

Weekly Report
March 10, 2023

GOVERNOR:

Governor Discussed Economic Success in San Antonio – On March 3rd, Governor Greg Abbott discussed Texas’ economic successes and current legislative efforts to ensure Texans thrive in the state’s booming economy during a fireside chat at a luncheon hosted by the San Antonio Chamber of Commerce. Governor Abbott said, “Success doesn’t just happen - it’s the result of years of tireless work. Because of the hard work of business and community leaders, like those of you here today, San Antonio is a huge success. With a strong, pro-growth agenda this session, we will keep Texas the number one state in the nation for economic development and job creation. Working together, we will make sure our state’s economy continues to provide boundless opportunities for every Texan.” The governor was joined in the fireside chat by FirstDay Foundation President and CEO Kevin Dinnin and greater:SATX President and CEO Jenna Saucedo-Herrera. During the fireside chat moderated by San Antonio Chamber of Commerce Board Chair Katie Harvey, Governor Abbott summarized the legislative efforts during the 88th Legislative Session that would ensure Texas’ continued economic growth. Policies mentioned by the governor included: providing new strategic economic development tools, statewide infrastructure upgrades, property tax cuts, regulatory reforms, workforce development, and education freedom for all Texans.

First Responders of the Year Awards Ceremony – On March 6th, Governor Greg Abbott honored first responders who have gone above and beyond to protect their communities at the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo’s (HLSR) First Responders of the Year Awards Ceremony. During the ceremony held at NRG Center, the governor recognized 16 award recipients - including 15 Texans and one group organization - for their selfless leadership, heroism, and sacrifice in service to their fellow Texans. Governor Abbott said, "Our first responders represent the very best of who we are, going above and beyond the call of duty to serve their fellow Texans. Today we remember first responders who have lost their lives and honor those who have demonstrated extraordinary valor in the line of duty. Texans are forever grateful for our first responders and their loved ones, and the State Texas will always support them in all that they do to keep our communities safe." Each year, HLSR honors various public law enforcement, firefighters, EMS, and other emergency services agencies in the Houston Metropolitan Area during the rodeo’s First Responders Cay. First Responders of the Year honorees are chosen by the rodeo’s Armed Forces Appreciation Committee.

Governor Delivers Keynote at Dallas Regional Chamber – On March 8th, Governor Greg Abbott championed Texas’ booming economy and outlined his

legislative priorities at a Dallas Regional Chamber (DRC) luncheon. Speaking to a crowd of over 400 business leaders, the governor highlighted how he will work with members of the Texas Legislature to ensure that a robust, pro-growth economic agenda keeps Texas the economic engine of America. Governor Abbott said, "The Dallas Metroplex is ranked number one in the nation for high-tech job growth because of its well-trained workforce, world-class airport, leading research universities, and affordable real estate. Last year was a banner year for Dallas, with a record for total jobs, a record for Texans employed in the Dallas metro, and an unemployment rate below the state average. That's a testament to the ingenuity and determination of the local business leaders. Texas is America's economic juggernaut, where entrepreneurs can cast a vision and know they live in a state where they can achieve it. This session, we will work to keep Texas the land of economic opportunity and prosperity." From cutting property taxes, to workforce development, to removing red tape that slows down the speed of business, the Governor highlighted during his remarks critical policies that will help businesses large and small continue to thrive in our state's economy. He also discussed a recently announced \$100 billion plan to bolster the state's transportation infrastructure and efforts to prepare the state power grid to meet increasing demands of our growing state. Named the National Chamber of the Year in 2022 by the Association of Chamber of Commerce Executives, the DRC serves as the voice of business and the champion of economic development and growth in the Dallas Region.

SENATE:

The Senate was in session on Tuesday and Wednesday of this week. On Wednesday, the Senate unanimously passed their first two bills of the session:

- **SB 372** by Joan Huffman (R-Houston) would make the unauthorized **disclosure** of non-public judicial opinions and **judicial work products** a criminal offense.
- **SB 728** by Joan Huffman (R-Houston) would include children determined to have a mental illness or an intellectual disability under the Code of Criminal Procedure or an incapacitated adult that lacks the mental capacity to manage the person's affairs under the Health and Safety Code in **National Instant Criminal Background Check System**.

Next Week: The Senate adjourned until 2:00 p.m. on Monday, March 13th.

HOUSE:

The House was in session Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday this week conducting routine business. On Wednesday, the House took up its first Congratulatory and Memorial Resolutions Calendar. They stood at ease until Thursday to refer bills.

