

**Weekly Report  
January 27, 2023**

**SENATE:**

The Senate was in session on Tuesday and Wednesday of this week conducting routine business.

**Senate Committee Assignments** – On January 23<sup>rd</sup>, Lt. Governor Dan Patrick issued Senate committee appointments for the 88<sup>th</sup> Legislative Session. Lt. Governor Patrick said, “As the Texas Senate begins its work this session, the committee assignments I made today will ensure we succeed in addressing the priorities of the people of Texas. This is the strongest, best equipped group of senators in Texas history. They are proven leaders with the expertise and experience needed to keep Texas moving in the right direction. That includes the most outstanding freshman class we have ever had. The overwhelming majority of bills voted on by the chamber will have bipartisan support. But make no mistake, the priority bills will address the concerns of the conservative majority in Texas. Our committees have worked long hours throughout the interim to prepare for this session. The senators’ commitment to public service is unwavering and I am proud to serve the people of Texas alongside them. It is a team effort and we are ready to do the work Texans expect of us.”

**Senate Committees and Chairs:**

**Senate Administration Committee** - Bob Hall (R-Edgewood)

**Senate Border Security Committee** - Brian Birdwell (R-Granbury)

**Senate Business & Commerce Committee** - Charles Schwertner (R-Georgetown)

**Senate Criminal Justice Committee** - John Whitmire (D-Houston)

**Senate Education Committee** - Brandon Creighton (R-Conroe)

**Subcommittee on Higher Education** - Brandon Creighton (R-Conroe)

**Senate Finance Committee** - Joan Huffman (R-Houston)

**Senate Health & Human Services Committee** - Lois Kolkhorst (R-Brenham)

**Senate Jurisprudence Committee** - Bryan Hughes (R-Mineola)

**Senate Local Government Committee** - Paul Bettencourt (R-Houston)

**Senate Natural Resources & Economic Development Committee** - Brian Birdwell (R-Granbury)

**Senate Nominations Committee** - Donna Campbell (R-New Braunfels)

**Senate State Affairs Committee** - Bryan Hughes (R-Mineola)

**Senate Transportation Committee** - Robert Nichols (R-Jacksonville)

**Senate Veteran Affairs Committee** - Kelly Hancock (R-North Richland Hills)

**Senate Water, Agriculture, & Rural Affairs Committee** - Charles Perry (R-Lubbock)

## **Senate Special Committee on Redistricting - Joan Huffman (R-Houston)**

### **Facts About Senate Committees:**

**Number of Committees** – The number of Senate standing committees remained the same as the 2021 session - 15. Changes to Senate Committees included:

- The Border Security Committee was established as a standing committee.
- The Education Committee has a standing Subcommittee on Higher Education; and the Higher Education Committee was eliminated.
- The name of the Veteran Affairs and Border Security Committee was changed to the Veteran Affairs Committee.

**Republican Committee Chairs** – Republicans chair 14 of the Senate’s 15 committees.

- In 2017, Republicans chaired 12 of the Senate’s 14 committees.
- In 2019, Republicans chaired 14 of the Senate’s 16 committees.
- In 2021, Republicans chaired 14 of the Senate’s 15 committees.

**Democratic Committee Chairs** – A Democrat chairs one Senate Committee – Senator John Whitmire (Senate Criminal Justice Committee):

- In 2017, Democrats chaired two of the Senate’s 14 committees – Senator Eddie Lucio, Jr. (Senate Intergovernmental Relations Committee) and Senator John Whitmire (Senate Criminal Justice Committee).
- Those chairs remained the same in 2019.
- In 2021, one Democrat chaired a Senate Committee – Senator John Whitmire (Senate Criminal Justice Committee).

**Next Week:** The Senate adjourned until 11:00 a.m. on Tuesday, January 11, 2023.

### **HOUSE:**

The House was also in session on Tuesday and Wednesday of this week conducting routine business.

