

Weekly Report
February 17, 2023

GOVERNOR:

Governor’s State-of-the-State Address – On February 16th, Governor Greg Abbott delivered his State-of-the-State address in San Marcos at Novem Magnetics Corporation’s manufacturing facility. Governor Abbott said, “The state of our state has never been more exceptional. Texans have inherited a legendary pedigree. A state first settled by brave pioneers willing to risk everything for the promise of freedom and opportunity. Texas is fulfilling that promise. I’m speaking to you from the manufacturing floor of Noveon. It is a cutting-edge business in the critical field of rare earth elements. They provide essential materials for things used every day like refrigerators, trucks, MRI machines, oil rigs. Even materials for ballistic missiles for America to defend itself. Most rare earth materials now come from China. If that supply is ever disrupted, many of the things we do every day would come to a halt. The future of Texas and the United States should not depend on China. We must embrace innovation like Noveon to make Texas more self-reliant to create our own products and to secure the Texas of tomorrow. With the help of businesses like Noveon, Texas is:

- #1 in the United States for new jobs. Texas has added more than 1.9 million new jobs since I became governor.
- #1 for economic development, number one for exports, and number one for Fortune 500 headquarters.
- Our \$2 trillion economy makes Texas the ninth-largest economy in the world.

All across our state business is booming. From our large metros to rural Texas and everywhere in between, businesses large and small have led Texas to be ranked the number one state for business every year that I’ve been governor.” He designated seven issues as emergency items for the legislature to take early action on including:

- cutting property taxes
- ending COVID restrictions
- education freedom
- school safety
- ending revolving door bail
- doing more to secure the border
- addressing the fentanyl crisis

The governor concluded by saying, “No doubt we have work ahead of us, but we’re building on a storied legacy. One hundred and eighty-seven years after Texas was founded, it has never been a better time to be a Texan. Texas is America’s economic juggernaut: Where a small family business can aspire to

employ hundreds and become leaders in their local community; where all Texans can chart their own destiny. Texas is the seat of knowledge, where children will have safer schools to master the skills that will prepare them for the workforce of tomorrow. Texas is the energy capital of the world, where we will strengthen our electric grid to power us for generations to come. Texas is the home of justice, where dangerous criminals will stay locked behind bars, and law-abiding Texans will have their liberty protected. This session, we will ensure Texas remains the leader of this nation as an unflinching force in this world. Together, we will build a Texas for the next generation - the Texas of tomorrow." *Other details from the governor's speech are in the issue categories below.*

House Speaker Dade Phelan commented on Governor Abbott's speech saying, "Governor Greg Abbott's State of the State address this evening included many great ideas for achieving the goal we all share at the Texas Legislature: making our state a better place to live, work and raise a family. To that end, the legislature this year must address our state's border security in a meaningful and innovative way, fight the rapidly-rising number of opioid overdoses and empower parents with the roles they play in the classroom and on social media. The Texas House's work on these issues and more is already underway, and our chamber looks forward to working with the governor and Texas Senate this session."

Democratic Response - Representative Gina Hinojosa (D-Austin) offered a Democratic response to the governor's speech saying, "In his 'State of the State' address, Governor Abbott announced his emergency priority for the 88th Legislative Session to divest our public schools of funding and transfer those resources to private schools. After almost a decade under Governor Abbott's leadership, he answers the anger and frustration that parents and teachers feel in cash-strapped schools with a gimmick that further undermines the public education that the vast majority of Texas school children and their families rely upon. Private vouchers offer private schools a choice to collect taxpayer dollars by selecting the students they choose to educate. It is the school's choice to select families and students who are the 'right fit.' At a time when our schools are in crisis after a pandemic that upended teaching and learning in schools that have been chronically underfunded, my constituents and all Texas parents deserve a real plan to deliver effective, high-quality education to all Texas school children. No more gimmicks. We must stop diverting property taxes away from public schools and fully fund the public education our children need to succeed, once and for all."

Governor's Committee to Support the Military – On February 9th, the Governor's Committee to Support the Military released their 2022 report with recommendations for policy changes and legislative action to improve education, health care, quality of life, workforce development, encroachment, and infrastructure as they relate to the military community of Texas. Governor Greg Abbott said, "Texas is the proud home to 15 military installations and the U.S. Army Futures Command. With over \$114.2 billion in economic output, these U.S. military installations represent one of the state's largest industries, supporting more than 622,790 direct and indirect jobs in communities across this great state."

I am grateful for the committee's hard work in developing meaningful recommendations that will further enhance the military value of these installations and improve the quality of life for our military families. With the guidance from this committee, we will continue working together this Legislative Session to achieve these important goals." The Committee's recommendations include:

- Mitigate the Impact of Lost Property Tax Revenue Due to the Disabled Veterans Residence Homestead Exemption - Explore options to mitigate the negative resource impact on communities and take action to ensure Texas military installations and the surrounding communities remain competitive for future mission and stationing decisions, as well as any future Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) actions.
- Early Enrollment for Military Family Students - Modify the current Texas Code to change "10 days" to "90 days" to provide school districts proof of residence. This accounts for the long lead time to find housing and allows military family students to remain stable in school.
- Military Child Education Coalition - Continue to ensure funding is appropriated by the Legislature to the Texas Education Agency (TEA) budget for the current \$500,000 biennium funding for the Military Child Education Coalition in the TEA's base appropriation request.
- Defense Manpower Data Center (DMDC) - Continue to pursue the memorandum of agreement between TEA and DMDC for data and establishment of a reporting process for annual or semi-annual reporting that allows TEA to measure the military readiness component of College, Career, and Military Readiness outcomes.
- Increase Integration between Texas Educational Providers and Military Installation/Industry Skill Requirements - Develop legislation to encourage Texas high schools, technical and community colleges, and universities to invest in programs supporting the growing demands in Texas for advanced manufacturing and technology skills.
- Addition of Airfield Paving or Related Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) Services to Interagency Contracts between TxDOT and the U.S. Military - Modify Texas Code to allow TxDOT to perform any TxDOT service on military installations, including airfield pavement projects to include runways, taxiways, and aircraft parking areas or related TxDOT services if the installation pays for the work.
- Defense Economic Adjustment Assistance Grant (DEAAG) Program - Fully fund the DEAAG program to \$30 million to help enhance military installations in Texas while improving and protecting those installations and surrounding communities from potential negative impacts of any future BRAC or stationing decision.
- Encroachment on Military Training - Ensure potential legislation considers encroachment effects on military installations and includes provisions to protect the military installations.

The Governor's Committee to Support the Military was established in September 2018. The Committee is comprised of up to 22 individuals, including Texas-resident veterans, community leaders, and business leaders.

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Operation Lone Star Update – On February 10th, Governor Greg Abbott said that his office, the Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS), and the Texas National Guard are continuing to work together to secure the border; stop the smuggling of drugs, weapons, and people into Texas; and prevent, detect, and interdict transnational criminal behavior between ports of entry. Since the launch of Operation Lone Star, the multi-agency effort has led to over 348,000 illegal immigrant apprehensions and more than 24,000 criminal arrests, with more than 22,000 felony charges reported. In the fight against fentanyl, DPS has seized over 361 million lethal doses of fentanyl during this border mission. Texas has also bused more than 9,100 migrants to Washington D.C. since April, over 5,200 migrants to New York City since August 5th, more than 1,500 migrants to Chicago since August 31st, and more than 890 migrants to Philadelphia since November 15th. Governor Abbott said, “Operation Lone Star continues to fill the dangerous gaps left by the Biden Administration's refusal to secure the border. Every individual who is apprehended or arrested and every ounce of drugs seized would have otherwise made their way into communities across Texas and the nation due to President Biden's open border policies.”

Governor Addresses NFIB's Small Business Day – On February 14th, Governor Greg Abbott highlighted the importance of small businesses to Texas' booming economy at the National Federation of Independent Business' (NFIB) Small Business Day in Austin. The governor also promised to work with the Texas legislature this session to bolster small business' success. Governor Abbott said, “Small businesses in Texas continue to drive our state's economy, making Texas an economic powerhouse. Thanks to our small businesses, Texas has been named the best state for business 18 years in a row, is the ninth-largest economy in the world, and has the fastest annual jobs growth rate in the nation. This session, we'll ensure that Texas small businesses continue to fuel our booming economy.” During his keynote address to over 160 business leaders, Governor Abbott noted that he will work with members of the Texas House and Senate to provide property tax relief, additional workforce development opportunities, and regulatory reform that will help small businesses continue to thrive in Texas' mighty economy.”

SENATE:

The Senate convened briefly on Tuesday and Wednesday conducting routine business. On Wednesday, they began referring bills to committees referring SB's 31-450. The Senate convened briefly on Friday to refer additional bills – SB's 451-700.

Lt. Governor Announces His Priorities – On February 13th, Lt. Governor Dan Patrick announced his priorities for the 88th Legislative Session. He said, “Each session, the 31 members of the Texas Senate file thousands of bills. Some are

duplicates because members often have similar priorities voiced to them by their constituents. The tradition has been for bill numbers 1 through 20 to indicate the Lt. Governor's and the Senate's priorities. In 2017, I increased the low bill numbers to 30. Senators like to get a low bill number because it shows their bill is also a priority of the Lt. Governor and has a great chance of passing. I believe Texans support our priorities because they largely reflect the policies supported by the conservative majority of Texans. Most will pass with bipartisan support. This session I could have used 50 low bill numbers because there are so many issues that need to be addressed. Just because a bill does not make the priority list does not mean it is not a priority for me or the Senate. We will pass over 600 bills this session. As I like to say, every bill is a priority to someone, otherwise we would not pass it. This year, several of our policy initiatives are already addressed in the budget as opposed to specific bills. One example is Texas border security funding. Since President Biden took office and implemented his open border policies, Texas has stepped into the breach. Texas should not have to use our tax dollars to do the Federal Government's job, but it is vitally important that we maintain our law enforcement and National Guard presence. If we do not, the border crisis will get much worse." Lt. Governor Patrick's Priority Bills:

- SB 1 – State Budget
- SB 2 – Restoring Voter Fraud to a Felony
- SB 3 – Increasing the Homestead Exemption to \$70,000
- SB 4 – Adding Additional Property Tax Relief
- SB 5 – Increasing the Business Personal Property Tax Exemption
- SB 6 – Adding New Natural Gas Plants
- SB 7 – Continuing to Improve the Texas Grid
- SB 8 – Empowering Parental Rights – Including School Choice
- SB 9 – Empowering Teacher Rights – Teacher Pay Raise
- SB 10 – Adding 13th Checks for Retired Teachers
- SB 11 – Keeping Our Schools Safe and Secure
- SB 12 – Banning Children's Exposure to Drag Shows
- SB 13 – Protecting Children from Obscene Books in Libraries
- SB 14 – Ending Child Gender Modification
- SB 15 – Protecting Women's College Sports
- SB 16 – Banning Critical Race Theory (CRT) in Higher Education
- SB 17 – Banning Discriminatory "Diversity, Equity and Inclusion" (DEI) Policies in Higher Education
- SB 18 – Eliminating Tenure at General Academic Institutions
- SB 19 – Creating A New Higher Education Endowment Fund
- SB 20 – Removing District Attorneys Who Refuse to Follow Texas Law
- SB 21 – Removing Judges Who Refuse to Follow Texas Law
- SB 22 – Assisting Rural Law Enforcement Funding – Increasing Pay and Needed Equipment
- SB 23 – Creating A Mandatory 10-Year Prison Sentence for Criminals Committing Gun Crime

- SB 24 – Expanding Alternatives to Abortion
- SB 25 – Creating New Scholarships for Registered Nurses
- SB 26 – Expanding Mental Health Care Beds Across Texas – Focus on Rural Counties
- SB 27 – Creating A New Business Specialty Court
- SB 28 – Addressing Texas’ Future Water Needs
- SB 29 – Banning Local COVID-19 Mandates
- SB 30 – Supplemental Budget

Note: SB 1 has been filed by Senator Joan Huffman (R-Houston). The other bills have not yet been filed.

Association of Professional Educators (ATPE) Executive Director Shannon Holmes commented on Lt. Governor Dan Patrick’s legislative priorities saying, “Nothing surprises us on the list of the lieutenant governor’s priorities. We haven’t seen the bill text yet, but we know that it’s no accident ‘school choice’ - aka vouchers - and a ‘teacher pay raise’ are side by side. But public educators are not fooled by political gamesmanship. A voucher is a voucher, and a voucher accompanied by a pay raise will still hurt Texas public schools. We also urge parents not to be fooled by buzzwords, either. Creating a system that allows taxpayer dollars to be spent without accountability doesn’t ‘empower parental rights.’ It just opens up a money-making scheme for private businesses. What will empower parents is ensuring each of them has the option to send their children to a well-resourced neighborhood school - one that is staffed by well-prepared professional educators who can provide for their own families on an educator’s salary. Regarding educators’ retirement benefits, a 13th check would be appreciated, but what retired educators really need is a cost-of-living adjustment and a method for receiving automatic COLAs in the future. The State of Texas has the means to provide this for retired educators given the historic level of resources at its disposal. School safety is of top priority to Texas educators, and we look forward to working with lawmakers as they craft solutions to keep our school communities safe.”

Senate Administration Committee – On February 15th, the Senate Administration Committee took up **SJR 50** by Senator Bob Hall (R-Edgewood), the constitutional amendment “blocker bill” which was voted out of committee. It will remain at the top of the Senate’s calendar requiring all other proposals to be taken up by suspending the regular order of business.

Regular Schedule for Senate Committees – The Senate committee schedule was announced this week:

Mondays:

8:00 a.m. Water, Agriculture & Rural Affairs Committee – E1.012 capitol extension

9:00 a.m. State Affairs Committee – Senate chamber

9:00 a.m. Local Government Committee – E1.028 capitol extension

9:30 a.m. Nominations Committee – Betty King Room

10:00 a.m. Finance Committee - E1.036 capitol extension

Tuesdays:

8:00 a.m. Business & Commerce Committee – E1.012 capitol extension
8:30 a.m. Health & Human Services Committee – Senate chamber
9:00 a.m. Education Committee – E1.028 capitol extension
9:00 a.m. Veterans Affairs Committee – Betty King Room
9:00 a.m. Local Government Committee – E1.016 capitol extension
1:30 p.m. Criminal Justice Committee – E1.016 capitol extension

Wednesdays:

8:00 a.m. Transportation Committee – E1.018 capitol extension
8:30 a.m. Health & Human Services Committee – Senate chamber
9:00 a.m. Natural Resources & Economic Development Committee – E1.012 capitol extension
9:00 a.m. Subcommittee on Higher Education – E1.028 capitol extension
9:00 a.m. Finance Committee – E1.036 capitol extension
9:00 a.m. Jurisprudence Committee – Betty King Room

Thursdays:

8:00 a.m. Business & Commerce Committee – E1.012 capitol extension
9:00 a.m. State Affairs Committee – Senate chamber
9:00 a.m. Border Security Committee – E1.016 capitol extension
9:00 a.m. Education Committee – E1.028 capitol extension

Next Week: The Senate adjourned until 11:00 a.m. on Tuesday, February 21, 2023.

HOUSE:

The House also convened briefly on Tuesday and Wednesday conducting routine business.

House Administration Committee – The House Administration Committee met on Tuesday, February 14th to take up organizational matters and approve House committee budgets. The committee:

- granted authority to the Chair, Representative Will Metcalf (R-Conroe) to act on the committee's behalf on matters involving the management of the general budget, approval of expenditure requests by House members, management of House facilities, coordination with House support personnel, and general enforcement of House policies and procedures;
- approved committee budgets;
- delegated accreditation of media representatives to the Executive Director of the House Business Office; and
- approved the standard process for electronic submission and posting of public comments and the continued use of the information links on committee meeting notices.

