

Weekly Report
March 17, 2023

Bill Filing Deadline – The deadline for legislators to file bills to be considered by the Texas Senate and House this session was 6:00 p.m. on Friday, March 10, 2023. The filing deadline does not apply to local bills, concurrent resolutions or simple resolutions. A total of 5,301 HB's and 2,565 SB's were filed for a record-setting total of 7,866 bills. 2,739 were filed in the last week. That compares to:

- 2023 bills filed by the deadline – 7,866 (up 585 from the 2019 record)
- 2021 bills filed by the deadline – 6,919 (down 362 from 2019)
- 2019 bills filed by the deadline – 7,281 (up 627 over 2017)
- 2017 bills filed by the deadline – 6,654
- 2015 bills filed by the deadline – 6,107
- 2013 bills filed by the deadline – 5,665
- 2011 bills filed by the deadline – 5,672
- 2009 bills filed by the deadline – 7,136

Leadership Priorities – Now that the bill filing deadline has passed, Governor Greg Abbott, Lt. Governor Dan Patrick, and Speaker Dade Phelan have released their priorities for the 88th Legislative Session.

Governor Greg Abbott's Emergency Items:

Cut Property Taxes:

- Use \$15 billion of the largest budget surplus in state history to cut property taxes;
- Lower the school district M&O tax rates by increasing the tax rate compression, providing relief for all property taxpayers;
- Provide relief to small businesses by increasing the business personal property tax exemption;
- Require local government debt be passed by a two-thirds supermajority of the local governing body; and
- Require local bond issues not included on the November ballot be passed by a two-thirds supermajority of voters.

End COVID Restrictions:

- Prohibit any COVID-19 government vaccine mandates;
- Prohibit any COVID-19 government mask mandates through a disaster declaration, ordinance, or other action; and
- Prohibit any government from closing any business or school because of COVID-19.
- Create safeguards and change how government responds to future pandemics, including requiring the legislature to convene if another pandemic is ever declared. This will ensure that the individual liberty of all Texans is protected no matter who is in charge.

Education Freedom for All Texans:

- 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:

- 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.

End Revolving Door Bail:

- Propose a constitutional amendment allowing judges to deny bail for the most violent offenders; and
- Pass legislation to hold judges and district attorneys accountable or reckless decisions compromising the safety and security of Texans."

Securing the Border:

- Secure another \$4.6 billion to bolster border security efforts;
- Pass legislation making it at least a ten-year mandatory minimum jail sentence for anyone caught smuggling in Texas;
- Enhance the minimum penalty for operating stash houses to a third-degree felony;
- Enhance criminal penalties for foreign terrorist organizations and increase intelligence operations against such organizations; and
- Increase penalties for smuggling and stash house operations when committed in a disaster area.

Fighting the Fentanyl Crisis:

- Classify fentanyl “overdoses” as poisonings;
- Prosecute an individual for murder if they distribute fentanyl or drugs laced with fentanyl that kill someone;
- Increase the supply of lifesaving NARCAN and make it more readily available to Texans exposed to fentanyl across the state.”

Lt. Governor Dan 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

Speaker Dade Phelan’s Priority Bills:

- HB 1 – State Budget
- HB 2 – Property Tax Relief
- HB 3 – School Safety and Security
- HB 4 – Data Privacy
- HB 5 – Job Creation and Economic Development
- HB 6 – Increased Punishment for Fentanyl-Related Crimes
- HB 7 – Legislative Border Safety Oversight Committee
- HB 8 – Community College Finance Reform
- HB 9 – Rural Broadband Infrastructure
- HB 10 – Water Infrastructure
- HB 11 – Teacher Recruitment and Retention
- HB 12 – Expanding Postpartum Medicaid Coverage
- HB 13 – School Active Shooter Plans; Mental Health Resources
- HB 14 – Streamline Property Development Approvals
- HB 15 – Mental Health and Brain Health Research
- HB 16 – Juvenile Justice Reform
- HB 17 – Uniform Enforcement of Criminal Laws
- HB 18 – Data Privacy and Protection for Minors
- HB 19 – Creating a Business Court System
- HB 20 – Creating a Border Protection Unit
- HB 90 – Workers’ Compensation and Death Benefits for Texas Military
- HB 100 – Increased Teacher Pay; Transition to Average Enrollment
- HB 200 – Re-establishing the Prosecuting Attorneys Coordinating Council
- HB 300 – Sales Tax Exemption for Family Products
- HB 400 – Higher Education Incentives for Mental Health Professionals
- HB 600 – Annual Cost-of-Living Adjustment for Retired Teachers
- HB 800 – Increased Penalties for Human Traffickers
- HB 900 – Identifying Sexually Explicit School Library Materials
- HB 1000 – Penalties for Illegal Border Crossing