**On Tuesday**, the House’s permanent officers were sworn in.

**Next Week:** The House adjourned until 2:00 p.m. on Tuesday, January 31, 2023.

### **BUDGET:**

#### **Upcoming Hearings:**

**Monday, January 30, 2023 – Senate Finance Committee** will meet at 10:00 a.m. in E1.036 of the capitol extension to take up Article I – General Government Agencies.

**Tuesday, January 31, 2023 – Senate Finance Committee** will meet at 9:00 a.m. in E1.036 of the capitol extension to take up Article I – General Government Agencies.

**Wednesday, February 1, 2023 – Senate Finance Committee** will meet at 9:00 a.m. in E1.036 of the capitol extension to take up Article II – Health & Human Services Agencies.

**Thursday, February 2, 2023 – Senate Finance Committee** will meet at 10:00 a.m. in E1.036 of the capitol extension to take up Article II – Health & Human Services Agencies.

**Friday, February 3, 2023 – Senate Finance Committee** will meet at 9:00 a.m. in E1.036 of the capitol extension if necessary to take up pending business.

**Monday, February 6, 2023 – Senate Finance Committee** will meet at 10:00 a.m. in E1.036 of the capitol extension to take up Article III – Education (Public Education) Agencies.

**Tuesday, February 7, 2023 – Senate Finance Committee** will meet at 9:00 a.m. in E1.036 of the capitol extension to take up Article III – Education (Higher Education) Agencies.

**Wednesday, February 8, 2023 – Senate Finance Committee** will meet at 9:00 a.m. in E1.036 of the capitol extension to take up Article III – Education (Higher Education) Agencies.

**Thursday, February 9, 2023 – Senate Finance Committee** will meet at 9:00 a.m. in E1.036 of the capitol extension to take up Article V – Public Safety & Criminal Justice Agencies.

**Friday, February 9, 2023 – Senate Finance Committee** will meet at 9:00 a.m. in E1.036 of the capitol extension if necessary for any pending business.

**Monday, February 13, 2023 – Senate Finance Committee** will meet at 10:00 a.m. in E1.036 of the capitol extension to take up Article IV – Natural Resources Agencies.

**Tuesday, February 14, 2023 – Senate Finance Committee** will meet at 9:00 a.m. in E1.036 of the capitol extension to take up Article VII – Business & Economic Development Agencies.

**Wednesday, February 15, 2023 – Senate Finance Committee** will meet at 9:00 a.m. in E1.036 of the capitol extension to take up Article VIII - Regulatory Agencies.

**Thursday, February 16, 2023 – Senate Finance Committee** will meet at 9:00 a.m. in E1.036 of the capitol extension to take up Article IV - Judiciary Agencies.

**Friday, February 17, 2023 – Senate Finance Committee** will meet at 9:00 a.m. in E1.036 of the capitol extension if necessary for any pending business.

#### **ELECTIONS:**

**U.S. Senator Term-Limits Proposal** – On January 25<sup>th</sup>, Senator Roland Gutierrez filed **SB 596**, which would prohibit United States Senators from Texas from serving more than two terms. SB 596 follows a proposed amendment to the U.S. Constitution filed by U.S. Senator Ted Cruz, which would place term limits on federal legislators. Senator Gutierrez said, “I agree with the junior U.S. Senator from Texas. We need term limits on U.S. Senators, let’s lead by example here in Texas. Twelve years of service from one Senator is enough. Citizen legislators should serve for a few years and return home. Instead, many officials have created a government run by a small group of special interests and elitist

politicians who create brokenness in Washington to govern in a manner that is totally counter to the American people's wants and needs. Terms limits bring about accountability that is long overdue and I urge my colleagues in the Texas legislature to advance this bill so that special interests in Texas are not a priority over hardworking, taxpaying people."