Chairman Metcalf appointed the Subcommittee to Review the House Policies and Procedures Manual:

- Brooks Landgraf (R-Odessa), Chair
- Sheryl Cole (D-Austin)

- Sam Harless (R-Spring)
- Cody Harris (R-Palestine)
- Joe Moody (D-El Paso)

They were charged to work with Steve Adrian in the House Business Office to update the manual and to complete the work expeditiously.

Regular Schedule for House Committees – The House Committee Coordinator announced the regular schedule for House Committees:

Mondays:

- 8:30 a.m. Appropriations Committee – E1.030 capitol extension
- 10:00 a.m. Business & Industry Committee – E2.012 capitol extension
- 10:00 a.m. Higher Education Committee – E1.010 capitol extension
- 10:00 a.m. Public Health Committee – Room 120 John H. Reagan State Office Building
- 10:00 a.m. Ways & Means Committee – Room 140 John H. Reagan State Office Building
- 2:00 p.m. Energy Resources Committee – E1.014 capitol extension
- 2:00 p.m. Select Committee on Youth Health & Safety – E2.026 capitol extension

Tuesdays:

- 8:00 a.m. Human Services Committee – E2.030 capitol extension
- 8:00 a.m. House Insurance Committee – E2.014 capitol extension
- 8:00 a.m. International Relations & Economic Development Committee – E1.036 capitol extension
- 8:00 a.m. Natural Resources Committee – E2.010 capitol extension
- 8:00 a.m. Public Education Committee – E2.036 capitol extension
- 10:30 a.m. Criminal Jurisprudence Committee – E2.016 capitol extension
- 2:00 p.m. Homeland Security & Public Safety Committee – E2.012 capitol extension
- 2:00 p.m. Urban Affairs Committee – E2.028 capitol extension

Wednesdays:

- 8:00 a.m. Agriculture & Livestock Committee - E1.026 capitol extension
- 8:00 a.m. Judiciary & Civil Jurisprudence Committee – E2.016 capitol extension
- 8:00 a.m. Land & Resource Management Committee – E2.028 capitol extension
- 8:00 a.m. Licensing & Administrative Procedures Committee – E2.010 capitol extension
- 8:00 a.m. Pensions, Investments & Financial Services Committee – E2.014 capitol extension
- 10:30 a.m. County Affairs Committee – E2.012 capitol extension
- 10:30 a.m. Juvenile Justice & Family Issues Committee – E2.030 capitol extension
- 10:30 a.m. State Affairs Committee – Room 140 John H. Reagan State Office Building
- 10:30 a.m. Transportation Committee – E2.036 capitol extension

Thursdays:

- 8:00 a.m. Corrections Committee – E2.014 capitol extension
- 8:00 a.m. Culture, Recreation & Tourism Committee – E2.012 capitol extension

8:00 a.m. Select Committee on Health Care Reform – E2.028 capitol extension
8:00 a.m. Redistricting Committee – Room 140 John H. Reagan State Office Building
10:30 a.m. Defense & Veterans’ Affairs Committee – E2.026 capitol extension
10:30 a.m. Elections Committee – E2.016 capitol extension
10:30 a.m. Environmental Regulation Committee – E2.030 capitol extension

Next Week: The House adjourned until 2:00 p.m. on Tuesday, February 21, 2023.

BUDGET:

Senate Finance Committee:

Friday, February 10, 2023 – Senate Finance Committee took up Article I – General Government, and Article II – Health and Human Services Agencies including:

- Health & Human Services Commission
- Office of the Inspector General
- Texas Civil Commitment Office
- Department of Family and Protective Services
- Department of State Health Services
- Special Provisions Relating to All Health and Human Services Agencies

Other witnesses included representatives of the Legislative Budget Board and the Office of the Inspector General.

Monday, February 13, 2023 – Senate Finance Committee took up Article IV – Natural Resources Agencies including:

- General Land Office and Veteran’s Land Board
- Department of Agriculture
- Railroad Commission
- Commission on Environmental Quality
- Parks & Wildlife Department
- Animal Health Commission
- Soil & Water Conservation Board
- Water Development Board
- Low-Level Radioactive Waste Disposal Compact Commission

Other witnesses included representatives of the Legislative Budget Board, Southwest Research Institute, Coastal Conservation Association, Ducks Unlimited, Feeding Texas, Texas Wildlife Association, Texas Veterinary Medical Association, Texas Public Employees Association, Texas Rural Water Association, Environment Texas, Texas Alliance of Energy Producers, Rio Grande Compact Commission, American Society of Civil Engineers, Houston Stronger, The Nature Conservancy, Texas Hydrogen Alliance, National Wildlife Foundation, No Kid Hungry Texas, Texas Water Conservation Association, American Flood Coalition, Texas 2036, Lone Star Chapter of the Sierra Club, Texas Land Trust Council, Texas Foundation for Conservation, Bass Anglers Sportsman Society, Simsboro Aquifer Water Defense Fund, Texas Conservation

Alliance, Texas Water Infrastructure Network, Greater Houston Partnership, Republic Services, Environmental Defense Fund, and San Antonio Water System.