Priorities for Speaker Phelan – On March 6th, Speaker Dade Phelan announced three priorities for the chamber this legislative session that focus on building a more resilient Texas by expanding the state's framework for

broadband development, dedicating dollars toward improving water infrastructure and cutting burdensome red tape around property development projects in the state.

- **HB 9** by Representative Ashby (R-Lufkin) would create the **Texas Broadband Infrastructure Fund** to administer the state's broadband development program, foster community outreach for expansion and affordability efforts and ensure the universal service program is fully funded, among other things. Under HB 9, the Texas legislature would have guidance over the appropriations of the fund and maintain flexibility to address rapidly-evolving technology and consumer needs. Representative Ashby has also filed **HJR 125**, which would put HB 9 on the Texas ballot if passed by the legislature, leaving it up to voters to decide whether it is adopted as state law.
- **HB 10** by Representative Tracy King (D-Batesville) would dedicate billions of dollars toward water development projects in Texas, improving the state's water infrastructure and security amid rising demand. Under the legislation, which would create the **Texas Water Fund**, applicants of existing programs administered by the Texas Water Development Board could receive assistance in financing new water sources for the state, including projects to acquire water from other states and develop infrastructure to transport water. HB 10 would also create a technical assistance program for water loss audits and require the Texas Water Development Board to report updates to the legislature every 5 years. Representative King has also filed **HJR 130**, which would put HB 10 on the Texas ballot if passed by the legislature, leaving it up to voters to decide whether it is adopted as state law.
- **HB 14** by Representative Cody Harris (R-Palestine) would streamline the approval process for **property development projects** and building reviews, requiring cities and counties that fail to complete such projects in a timely manner to utilize third-party reviewers.

Speaker Phelan said, "The Texas legislature must continue to support our state's rapidly-increasing demand for internet, water and housing, and I appreciate Representatives Ashby, King and Harris for filing legislation that would lay the necessary foundations to continue fostering those efforts. Members of the Texas House will discuss this legislation and more in the coming weeks, and I look forward to our chamber passing these proposals during the 88th Legislature."

More Speaker Priorities Announced – On March 7th, House Speaker Dade Phelan announced three additional priorities of the chamber for this legislative session that aim to dedicate more dollars toward brain health research, improve the outcomes of youth in the state's juvenile justice system and address the rising concern among Texas parents over certain content in public school libraries.

- **HB 15** by Representative Senfronia Thompson (D-Houston) would establish the **Mental Health and Brain Research Institute of Texas**, dedicating state dollars toward improving brain health research and

understanding prevention and treatment measures related to traumatic brain injuries. Representative Thompson has also filed **HJR 135**, which would put HB 15 on the Texas ballot if passed by the legislature, leaving it up to voters to decide whether it is adopted as state law.

- **HB 16** by Representative Joe Moody (D-El Paso), also known as the **Closer to Home bill**, would promote the diversion of youth from confinement in state facilities, returning children closer to their homes and slowing admissions to the Texas Juvenile Justice Department. The legislation, which builds on reforms the Texas legislature passed in 2015, would enhance the court's procedural discretion at key intercept points with the goal of keeping children as removed from the juvenile justice system as possible and expand community-based services to foster additional rehabilitative resources and incentivize diversion funding on a regional basis.
- **HB 900** by Representative Jarod Patterson (R-Frisco), also known as the **Restricting Explicit & Adult Designated Educational Resources (READER) Act**, would address the rising concern among Texas parents of sexually explicit books and other inappropriate materials in public school libraries by establishing mandatory review standards and additional parental controls to create more oversight over the current book collection process. Under HB 900, book vendors would be required to rate and identify books that contain sexually relevant or explicit material before selling copies to public schools, submitting a yearly report of books to the Texas Education Agency that were sold to districts with such ratings for the agency to make available online. Among other things established by HB 900, parents would also have to provide written consent before their child could access material with a sexually relevant rating, strengthening the current parental oversight process.

Speaker Phelan said, "As lawmakers, it is essential that we do everything we can to support Texas children, which starts with the state creating the best possible trajectory for our most vulnerable kids. That conversation extends to prioritizing more dedication and dollars toward better understanding mental health issues and traumatic brain injuries, and, as a parent myself, ensuring that parental involvement is present when it comes to the types of content in public school libraries. Thank you to Representatives Thompson, Moody and Patterson for filing these important measures, all of which I look forward to our chamber passing during the 88th Legislature."