GOVERNOR:

Parent Empowerment Night in Tyler – On March 10th, Governor Greg Abbott highlighted rural support for parental rights and school choice at a Parent Empowerment Night at Grace Community School in Tyler. The governor pledged to empower Texas parents with the right to choose the best education opportunities for their child’s needs. Governor Abbott said, “After my accident that left me paralyzed, I made the decision to not let my life be defined by the enormous challenge that I faced. Instead, I would determine my future by the way that I responded to this new challenge. This principle applies to all of us. Our lives are not defined by how we are challenged, but rather, how we respond to that challenge. We are here in Tyler tonight facing a much greater challenge to make sure our students are educated in the best way possible. We, as a people of Texas, commit to doing everything we can to respond to the lack of parental rights in our children's education. If each of us refuses to be defined by the challenge, but instead how we respond to that challenge, we will be part of the

generation that ensures Texas children will be the best educated students in the nation." At the event, the governor touted the widespread support for school choice in rural, urban, and suburban communities across the state and voiced his support for the expansion of state-funded Education Savings Accounts to every Texas parent and student. Additionally, Governor Abbott emphasized the importance of transparency and accessibility of what is taught in Texas classrooms so that every parent can make informed decisions regarding their child's education. The governor was joined by Representative Matt Schaefer, Texas Public Policy Foundation Campaign Director Mandy Drogin, Head of Grace Community School Jay Ferguson, and other parent empowerment advocates.

Operation Lone Star Update – On March 10th, Governor Greg Abbott said that 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 355,000 illegal immigrant apprehensions and more than 25,000 criminal arrests, with more than 23,000 felony charges reported. In the fight against fentanyl, DPS has seized over 366 million lethal doses of fentanyl during this border mission.

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."

SENATE:

The Senate was in session Monday through Thursday this week.

On Monday, the Senate gave tentatively approval to, **SB 2** by Bryan Hughes (R-Mineola), which would increase the penalty for **voter fraud** from a Class A misdemeanor to a second-degree felony. *It passed to Third Reading by a vote of 19 to 12 along party lines with the Republicans in support and the Democrats voting no.*

The Senate also passed **SB 578** by Judith Zaffirini (D-Laredo), which would allow a **person protected by a protective order** to ask the court to maintain confidentiality of the person's county of residence. *It passed unanimously.*

On Tuesday, the Senate gave preliminary approval to **SB 559** by Bryan Hughes (R-Mineola), which would prohibit a state bar rule or policy from limiting an applicant for a **license to practice law** based on a **sincerely held religious belief** of the applicant. *It passed to Third Reading by a vote of 22 to 9.*

They also passed **SCR 17** by Bryan Hughes (R-Mineola), which would urge Congress to propose and submit to the states for ratification the “**Keep Nine**” **amendment** (keep nine justices on the U.S. Supreme Court) to the U.S. Constitution. *It passed by a vote of 26 to 5.*

Also on Tuesday, the Senate gave final approval to **SB 2** by a vote of 19 to 12. Lt. Governor Dan Patrick said, “Maintaining the integrity of Texas’ elections has been a top priority of mine since I was elected to the Texas Senate and throughout my tenure as Lt. Governor. For years, I have been explicit in saying that I want to make it easier for Texans to vote and harder to cheat. Voters demand secure elections. Citizens must have trust in the outcome of every election in our state. People who wish to subvert our elections must know that committing voter fraud comes with a steep penalty; a misdemeanor is simply too weak. SB 2 deters these bad actors and will give Texans peace of mind that election security is dramatically improved. I salute Senator Hughes and the Texas Senate Republicans who have worked diligently to upgrade illegal voting back to a felony, which was Texas law for almost 50 years until the House reduced it to a misdemeanor last session.”

On Wednesday, the Senate gave final approval to **SB 559** by a vote of 21 to 9. They also passed:

- **SB 30** by Joan Huffman (R-Houston) is the **supplemental appropriations** bill. *The committee substitute was adopted and it passed by a vote of 30 to 0. (a summary is in the Budget category below).*
- **SB 402** by John Whitmire (D-Houston) would give preference in trial courts to trials for defendants charged with **murder and capital murder**. *It passed by a vote of 29 to 1.*
- **SB 645** by Joan Huffman (R-Houston) would set the **criminal penalties** for **manufacturing or delivery** of less than one gram of **fentanyl**; and would enhance the penalty if an individual dies from a fentanyl overdose. Senator Huffman said, “The fentanyl epidemic is unlike anything we have ever seen as a state. Texans are losing their lives to this lethal poison everyday and the sheer number of overdoses we continue to witness across the state is truly shocking. To those who are manufacturing or delivering this lethal poison, you will be held accountable for your absolute disregard for human life.” *The committee substitute and two floor amendments were adopted and it passed by a vote of 30 to 0.*
- **SB 994** by Charles Schwertner (R-Georgetown) would allow the Secretary of State (in addition to party officers) to **declare a candidate ineligible** on the basis of failure to pay a filing fee or submit a petition in lieu of a filing fee. *It passed by a vote of 23 to 7.*
- **SB 1319** by Joan Huffman (R-Houston) would require health authorities and law enforcement agencies to report overdose information to the computerized database for **mapping overdose locations**. *The committee substitute and one floor amendment were adopted and it passed by a vote of 30 to 0.*