Tuesday, February 14, 2023 – Senate Finance Committee took up Article VII – Business & Economic Development Agencies including:

- Department of Transportation
- Department of Motor Vehicles
- Workforce Commission
- Department of Housing & Community Affairs
- Lottery Commission

Other witnesses included representatives of the Legislative Budget Board, Texas Hospital Association, Early Childhood IN-3 Council, Texas Public Employees Association, Port of Port Arthur, Texas Restaurant Association Habitat for Humanity Texas, Baptist General Convention of Texas, Lone Star National Bank, Kyle Bright Beginnings Learning Center, Texans Care for Children, Prenatal to Three Collaborative, Creative Child, Haven for Hope of Bexar County, Texas Building Trades Council, Children at Risk, Texas Ports Association, Lifeworks, North Texas Early Education Alliance, Montrose Grace Place, Young Adult Leadership Council, Texas 2036, Texas Association for the Education of Young Children, Sheriffs Association of Texas, Disability Rights TX, Texas Housers, and four individuals.

Wednesday, February 15, 2023 – Senate Finance Committee took up Article VIII - Regulatory Agencies including:

- Public Utility Commission
- Office of Public Utility Counsel
- Department of Insurance
- Office of Public Insurance Counsel
- Office of Injured Employee Counsel
- Executive Council of Physical Therapy and Occupational Therapy
- State Office of Administrative Hearings
- Texas Medical Board
- Texas Board of Nursing
- Board of Chiropractic Examiners
- Board of Dental Examiners
- Optometry Board
- Health Professions Council
- Board of Veterinary Medical Examiners
- Board of Pharmacy
- Behavioral Health Executive Council
- Securities Board
- Funeral Service Commission
- Board of Plumbing Examiners
- Racing Commission

- Department of Licensing and Regulation
- Board of Professional Geoscientists
- Special Provisions Relating to All Regulatory Agencies

PUC Chairman Peter Lake told the committee that low pay, long hours, and a poor work/life balance are making it difficult to maintain staff levels. He said, "We are losing employees - very good employees - at a staggering rate. We need the resources to compensate and keep the people we've got, and we need to be able to attract new talent to address the increasing complexity and responsibilities we have." Chairman Joan Huffman said that staffing shortages, especially an inability to attract and retain skilled workers like attorneys, are not an isolated problem. Huffman said, "As the state grows and our issues become more complex, we have to have staff that we can depend on, that are knowledgeable, and can work on these issues and we have to be willing to pay them." It was noted that the Senate and House draft budgets include a 5 percent, across-the-board pay raise for all state employees in each year of the 2024-2025 biennium.

Other witnesses included representatives of the Legislative Budget Board, Sunset Advisory Commission, Texas Nurses Association, U.S. Green Building Council-Texas Chapter, Texas Veterinary Medical Association, Texas Public Employees Association, Texas Medical Association, Oncor Electric Delivery, Texas Association of Water Companies, Executive Council of Physical Therapy & Occupational Therapy Examiners, National Association of Social Workers-Texas, Texas 2036, Health Professions Council, and Lone Star Chapter of the Sierra Club.

Thursday, February 16, 2023 – Senate Finance Committee took up Article IV - Judiciary Agencies including:

- Supreme Court of Texas
- Court of Criminal Appeals
- The Courts of Appeals for Houston, Fort Worth, Austin, San Antonio, Dallas, Texarkana, Amarillo, El Paso, Beaumont, Waco, Eastland, Tyler, Corpus Christi-Edinburgh, and Houston
- Comptroller's Department – Judiciary Section
- Office of Court Administration
- Texas Indigent Defense Commission
- Office of State Prosecuting Attorney
- State Law Library
- Office of Capital and Forensic Writs
- Commission on Judicial Conduct
- Special Provisions Relating to the Judiciary

Other witnesses included representatives of the Legislative Budget Board, Texas Fair Defense Project, County Judges and Commissioners Association of Texas, Texas 2036, and Council of Chief Justices.

Friday, February 17, 2023 – Senate Finance Committee – the posted meeting was cancelled because the committee completed its business on Thursday, February 16th.

House Appropriations Committee:

Tuesday, February 14, 2023 – House Appropriations Committee heard invited testimony on:

- Biennial Revenue Estimate and Economic Stabilization Fund – Comptroller Glenn Hegar
- Endowments and Sustainable Investment Opportunities – Comptroller Glenn Hegar
- House Budget Recommendations and Spending Limits – Jerry McGinty, Director of the Legislative Budget Board; and Aaron Henricksen, Assistant Director of the Legislative Budget Board
- Texas Sunset Advisory Commission – Brian Francis, Acting Director, Sunset Advisory Commission
- State Auditor’s Office – Lisa Collier, State Auditor
- Property Tax Proposals Included in TEA Rider 81 – Maggie Jebesen, Budget Analyst, Legislative Budget Board; Avery Saxe, Public Education Manager, Legislative Budget Board; and Texas Education Commissioner Mike Morath
- Public Education Funding Proposals Included in TEA Rider 82 – Texas Education Commissioner Mike Morath

Wednesday, February 15, 2023 – House Appropriations Committee heard invited testimony on:

- Overview of the Texas Medicaid Program – Claire Stieg, Budget Analyst, Legislative Budget Board; Cecile Erwin Young, Executive Commissioner, Health & Human Services Commission; Stephanie Stephens, Medicaid Director, Health & Human Services Commission; and Molly Lester, Deputy Chief Program and Services Officer, Health & Human Services Commission.
- Behavioral and Mental Health – Michelle Alletto, Chief Program and Services Officer, Health & Human Services Commission; Dr. David Lakey, Vice Chancellor for Health Affairs and Chief Medical Officer, University of Texas System, Texas Child Mental Health Care Consortium; and Andy Keller, President and CEO, Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute.
- Family and Protective Services – Andrea Nikic, Budget Analyst, Legislative Budget Board; Stephanie Muth, Commissioner, Department of Family and Protective Services; and Katie Olse, CEO, Texas Alliance of Child and Family Services.