Additional Priorities of Speaker Phelan – On March 8th, Speaker Dade Phelan announced several more priorities of the chamber for this legislative session that would improve school safety, better support Texas teachers and provide a cost-of-living adjustment for retired educators in the state.

- **HB 3** by Representative Dustin Burrows (R-Lubbock) would streamline and further define the roles and responsibilities of the **Texas School Safety Center** and Texas Education Agency so that school safety standards can be properly enforced. Under HB 3, at least one armed

security officer would be required to be located on every campus. The legislation would also provide an annual \$15,000 in base funding per campus for school safety related mitigation measures.

- **HB 11** by Representative Harold Dutton would make a number of improvements to the state's **teacher recruitment, preparation and retention** policies, including the implementation of a restructured approach to minimum salary that results in increased pay by recognizing the various pathways related to the profession. Under HB 11, children of Texas teachers would be eligible for free public school pre-kindergarten, providing more flexibility for educators in need of child care. Additionally, a new grant would be established to help teachers offset the costs of receiving special education or bilingual credentials. House Bill 11 would, among other things, also increase the mentor program allotment for every first- or second-year teacher, allowing educators to receive even more assistance early in their teaching careers.
- **HB 13** by Representative Ken King (R-Canadian) would also address school safety in Texas, increasing the **school safety allotment** to \$100 per student and requiring school districts to develop an Active Shooter Preparedness Plan. The active shooter plan would clarify the chain of command for active shooter events to ensure continuity between school officials and law enforcement, designating points of contact during such emergencies. HB 13 would also increase state funding toward mental and behavioral health resources for schools, expanding accessibility to programs such as Mental Health First Aid training so that educators and administrators can better detect early warning signs and intervene as necessary.
- **HB 100** by Representative Ken King (R-Canadian) would help provide certainty to school districts for the purposes of calculating their budgets by shifting to an enrollment-based system for most allotments in the state's **school finance system**. Under HB 100, special education funding would also be expanded across the state. The legislation would also increase the transportation allotment, alleviating the burden that school districts have faced when paying for diesel due to inflation.
- **HB 400** by Representative Stephanie Klick (R-Fort Worth) would further advance the **mental and behavioral health workforce** at institutions of higher education in Texas by establishing a new grant funding stream. The funding stream, under the oversight of the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, would create a behavioral health grant program focused on the behavioral health workforce, specifically in rural parts of the state, as well as a psychiatry graduate medical education specialty, with an emphasis on pediatric psychiatry care in Texas.
- **HB 600** by Representative Greg Bonnen (R-Friendswood) would provide a **cost-of-living adjustment for retired Texas educators** in the state while also maintaining the actuarial soundness of the Teacher Retirement System pension fund. Eligible retired educators would receive a one-time, upfront cost-of-living increase beginning in 2024 based on the years of

retirement, with a \$5,000 cash payment for the state's oldest retirees. Beginning in 2028, retired teachers could also begin receiving an annual cost-of-living adjustment of at least 1 percent. Representative Bonnen has also filed **HJR 2**, which would put HB 600 on the Texas ballot if passed by the legislature, leaving it up to voters to decide whether it is adopted as state law.

Speaker Phelan said, "Ensuring that Texas children are safe in classrooms is a priority that the Texas House will take meaningful action on this year, along with passing measures that better support our teachers - beginning with recruitment and ending with retirement. I thank Representatives Burrows, Dutton, King, Klick and Bonnen for their hard work on filing these legislative proposals. Our chamber looks forward to passing them this session."

Next Week: The House adjourned until 2:00 p.m. on Monday, March 13, 2023.

BUDGET:

House Appropriations Committee:

Subcommittee on Article II – On Monday, the House Appropriations Committee's Subcommittee on Article II (Health & Human Services) held a formal meeting to discuss House budget recommendations.