#### **PUBLIC EDUCATION:**

**Educator Training on Suicide Prevention and Mental Health** - On January 23<sup>rd</sup>, Representative Ana-Maria Ramos (D-Dallas) filed **HB 1485**, which would require educators to be re-trained on suicide prevention and other mental health topics at least every two years. Representative Ramos said, "A troubling trend in the last decade has been the increase in suicides in both Texas and the United States. The isolating nature of the COVID-19 pandemic has only exacerbated this trend. As legislators, we have it in our power to make a change. Suicide is the second-leading cause of death for individuals between the ages of 1- and 17 in Texas, according to both the CDC and the Health and Human Services Commission. Suicide is preventable and is a significant public health issue that takes a substantial toll on individuals, families, and communities. Adolescents face many stressors at home and school that can result in suicidal thoughts or actions if not identified. Given how much of an adolescent's time is spent in school, numerous lives could be saved if educators were regularly trained on identifying signs of suicide risks and how to intervene in these situations. By increasing access to care, reducing access to lethal means, dismantling stigmas against seeking mental health treatment, and reducing discriminatory disparities, we can meet the challenge of reversing the suicide trend in Texas.

**Press Conference on Increasing Teacher Pay** - On January 24<sup>th</sup>, Representative James Talarico (D-Austin) held a press conference in support his **HB 1548**, which would provide a teacher payraise for Texas teachers and other school personnel. Representative Talarico said, "Before I was a Texas legislator, I was a school teacher . . . I struggled to make ends meet. My coworkers drove Uber's at night, and sold their own blood plasma to make extra money. Now, 40 percent of Texas teachers work a second job just to pay the bills. It's no wonder that thousands of educators are leaving the profession. We have an emergency teacher shortage in this state, and it requires emergency action by the Texas legislature." His legislation would give an immediate \$15,000 across-the-board payraise to every teacher. If passed, it would be the largest payraise for teachers in Texas history. He said, "We can do this! Our state has a \$47 billion budget surplus. We have no excuse. Hoarding this surplus while educators and children are suffering is immoral, and it is also bad business. Any business person worth their salt will tell you, you don't stick your money under a mattress. You put your money to work by making smart investments. And, the smartest investment we can make as a state is in the next generation." He concluded by saying, "We ask teachers to clean up the mess from centuries of poverty, racism, and oppression. Let's be honest, our teachers are the catch-all solution to all of society's problems." He discussed school safety and the mental health crisis. Also

speaking was Representative Gina Hinojosa (D-Austin), said the state does not have a teacher shortage, but “Teachers have chosen to walk away from a profession that undervalues them, underpays them, and under-resources their job.” She added, “Some teachers are holding on, hoping against hope we can get something done. With one foot out the door, they are watching us to see if we are going to send help.” Representative Terry Meza (D-Irving) also a former teacher, gave statistics on Texas teacher salaries:

- Texas ranks in bottom half of states for teacher pay; this bill would bring Texas up to the top ten states;
- Texas teacher salaries are \$7,500 below the national average;
- Veteran teachers are paid \$13,000 less than veteran teachers in other states; and
- When accounting for inflation, teacher salaries have actually declined over the past decade.

Also speaking were Representative Trey Martinez-Fischer, Chair of the House Democratic Caucus; the Austin ISD school board president; and a teacher in Leander ISD.

**Key Dates – 88<sup>th</sup> Legislative Session:**

88<sup>th</sup> Legislative Session Begins: January 10, 2023

Inauguration of Governor and Lt. Governor – January 17, 2023

Bill Filing Deadline: March 10, 2023

88<sup>th</sup> Legislative Session Ends: May 29, 2023

Governor’s Veto Deadline: June 18, 2023

**State Websites** - Additional information can be obtained via the Senate, House, and capitol websites:

[www.senate.state.tx.us](http://www.senate.state.tx.us)

[www.house.state.tx.us](http://www.house.state.tx.us)

[www.capitol.state.tx.us](http://www.capitol.state.tx.us)