House Appropriations Committee’s Budget Subcommittees – On February 15th, House Appropriations Committee Chair Greg Bonnen (R-Friendswood) named budget subcommittees. Pursuant to House Rules, Rule 4, Sections 43 and 44, each committee may conduct its business through the use of subcommittees as determined by the chair, who shall appoint the membership of each subcommittee. Chairman Bonnen created the following subcommittees and named the following chairs and members of each subcommittee:

Subcommittee on Articles I, IV, and V (General Government, Judiciary, and Public Safety & Criminal Justice)

Representative Mary González (D-Clint), Chair
Representative David Spiller (R-Jacksboro), Vice Chair
Representative Steve Allison (R-San Antonio)
Representative Mano DeAyala (R-Houston)
Representative Jarvis Johnson (D-Houston)

Subcommittee on Article II (Health & Human Services)

Representative Jacey Jetton (R-Fort Bend), Chair
Representative Toni Rose (D-Dallas), Vice Chair
Representative Gary Gates (R-Richmond)
Representative Donna Howard (D-Austin)
Representative Angelia Orr (R-Itasca)
Representative Lynn Stucky (R-Sanger)
Representative Gene Wu (D-Houston)

Subcommittee on Article III (Education)

Representative Gary VanDeaver (R-New Boston), Chair
Representative Barbara Gervin-Hawkins (D-San Antonio), Vice Chair
Representative John Bryant (D-Dallas)
Representative Armando “Mando” Martinez (D-Weslaco)
Representative Geannie Morrison (R-Victoria)
Representative Lina Ortega (D-El Paso)
Representative Carl Tepper (R-Lubbock)
Representative Carrie Isaac (R-Dripping Springs)
Representative Krona Thimesch (R-Lewisville)

Subcommittee on Articles VI, VII, and VIII (Natural Resources, Business & Economic Development, and Regulatory)

Representative Armando Walle (D-Houston), Chair
Representative Cecil Bell (R-Magnolia), Vice Chair
Representative Trey Martinez Fischer (D-San Antonio)
Representative Ed Thompson (R-Pearland)
Representative Steve Toth (R-The Woodlands)

Subcommittee on Strategic Fiscal Review and Federal Relief Funds

Representative Cecil Bell, Jr. (R-Magnolia), Chair
Representative Donna Howard (D-Austin), Vice Chair
Representative John Bryant (D-Dallas)
Representative Lina Ortega (D-El Paso)
Representative David Spiller (R-Jacksboro)
Representative Carl Tepper (R-Lubbock)
Representative Ed Thompson (R-Pearland)
Representative Armando Walle (D-Houston)

Upcoming Hearings:

Tuesday, February 21, 2023 – Senate Finance Committee will meet at 9:00 a.m. in E1.036 of the capitol extension to take public testimony on Article II – Health and Human Services.

Tuesday, February 21, 2023 – House Appropriations Committee’s Subcommittee on Article III (Education) will meet at 8:00 a.m. in E1.030 in the capitol extension to take up:

- Lamar Colleges and TSTC
- Health Related Institutions

Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board

- University of Houston System and Component institutions
- Texas Tech University System and Component Institutions
- University of Texas System and Component Institutions

Tuesday, February 21, 2023 – House Appropriations Committee’s Subcommittee on Articles I, IV, and V (General Government, Judiciary, and Public Safety & Criminal Justice) will meet at 8:00 a.m. in E2.030 of the capitol extension to take up:

- Office of the Attorney General
- Comptroller of Public Accounts
- Texas Commission on the Arts
- Bond Review Board
- Cancer Prevention & Research Institute of Texas
- Texas Commission on State Emergency Communications
- Emergency Services Retirement System
- Employees Retirement System & Social Security Benefit Replacement
- Texas Ethics Commission
- Texas Historical Commission

Tuesday, February 21, 2023 – House Appropriations Committee’s Subcommittee on Articles VI, VII, and VIII (Natural Resources, Business & Economic Development, and Regulatory) will meet at 8:00 a.m. in E2.026 of the capitol extension to take up:

- Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs
- Texas Lottery Commission
- Texas Department of Motor Vehicles
- Texas Department of Transportation
- Texas Workforce Commission
- Reimbursement to the Unemployment Compensation Benefit Account

Wednesday, February 22, 2023 – House Appropriations Committee’s Subcommittee on Article III (Education) will meet at 8:00 a.m. in E1.030 in the capitol extension to take up:

- Texas State University System and Component Institutions
- Texas A&M University System and Component Institutions