Senate Business & Commerce Committee – On Tuesday, the Senate Business & Commerce Committee took up:

SB 640 by Charles Schwertner (R-Georgetown) would clarify that the **State Preservation Board** is responsible for providing general building and grounds maintenance for the Sam Houston Building, the Robert E. Johnson Building and attached parking facilities, and the John H. Reagan Building. *It was left pending.*

Senate Finance Committee – On Wednesday, the Senate Finance Committee took up:

SB 30 by Joan Huffman (R-Houston) is the **supplemental appropriations** bill. *It was voted out favorably as substituted. A summary is in the article below.*

Supplemental Appropriations Bill – On March 3rd, Senator Joan Huffman (R-Houston), Chairman of the Senate Finance Committee, filed **SB 30**, the Senate's supplemental budget for the 2022-2023 biennium. In total, the bill appropriates \$11.8 billion in All Funds and \$5 billion in General Revenue in the current biennium to true-up projections for entitlement programs, address unanticipated costs, and fund important legislative priorities. Chairman Huffman said, "As promised, SB 30 supports proposals and initiatives that will help keep Texas as the premier state for families and businesses alike. The supplemental budget provides one-time funding to bolster key legislative priorities, including school safety, access to mental health care, public safety, reducing debt, and our state historic sites and parks. I am looking forward to working with my colleagues to pass this historic supplemental budget that complements Senate Bill 1."

Highlights of SB 30 include:

- \$2.3 billion to continue the legislature's commitment in expanding inpatient mental health care capacity;
- \$600 million to provide additional assistance grants to school districts for safety and security upgrades;
- \$1 billion to provide supplemental benefit enhancements to retired educators;
- \$296 million to support Department of Criminal Justice operations including additional resources to support staffing, operational needs, and enhanced security through a new correctional officer training facility, transport surveillance systems, security maintenance projects and improved fencing;
- \$1 billion toward the Employees Retirement System unfunded liability, reducing future interest payments and length of amortization for outstanding pension obligations;
- \$3.86 billion to pay aggregate customer rate relief charges associated with Winter Storm Uri, contingent on passage of legislation;
- Additionally, SB 30 provides:
 - \$2.9 billion to address the Medicaid shortfall;
 - \$400 million set aside to invest in deferred maintenance at state managed facilities;
 - \$300 million to endow the Historic Infrastructure Sustainability Trust Fund to ensure proper preservation of our state's rich historic buildings, sites, and artifacts, contingent on the passage of legislation;
 - \$200 million to fund the Texas State Buildings Preservation Endowment to assist in future maintenance, preservation, rehabilitation and restoration of historic state buildings including the Texas State Capitol, Texas State Cemetery, Governor's Mansion, and Bullock State History Museum, contingent on the passage of legislation;
 - \$217.1 million to support the preservation, restoration, and improvements to historic sites including the San Jacinto Battleground, USS Battleship, National Museum of the Pacific War, Levi Jordan Plantation, Fort Velasco, and county courthouses;
 - \$141.8 million to address correctional managed healthcare costs;
 - \$100 million for the acquisition of park lands; and
 - \$400 million for flood mitigation.

Next Week:

Monday, March 13, 2023 – Senate Finance Committee will meet at 10:00 a.m. in E1.036 of the capitol extension to take up:

SB 729 by Joan Huffman (R-Houston) would allow **military service** to be credited under the **Employees Retirement System of Texas**.

ELECTIONS:

Senate State Affairs Committee – On Thursday, the Senate State Affairs Committee took up:

SB 610 by Bryan Hughes (R-Mineola) would make it a criminal offense (state jail felony) for a delegate or alternate to a federal **Article V convention** to knowingly cast an **unauthorized vote**. *It was voted out favorably.*

HIGHER EDUCATION:

House Higher Education Committee – On Monday, the House Higher Education Committee held an organizational meeting and heard invited testimony from:

- Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board
- Texas Association of Community Colleges
- Texas State Technical College
- University of Texas System
- Texas A&M University System
- Texas Tech University System
- Texas State University System
- University of Houston System
- University of North Texas System
- Independent Colleges & Universities of Texas
- Stephen F. Austin University
- Texas Women’s University

Bill to End Affirmative Action – On March 8th, Representative Carl Tepper (R-Lubbock) filed **HB 3682** to prohibit affirmative action in governmental employment and higher education admissions. Specifically, HB 3682 would prohibit public universities and governmental agencies, including cities and counties, from considering an individual’s race, color, or any other inherent classification as a factor in making an admissions or employment decision. Representative Tepper said, “In Texas, we succeed based on our talents, ability, and work ethic. Affirmative action discriminates against individuals based on race or other intrinsic characteristics. It’s time for these racist practices to end in public universities and governmental entities. The states of California, Arizona, Florida, Idaho, Michigan, Nebraska, New Hampshire, Oklahoma, and Washington currently prohibit affirmative action at their public universities. Nine other states already prohibit affirmative action in admissions processes at their public universities. The United States Supreme Court seems poised to prohibit affirmative action, and the Texas Legislature should be prepared. We need to ensure that we value meritocracy over race-based discrimination.”