On Thursday, the Senate passed:

- **SB 156** by Charles Perry (R-Lubbock) would allow a person with a real property interest in a **groundwater conservation district** to petition the district to adopt a rule or modify a rule; and would require the district to act on the petition within 90 days. *It passed by a vote of 30-0.*
- **SB 497** by Judith Zaffirini (D-Laredo) would institute regulations on the processing and sale of kratom or **kratom products** (any part of the leaf of the plant *Mitragyna speciosa*). *It passed by a vote of 28-2.*
- **SB 599** by Brian Birdwell (R-Granbury) would allow **district clerks** with a **license to carry a handgun** to carry a handgun in areas where handguns are restricted (including the courthouse). *It passed by a vote of 30-0.*
- **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 passed by a vote of 29-1.*
- **SB 780** by Bryan Hughes (R-Mineola) would add to the list of **designated emergency infant care providers** (safe haven to drop off an infant) a fire department, or a law enforcement agency. *It passed by a vote of 30-0.*
- **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 passed by a vote of 30-0.*

Total number of bills reported out of Senate Committees this week: 38
Total number of bills passed by the Senate this week: 14
Total number of bills passed by the Senate this session: 16

Next Week: The Senate adjourned until 3:00 p.m. on Monday, March 20, 2023.

HOUSE:

The House was in session Monday through Thursday this week conducting routine business. On Thursday, they adopted resolutions on the Congratulatory and Memorial Resolutions Calendars.

Total number of bills reported out of House Committees this week: 15
Total number of bills passed by the House this week: 0
Total number of bills passed by the House this session: 0

Next Week: The House adjourned until 2:00 p.m. on Monday, March 20, 2023.

BUDGET:

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

SB 729 by Joan Huffman (R-Houston) would allow **military service** to be credited under the **Employees Retirement System of Texas**. *It was reported favorably and recommended for the Local & Uncontested Calendar.*

House Appropriations Committee:

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

Subcommittee on Articles I, IV, & V – On Tuesday, the House Appropriations Committee’s Subcommittee on Articles I, IV & V (General Government, Judiciary, and Public Safety & Criminal Justice) held a formal meeting to discuss House budget recommendations and riders.

Subcommittee on Article III – On Wednesday, the House Appropriations Committee’s Subcommittee on Article III (Education) held a formal meeting to discuss House budget recommendations and riders.

Subcommittee on Articles VI, VII, & VIII – On Tuesday, the House Appropriations Committee’s Subcommittee on Articles VI, VII, & VIII (Natural Resources, Business & Economic Development, and Regulatory) held a formal meeting to discuss budget recommendations and riders.

House Appropriations Committee – On Thursday, the full House Appropriations Committee considered budget recommendations for all articles and riders.

House Pensions, Investments & Financial Services Committee – On Wednesday, the House Pensions, Investments & Financial Services Committee took up:

HCR 20 by Abel Herrero (D-Robstown) would urge Congress to repeal the **Government Pension Offset and Windfall Elimination Provision of the Social Security Act**. *It was left pending.*

SB 30 by Joan Huffman (R-Houston) is the **supplemental appropriations** bill. CSSB 30 would appropriate \$11.852 billion (plus \$8.207 billion adjustment from the Foundation School Program) and would be \$5.6 million under the tax spending limit. It uses \$1.445 billion in federal funds from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) leaving \$3.955 billion in remaining ARPA funding. Highlights include:

- \$3.862 billion – Energy Customer Rate Relief Bonds
- \$2.935 billion – Medicaid Shortfall
- \$2.32 billion – State Hospital Construction and Inpatient Capacity
- \$99 million – State Employee Salary Increase
- \$1 billion – Supplemental Enhancement for Teacher Retirement System
- \$1 billion – Legacy Lump-Sum Payment to Teacher Retirement System
- \$600 million – Texas Education Agency for School Safety
- \$400 million – Water Development Board for Flood Mitigation
- \$400 million – Texas Facilities Commission – Maintenance of State Buildings

