investigations but generally makes records public after an investigation is complete. Supporters of the bill argue that it is necessary to standardize personnel file record-keeping practices, aligning with a model policy developed by the Texas Commission on Law Enforcement in response to its sunset review in 2023. However, record-keeping practices are largely standardized already among the vast majority of departments and jails pursuant to Government Code Ch. 552 and its broad exceptions to disclosure for law enforcement. **Broad and Vague Language** The bill's vague language could be interpreted to seal nearly all records connected to law enforcement—including body camera footage, 911 calls, emails, and dispatch logs—far beyond its stated purpose of protecting unsubstantiated claims. By limiting disclosure to what is "required by law" without defining who that applies to, the bill creates ambiguity that could invite disputes and lawsuits. Moreover, relying on narrow safeguards like the Sandra Bland Act leaves much misconduct unaddressed, since it only triggers investigations in cases of deaths in custody, not other serious abuses. **Consequences for Law Enforcement** The bill could backfire on law enforcement by blocking the release of records that clear officers of wrongdoing, fueling public mistrust. It also risks giving small, elected law enforcement agencies the power to seal nearly any document, allowing officials to control what information about their own conduct becomes public and undermining accountability. **Uvalde Robb Elementary School Shooting Investigation** The Uvalde Robb Elementary School shooting investigation highlights the potential for this bill to delay or prevent the release of information to the public. Lengthy legal battles have been required to gain any public access to records. The	

			passage of this bill would likely restart these legal challenges, potentially delaying the release of information for years. By requiring that any "document relating to a license holder" be placed in a sealed file not subject to the Public Information Act, the bill could permanently conceal records that families and the public have been fighting to access. This legislation could hinder public transparency and accountability, particularly in high-profile incidents where full disclosure is critical. **Hindering Public Accountability and Oversight** SB 15 does not solve the underlying issue of police accountability; instead, it makes it more difficult to achieve. The bill's negative consequences far outweigh its stated purpose of protecting officers from unsubstantiated claims. It blocks civilian oversight, hides potential patterns of abuse, prevents independent review of investigations, and ultimately erodes public trust in law enforcement.	
SB 18 Sponsor: Gerdes By: Zaffirini	Relating to an exemption from the requirement to obtain a permit from the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality for certain dams or reservoirs operated and maintained for the purposes of erosion, floodwater, and sediment control.	Disaster Preparedness & Flooding, Select 9 Ayes 0 Nays 0 PNV 0 Absent	SB 18 would speed up repairs and maintenance of flood control structures by creating an exemption process for certain dams. SB 18 is a refile of SB 2568 (89R), which passed the Senate unanimously but ran out of time in the House. It addresses flood control dams built by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), a division of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Texas has 2,029 of these earthen dams, and no new ones are being constructed. Local district sponsors are responsible for monitoring, operating, and maintaining them. The dams capture and store floodwaters during both normal and extreme rain events, releasing water downstream at a controlled, engineered rate. Many of these structures are more than 60 years old and now require significant maintenance, rehabilitation, and repair. However, the permitting process for such work is lengthy and can take up to a year, delaying critical upkeep. SB 18 would allow qualified district sponsors, such as soil and water conservation districts or river authorities, to apply to the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) for a permit exemption to: - Divert water from a reservoir, when necessary, for the limited purpose of repairing, maintaining, or rehabilitating the dam or reservoir; or - Construct or maintain, on property owned or controlled by the sponsor, a storage facility of up to 200 acre feet of water for erosion, floodwater, and sediment control. With SB 18's permit exemption, critical maintenance of dams can occur more efficiently, reducing risks from deferred repairs.	**<u>Favorable</u>**

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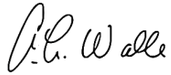

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