PUBLIC EDUCATION:

House Public Education Committee – On Tuesday, the House Public Education Committee took up:

HB 131 by Andrew Murr (R-Junction) would require school districts to excuse a student from attending school for a **career investigation day** for up to two days

during the student's junior and senior years of high school to determine the student's interest in pursuing a career in the professional's field. *It was left pending.*

HB 621 by Matt Shaheen (R-Plano) would require the State Board of Educator Certification to provide for the issuance of a **temporary teaching certificate** to a person who has served in the **armed services**. *It was left pending.*

HB 768 by Alma Allen (D-Houston) would entitle school district employees that have available **personal leave** to use the leave for compensation for a day designated as a school holiday for which the employee would not otherwise receive compensation. *It was left pending.*

Senate Education Committee – On Wednesday, the Senate Education Committee took up:

SB 68 by Judith Zaffirini (D-Laredo) would require school districts to excuse a student from attending school for a **career investigation day** for up to two days during the student's junior and senior years of high school to determine the student's interest in pursuing a career in the professional's field. *It was left pending.*

SB 133 by Royce West (D-Dallas) would **prohibit physical restraint** or use a chemical irritant spray on a **student ten years of age or younger** unless the student poses a serious risk of harm to the student or another person. *It was left pending.*

SB 294 by Nathan Johnson (D-Dallas) would require the commissioner of state health services to establish an advisory committee to examine and review the administration by school districts, charters, and institutions of higher education of **medication for respiratory distress**. Based on recommendations from the advisory committee, it would allow trained personnel to administer medication to a student experiencing respiratory distress. *It was left pending.*

SB 357 by Bob Hall (R-Edgewood) would authorize school districts to employ **honorably retired peace officers** as school district security personnel. *It was left pending.*

SB 629 by Jose Menendez (D-San Antonio) would require the Commissioner of State Health Services to establish an advisory committee to examine and review the **administration of opioid antagonists** to a person experiencing an apparent opioid-related drug overdose. *It was left pending.*

SB 798 by Mayes Middleton (R-Wallisville) would prohibit the qualifications for certification as a **school counselor** from including a requirement that a candidate for certification have experience as a classroom teacher. *It was left pending.*

SB 891 by Judith Zaffirini (D-Laredo) would require school districts to excuse a student from attending school for up to five days per school year so the student can seek or receive **mental or behavioral health treatment**, support, or diagnosis. *It was left pending.*

House Judiciary & Civil Jurisprudence Committee – On Wednesday, the House Judiciary & Civil Jurisprudence Committee took up:

HB 272 by Julie Johnson (D-Carrollton) would replace all statutory references to “admission, review, and dismissal committee” with the words “**individualized education program team.**” *It was left pending.*

Parent Empowerment Night in Bryan – On March 8th, Governor Greg Abbott advocated for protecting parents' rights to choose the best education opportunity for their child at a Parent Empowerment Night at Brazos Christian School in Bryan. Governor Abbott said, “Our country is premised on freedom, and that freedom as it concerns raising children rests the most in parents. Parents deserve the freedom to choose the best education pathway for their child. We must reform curriculum to get kids back to the basics of learning, and we must empower parents. Parents should have access to curriculum, school libraries, and what their children are taught. And we will do that with our Parental Bill of Rights. No one knows what is better for a child's success than their parents. When it comes to education, parents matter. This is so vital to the future of our state, I made education freedom an emergency item this session.” Speaking to over 200 parents, educators, and students, the governor stressed the need for curriculum reform in Texas schools and parental empowerment so Texas parents can help their children succeed. The governor also promoted the expansion of state-funded Education Savings Accounts to provide every parent with the freedom to choose the best school and education opportunities for their student's needs. The governor was joined by Representative John Raney, Texas Public Policy Foundation Campaign Director Mandy Drogin, Brazos Christian School Headmaster Jefferey McMaster, and other parent empowerment advocates.

School Safety Proposals – On March 8th, Senator Paul Bettencourt (R-Houston) filed a group of bills to strengthen school safety on multiple levels. During the 2021-2022 school year, there were over 130,000 truancy cases in Houston area school districts. Furthermore, the Robb Elementary School shooter had hundreds of unexcused absences before being involuntary withdrawn from his school district. These bills will create top-down policy guidelines so all schools collect and communicate student attendance and behavior data. Senator Bettencourt said, “The bottom line is, we've got to do something about school attendance and truancy because this is not trending well for the kids, their families, or society.” How school districts currently handle truancy varies widely from district to district.