Wednesday, February 22, 2023 – House Appropriations Committee’s Subcommittee on Articles I, IV, and V (General Government, Judiciary, and Public Safety & Criminal Justice) will meet at 8:00 a.m. in E2.030 of the capitol extension to take up:

- Office of the Governor and Trusteed Programs
- Texas Facilities Commission and Revenue Bonds for Lease Payments
- Department of Information Resources

- Texas State Library & Archives Commission
- Texas Public Finance Authority & GO Bond Debt Service
- Pension Review Board
- State Office of Risk Management
- Texas Secretary of State
- Texas Veterans Commission

Wednesday, February 22, 2023 – House Appropriations Committee’s Subcommittee on Articles VI, VII, and VIII (Natural Resources, Business & Economic Development, and Regulatory) will meet at 8:00 a.m. in E2.026 of the capitol extension to take up:

- Health-Related Agencies
- Behavioral Health Executive Council
- Board of Chiropractic Examiners
- Texas State Dental Examiners
- Health Professions Council
- Texas Medical Board
- Texas Board of Nursing
- Optometry Board
- Board of Pharmacy
- Executive Council on Physical Therapy & Occupational Therapy Examiners
- Board of Veterinary Medical Examiners

Thursday, February 23, 2023 – House Appropriations Committee’s Subcommittee on Article III (Education) will meet at 8:00 a.m. in E1.030 in the capitol extension to take up:

- Higher Education Fund
- Available University Fund
- National Research University Fund
- Support for Military and Veteran’s Exemptions
- Higher Education Group Insurance
- Junior Colleges and Community Colleges
- Texas State Technical College System and Component Institutions
- Stephen F. Austin State University
- Texas Southern University
- Baylor College of Medicine
- Texas Woman’s University System and Component Institutions
- University of North Texas System and Component Institutions
- Special Provisions Relating Only to Higher Education Agencies
- Special Provisions Relating Only to Components of TSTC

Thursday, February 23, 2023 – House Appropriations Committee’s Subcommittee on Articles I, IV, and V (General Government, Judiciary, and Public Safety & Criminal Justice) will meet at 8:00 a.m. in E2.030 of the capitol extension to take up:

- Supreme Court of Texas
- Office of the State Prosecuting Attorney

- Court of Criminal Appeals
- 14 Courts of Appeals
- Office of Court Administration, Texas Judicial Council
- Texas Indigent Defense Commission
- Comptroller's Judiciary Section
- Special Prosecution Unit
- Office of Capital and Forensic Writs
- State Law Library
- State Commission on Judicial Conduct
- Special Provisions Relating to the Judiciary

Thursday, February 23, 2023 – House Appropriations Committee's Subcommittee on Articles VI, VII, and VIII (Natural Resources, Business & Economic Development, and Regulatory) will meet at 8:00 a.m. in E2.026 of the capitol extension to take up:

- Public Utility Commission of Texas
- Office of Public Utility Counsel
- State Office of Administrative Hearings
- Funeral Service Commission
- Board of Professional Geoscientists
- Office of Injured Employee Counsel
- Texas Department of Insurance
- Office of Public Insurance Counsel
- Texas Department of Licensing and Regulation
- Board of Plumbing Examiners
- Texas Racing Commission
- Securities Board
- Special Provisions Relating to All Regulatory Agencies

Monday, February 27, 2023 – House Appropriations Committee's Subcommittee on Articles I, IV, and V (General Government, Judiciary, and Public Safety & Criminal Justice) will meet at 8:00 a.m. in E2.030 of the capitol extension to take up:

- Department of Public Safety
- Overview of Criminal and Juvenile Justice Correctional Populations
- Texas Juvenile Justice Department
- Texas Department of Criminal Justice
- Board of Pardons & Paroles
- Texas Military Department
- Texas Commission on Fire Protection
- Texas Commission on Jail Standards
- Texas Commission on Law Enforcement
- Texas Alcoholic Beverage Commission

Monday, February 27, 2023 – House Appropriations Committee's Subcommittee on Articles VI, VII, and VIII (Natural Resources, Business & Economic Development, and Regulatory) will meet at 8:00 a.m. in E2.026 of the capitol extension to take up:

- Texas Railroad Commission
- Department of Agriculture
- Texas Animal Health Commission
- Texas Commission on Environmental Quality
- General Land Office and Veterans' Land Board
- Low-Level Radioactive Waste Disposal Compact Commission
- Texas Parks & Wildlife Department
- Texas Water Development Board
- Texas State Soil & Water Conservation Board

Monday, February 27, 2023 – House Appropriations Committee's Subcommittee on Article III (Education) will meet at 9:00 a.m. in E1.026 in the capitol extension to take up:

- Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired and special provisions
- Texas School for the Deaf and special provisions
- Texas Education Agency
- Texas Permanent School Corporation
- Teacher Retirement System
- Optional Retirement Program

Monday, February 27, 2023 – House Appropriations Committee's Subcommittee on Article II (Health & Human Services) will meet at 10:00 a.m. in E1.030 in the capitol extension to take up:

- Health & Human Services Commission and Office of Inspector General
- Texas Civil Commitment Office
- Department of State Health Services
- Department of Family & Protective Services

Tuesday, February 28, 2023 – House Appropriations Committee's Subcommittee on Article II (Health & Human Services) will meet at 8:00 a.m. in E1.030 in the capitol extension to take up:

- Health & Human Services Commission and Office of Inspector General
- Texas Civil Commitment Office
- Department of State Health Services
- Department of Family & Protective Services

PUBLIC EDUCATION:

Education Choice - In his State-of-the-State speech, Governor Abbott said, "We must also protect the freedom and rights of parents who have children in school. Public schools play an essential role in our state. They educate our future entrepreneurs, scientists, and leaders. We must ensure that our education system works for every child. Thanks to legislators, per-student funding is at an all-time high. We've provided more funding for public education and more funding for teacher pay raises than ever in the history of our state. And this session, we'll do even more. Many public schools in Texas are excellent. In fact, we are number one for National Blue Ribbon Schools, and we have one of the best high school graduation rates in America. When I grew up in Longview and Duncanville, we were taught the basics - reading, writing, math, and science. We

were inspired by our country's founding and how it stands apart from the rest of the world as the beacon of liberty and opportunity. Many children today are not educated like you and I were. I hear frustrations from many parents. Let's be clear: Schools are for education, not indoctrination. Schools should not push 'woke' agendas. Period. We must reform curriculum, get kids back to the basics of learning, and we must empower parents. Parents deserve access to curriculum, school libraries, and what their children are taught. We will do that with our Parental Bill of Rights. Parents also deserve education freedom. Without it, some parents are hindered in helping their child succeed. That must change this year. The way to do that is with school choice through state-funded Education Savings Accounts. We've seen them work in other states - and here in Texas. I created Education Savings Accounts for special needs students. It worked so well that a bipartisan super-majority passed it into law and now wants to increase funding for it. Now, it's time to provide every parent with the ability to choose the best education option for their child. To be clear, under this school choice program, all public schools will be fully funded for every student."

Education Freedom for All Texans Emergency Item - In designating "Education Freedom for All Texans" as an emergency item, Governor Abbott specifically proposed, "To provide every parent with the ability to choose the best education option for their child, Governor Abbott will work with the Texas legislature this session to:

- Expand school choice options available through ESAs to all Texas students;
- Amend the Texas Constitution to bolster a parent's right as the primary decisionmaker in all matters involving their child;
- Require schools to better inform parents of their rights;
- Expand parent access to curriculum, school libraries, and what their children are taught;
- Reform the grievance process to ensure parent concerns are addressed quickly and respectfully;
- Allow parents to decide if their child should repeat a grade;
- Strengthen consent requirements for health services; and
- Protect students from unnecessary personal data collection and ensure schools are not sharing or selling student data outside the Texas public education system.

School Safety - In his State-of-the-State speech, Governor Abbott said, "Children must also have safe schools. We must establish the safest standards, and then use the newly created Chief of School Safety to mandate compliance with those standards, and we must provide more mental health professionals in our schools. We cannot let another school year go by without making our schools safer."

School Safety Emergency Item - In designating "School Safety" as an emergency item, Governor Abbott specifically proposed, "We cannot let another school year go by without making our schools safer. This session, the governor will work with the Texas legislature to:

- Provide funding for every school campus to make necessary school safety improvements, including technology upgrades, hardening equipment, and expanded mental health resources;
- Expand and enhance the capabilities of iWatchTexas in school districts;
- Codify the intruder detection audit process and require facilities use those standards;
- Require school campus maps be provided to local law enforcement to ensure they have the necessary resources to respond to a disaster;
- Increase funds for TCHAT to ensure more Texas students are connected with the mental health services they need; and
- Use the newly created Chief of School Safety and Security to ensure compliance with all mandated school safety standards.

STATEWIDE:

Proposal to Change Constitutional Session "Slow-Down" Rules – On February 10th, Representative John Raney (R-Bryan) filed HJR 75, which would allow Texans to vote on a constitutional amendment to modernize the organization and procedures of the Texas Legislature. Currently, the Texas legislature convenes its regular session on the second Tuesday of January in odd-numbered years for 140 days. A provision in the Texas Constitution added in 1930 prohibits legislators from passing bills relating to non-emergency items in the first 60 days, which translates to approximately 40 percent of a session's duration. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the 1930 population of Texas was 5.84 million, compared to 29.36 million today. There were minimal methods of communication, few easily-traveled roads, and limited modes of travel. In that era, the 1930 provision made sense. It no longer makes sense today. Nineteen states have a constitutional provision that requires their legislatures to meet prior to the first day of the session for organizational purposes, and even more states hold informal meetings of this nature. HJR 75 would:

- remove the provision that prevents action on legislation within the first 60 days of a regular session;
- require an organizational meeting in Austin in December preceding a regular session to include swearing-in of legislators, election of officers, and adoption of rules; and
- establish the first day of a regular session as the deadline for committee assignments by the presiding officer of the Senate and the House.

Representative Raney said, "As representatives of the people, it is crucial for us to make the best use of our limited time in Austin. Organizational standards of the Texas legislature have not been updated in more than 90 years. I think it's time we let the people of Texas have a say in the efficiency of their government."

Key Dates – 88th Legislative Session:

88th Legislative Session Began: January 10, 2023
Inauguration of Governor and Lt. Governor – January 17, 2023
Bill Filing Deadline: March 10, 2023
88th 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

www.house.state.tx.us

www.capitol.state.tx.us