- **SB 1630** would require all schools to adopt an attendance policy to address truancy. It would require notifications being sent out for excused or unexcused absences via email, text, or by mail. Then, once a student fails to attend school for a certain period, a meeting between a parent and an appropriate administrator from the school will be required. If the parent fails to attend the meeting, the school attendance officer will make a home visit to investigate the student's behavior and living conditions and report the findings to the school or district. Finally, SB 1630 would establish guidelines to identify students in need of in-school or out-of-school support services aimed at addressing a student's failure to attend school regularly.

SB 1888 requires the TEA to gather and make available student truancy and chronic absenteeism data at the campus and district levels annually.

- **SB 1631** would require a student’s disciplinary record or any threat assessment involving their behavior to travel with them when they transfer schools.
- **SB 1632** would allow school districts to request feedback from the Texas School Safety Center prior to submitting a multi-hazard emergency operations plan. Once approved by the Texas School Safety Center, a school would have to submit their plan to local law enforcement for feedback.
- **SB 1633** would establish a grant program giving \$3,000 to school campuses for school marshals and guardian programs.
- **SB 1635** would require the Texas School Safety Center to establish and maintain a list of vendors approved for school safety related products.

Senator Bettencourt concluded, “We’re got to make sure schools are protected using best-practices, help from marshals and guardians, tracking and reporting consistent data, and absenteeism and truancy is shared with other schools because that’s lessons learned.”

School Land Board – On March 9th, Governor Greg Abbott appointed Marcella Burke and reappointed Gilbert “Gil” Burciaga to the School Land Board for terms set to expire on August 29, 2023. The board manages the acquisition, sale, and mineral leasing of the lands that comprise the Permanent School Fund, which contributes billions of dollars each year to public education in Texas.

Marcella Burke of Houston is founder and partner of Burke Law Group PLLC, a full-service energy and environmental law firm. She worked for the U.S. Department of the Interior and the Environmental Protection Agency in senior roles and previously participated in numerous judicial clerkships and externships. She serves in leadership roles with the State Bar of Texas Environmental Division, Foundation for Natural Resources and Energy Law, and the Institute for Energy Law. Burke received a Bachelor of Arts from Texas A&M University and a Juris Doctor from the University of Houston Law Center, as well as two fellowships in Constitutional Law.

Gilbert “Gil” Burciaga of Austin is the chairman of ARM Energy, LLC. He currently serves as a board member for the TreCare Pregnancy Center. Governor Abbott first appointed him to the School Land Board in 2015. Burciaga received a Bachelor of Science from Texas A&M University.

Next Week:

Monday, March 13, 2023 – House Select Committee on Youth Health & Safety Committee will meet at 2:30 p.m. in E2.026 of the capitol extension to take up:

HB 195 by Mary Gonzalez (D-Clint) would require the **individualized education program** of students with disabilities to include any necessary accommodation that the student will need during a disaster or emergency situation.

HB 473 by Lacey Hull (R-Houston) would provide that before a threat assessment and safe and supportive school team may conduct a **threat assessment of a student**, the team must notify the parent of the student regarding the assessment and provide an opportunity for the parent to participate in the assessment and submit information to the team regarding the student.

HB 669 by Shawn Thierry (D-Houston) would require school districts and charters to provide a **panic alert device** that allows for immediate contact with district or school emergency services or emergency services agencies, law enforcement agencies, health departments and fire departments in each classroom.

HB 1147 by Barbara Gervin-Hawkins (D-San Antonio) would add emergency **alerting devices** to the supplies required to be in a bleeding control station in public schools.

HB 1157 by Jose Lozano (R-Kingsville) would require **excused absences** for a student to attend an appointment with a **mental health professional**.

HB 1358 by Sam Harless (R-Spring) would require **campus improvement plans** to include goals and methods for violence and **bullying prevention** and for **dropout deterrence**.

Tuesday, March 14, 2023 – House Public Education Committee will meet at 8:00 a.m. in E2.036 of the capitol extension to take up:

HB 579 by DeWayne Burns (R-Cleburne) would allow parents or guardians of **students with significant cognitive disabilities** to request that the student be exempted from the administration of an alternative assessment instrument; and would require the student's admission, review and dismissal committee to determine if the student should be exempted.

HB 890 by Keith Bell (R-Forney) would require the process through which a **school district** conducts **hearing of complaints** by personnel, students and parents to include an initial administrative hearing and an opportunity to appeal the administrative decision; and unless the parties agree, provide for a resolution of the complaint within 120 calendar days.

HB 920 by Stephanie Klick (R-Fort Worth) would require the commissioner of state health services to establish an advisory committee to examine and review the administration by school districts, charters, and institutions of higher education of **medication for respiratory distress**. Based on recommendations from the advisory committee, it would allow trained personnel to administer medication to a student experiencing respiratory distress.

HB 1002 by Four Price (R-Amarillo) would allow chiropractors and physical therapists to the list of persons that a school district or charter can include on a **public school concussion oversight team**.

HB 1067 by Gary VanDeaver (R-New Boston) would provide that if the board of trustees of an affected school district fails to adopt a resolution approving or disapproving a **petition requesting the detachment and annexation of territory** within 45 days of receiving the petition, the petition is considered to be disapproved by the board of trustees.

HB 1212 by Jacey Jetton (R-Sugar Land) would prohibit school districts from requiring documentation from a clergy member of other religious leader for purposes of excusing a student from attending school to observe a **religious holy day**.

HB 1225 by Will Metcalf (R-Conroe) would require **assessment instruments** to be administered in **paper format** to any student whose parent or guardian requests the assessment to be administered in paper format.

HB 1297 by Harold Dutton (D-Houston) would allow **vision screening** for public and private school students using an electronic eye chart as a substitute for a printed eye chart to assess visual acuity.

HB 1416 by Keith Bell (R-Forney) would eliminate the requirement that school districts establish an accelerated learning committee; would allow **accelerated instruction** for students that fail to perform satisfactorily on an assessment instrument in math or reading; would allow parents to elect or reduce a requirement for accelerated instruction; would allow automated or another augmented method for providing supplemental instruction in lieu of required individual or group instruction; and would waive the accelerated instruction requirement for students with a medical condition that prevents the student from attending school in an on-campus instructional setting.

HB 1789 by Brad Buckley (R-Killeen) would exempt school **bus drivers** from nepotism prohibitions.

HB 1883 by Salman Bhojani (D-Fort Worth) would require the State Board of Education to ensure that **assessment instruments** are **not administered on a religious holy day** including All Saints Day, Christmas, Diwali, Eid as-Adha, Eid al-Fitr, Passover, Rosh Hashanah, Vaisakhi, Vesak, and Yom Kippur.

HB 1955 by Brad Buckley (R-Killeen) would require students to establish **residency in a school district's** residency zone within 90 days (instead of 10 days) after the date of a military order.

STATEWIDE:

House Criminal Jurisprudence Committee – On Tuesday, the House Criminal Jurisprudence Committee took up:

HB 279 by Jacey Jetton (R-Sugar Land) would make **trafficking of a disabled individual** punishable to the same extent as trafficking of a child. *It was left pending.*

HB 369 by Senfronia Thompson (D-Houston) would reduce the penalty for possession of up to 0.02 grams of a **controlled substance** in Penalty Group 1 or 1-B. *It was left pending.*

House Homeland Security & Public Safety Committee – On Tuesday, the House Homeland Security & Public Safety Committee heard invited testimony related to border security and emergency management from:

- Office of the Governor
- Texas Facilities Commission
- Texas Department of Public Safety
- Texas Military Department

- South Texas Property Rights' Association
- National Border Patrol Council
- Texas Division of Emergency Management
- Commission on State Emergency Communications

Senate Criminal Justice Committee – On Thursday, the Senate Criminal Justice Committee took up:

SB 287 by Joan Huffman (R-Houston) would make it an offense for a person to make a **terroristic threat** to influence the conduct or activities of a child care facility, public or private primary or secondary school, or institution of higher education. *It was left pending.*

SB 645 by Joan Huffman (R-Houston) would set the **criminal penalties for possession of controlled substances**, depending on the quantity of controlled substances possessed. *It was voted out favorably as substituted.*

SB 1004 by Pete Flores (R-Pleasanton) would make it a criminal offense to **tamper with an electronic monitoring device** by a person required to submit to electronic monitoring as a condition of community supervision or parole. *It was voted out favorably as substituted.*

SJR 44 by Joan Huffman (R-Houston) would propose a constitutional amendment authorizing the **denial of bail** to a person accused of a violent or sexual offense or of continuous trafficking of persons. *It was voted out favorably.*

House Defense & Veterans' Affairs Committee – On Thursday, the House Defense & Veterans' Affairs Committee took up:

HB 671 by Mary Gonzalez (D-Clint) would require the Texas Veterans Commission to conduct a suicide prevention campaign to provide **veterans** with information regarding **suicide prevention**. *It was left pending.*

Senate State Affairs Committee – On Thursday, the Senate State Affairs Committee took up:

SB 643 by Judith Zaffirini (D-Laredo) would limit authorized organizations to hold no more than 48 temporary **charitable bingo** licenses during a 12-month period; and would limit aggregate prizes awarded on a single bingo occasion to \$5,000 (instead of \$2,500). *It was voted out favorably.*

SB 801 by Bryan Hughes (R-Mineola) would clarify that a **trustee of a trust** is considered to be the named party to an instrument that names the trust as a party to the instrument unless the trust is a legal entity under state law. *It was voted out favorably.*

SJR 52 by Brian Birdwell (R-Granbury) would propose a constitutional amendment **rescinding the calling of a convention under Article V of the U.S. Constitution** submitted by the Texas Legislature after the 16th anniversary of the date the last legislative vote was taken on the application. *It was voted out favorably.*

Proposed TEXIT Referendum Act – On March 6th, Representative Bryan Slaton (R-Royce City) filed **HB 3596**, which is commonly known as the “TEXIT

Referendum Act.” If HB 3596 is passed, it would place a referendum on the ballot during the next general election, allowing the people of Texas to vote on whether or not the State should investigate the possibility of Texas independence, and present potential plans to the legislature. Representative Slaton said, “The Texas Constitution is clear that all political power resides in the people. After decades of continuous abuse of our rights and liberties by the federal government, it is time to let the people of Texas make their voices heard.” If a majority of the people of Texas vote ‘yes’ on the referendum, a committee would be established to investigate the feasibility of independence from the Union and propose options and potential plans for independence to the Texas Legislature. Representative Slaton added, “On this 187th anniversary of the fall of the Alamo I’m proud to file this bill to let the people of Texas vote on the future of our State. Texas was born out of a desire for liberty and self-governance, and that desire continues to burn in the hearts of all Texans.”

Proposed Racketeering Bill to Crack Down on Criminal Gangs – On March 6th, Senators Pete Flores (R-Pleasanton) and Juan "Chuy" Hinojosa (D-McAllen) filed **SB 1788** which would create a new racketeering offense in Texas and provide law enforcement officers the statutory authority to target the financial assets of criminal enterprises and gang operations. Senator Flores said, "The cartels and gangs are getting rich off of loopholes in Texas law. There are costly, and often deadly gaps that leave our law enforcement officers without the resources to build strong cases against these gangs and criminal organizations. SB 1788 will target these groups to hit them where it hurts most – their bottom line. It's no secret that these organizations have become more sophisticated and diversified which is how they have sidestepped our current laws. I am committed to expanding the arsenal of Texas law enforcement officers and prosecutors so they may take down the despicable groups who profit off of trafficking innocent human beings, drugs, and weapons. The days of these criminal organizations plaguing our state are numbered." Senator Hinojosa added, "We need to provide our law enforcement with additional tools to prosecute criminal enterprise racketeering groups that are well organized. This bill not only addresses building strong cases against gangs and criminal activities it also gives us the tools to prosecute criminals who use sophisticated financial methods to commit white collar crimes. This would include white collar crimes such as bribery and corrupt influence of public officials. Texas has seen an exponential flood of international gang and criminal enterprise organizations terrorizing communities. Organized crime units consume millions of local dollars through their unlawful and illegal criminal activities. SB 1788 aims to provide law enforcement officers and prosecutors with additional statutory authority to target financial assets of criminal enterprises and gangs that participate in racketeering. This bill will establish new penal prohibitions, enhanced sanctions, and increased penalties for certain offenses. These new tools will allow law enforcement to target key assets of criminal organizations; properties, investments, and other financial assets. This legislation is modeled after the federal Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act." Racketeering refers to any act of committing or participating

in organized, coercive criminal activity, including trafficking, drug dealing, and illegal financial activities.

Next Week:

Thursday, March 16, 2023 – Senate Special Committee on Redistricting will meet at 9:00 a.m. in E1.036 of the capitol extension to take up:

SB 375 by Joan Huffman (R-Houston) is the redistricting bill for **Texas Senate districts**.

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