- \$300 million – Texas Historical Commission – Endowment for Historic Sites
- \$375.9 million – State Agency Vehicle Replacement
- \$243.8 million – Texas Guaranteed Tuition Plan
- \$237.2 million – Texas Department of Criminal Justice for Agency Operations
- \$210 million – Texas Facilities Commission for Construction of New Facility for the Texas State Library and Archives
- \$217.1 million – Maintenance, Restoration, and Promotion of Historic Sites
- \$200 million – Preservation Endowment Fund
- \$165.6 million – Employees Retirement System for Legacy Payment Shortfall
- \$146.1 million – Texas A&M Forest Service – Responding to Natural Disasters
- \$141.8 million – Texas Department of Criminal Justice – Correctional Managed Care
- \$100 million – Texas Parks & Wildlife Department for Park Acquisition
- \$100 million – Film Incentive Program
- \$47.3 million – Department of Public Safety for Border Operations
- \$35 million – Texas Department of Criminal Justice for Training Facility
- \$26.8 million – Opioid Abatement Trust Fund Transfer
- \$15 million – Federally Qualified Health Center Incubator Program
- \$24.5 million – Lamar Universities for Disaster Resiliency Infrastructure
- \$23.8 million – Texas Department of Criminal Justice for Deferred Maintenance for Security Projects
- \$12.6 million – Department of Family and Protective Services for Foster Care
- \$9.7 million – Texas Juvenile Justice Department for Reimbursement to Counties
- \$8 million – University of Texas for Texas Memorial Museum
- \$10.6 million – Other items

It passed the Senate by a vote of 30-0.

Next Week:

Monday, March 20, 2023 – House Appropriations Committee will meet at 10:00 a.m. in E1.030 of the capitol extension to take up:
SB 30 by Joan Huffman (R-Houston) is the **supplemental appropriations** bill.

Monday, March 20, 2023 – Senate Finance Committee will meet at 3:00 p.m. or 15 minutes upon adjournment in E1.036 of the capitol extension to consider pending business.

Tuesday, March 21, 2023 – Senate Veteran Affairs Committee will meet at 9:00 a.m. in 2E.20, The Betty King Committee Room in the capitol building to take up:

SB 538 by Phil King (R-Weatherford) would allow the **Texas Military Department** to use appropriated money to recruit or retain service members, employees, or other personnel.

SB 777 by Kelly Hancock (R-North Richland Hills) would allow active-duty military service members, veterans, and surviving family members of a person who died while serving in the U.S. armed forces to receive a **state parklands passport**.

ELECTIONS:

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

SB 221 by Paul Bettencourt (R-Houston) would prohibit a petition requesting a ballot proposition from containing **misleading ballot language**. *It was left pending.*

SB 747 by Bryan Hughes (R-Mineola) would provide that **if a run-off candidate withdraws** from the election before 5:00 p.m. of the 21st day after the state canvass, the candidate who received the third highest number of votes in the primary election is entitled to a place on the runoff ballot. *It was left pending.*

SB 825 by Paul Bettencourt (R-Houston) would extend the **deadline for submitting a recount petition** to the third (instead of second) day after canvassing and provide that if the deadline falls on a Saturday, Sunday, or holiday, the deadline is extended to the next regular business day. *It was left pending.*

SB 921 by Bryan Hughes (R-Mineola) would prohibit a **majority vote** from being determined using a preferential voting system to reassign votes. *It was left pending.*

SB 1052 by Drew Springer (R-Muenster) would allow **election judges** to be compensated for two (instead of one) hour of work before the polls open. *It was left pending.*

House Elections Committee – On Thursday, the House Elections Committee took up:

HB 232 by Valoree Swanson (R-Spring) would increase the **filing fee** for state representative candidates from \$750 to \$1,250. *It was left pending.*

HB 357 by John Bucy (D-Austin) would remove the requirement that a voter provide an address to access the **online tracker** for **mail-in ballots**. *It was left pending.*

HB 1631 by Dennis Paul (R-Webster) would remove the time limit (five continuous hours) on the hours an **election watcher** can observe an election. *It was left pending.*

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

SB 1089 by Tan Parker (R-Flower Mound) would repeal Sections 2.56 and 124.003(e) of the Election Code which allows a separate ballot listing for **unopposed candidates** and declares them elected. *It was voted out favorably.*

HIGHER EDUCATION:

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

SB 15 by Mayes Middleton (R-Wallisville) would require a student of a public institution of higher education who competes in **intercollegiate athletic competitions** to do so based on the student's **biological sex**. Senator Middleton said, "This legislation will protect women student athletes in collegiate level athletic programs from having to unfairly compete against biological males. SB 15 requires athletes to compete on the team according to the athlete's biological sex, as correctly stated on the student's birth certificate. It protects the integrity of women's college sports by ensuring biological men don't cheat women out of victories, steal athletic records from female athletes, and put women's athletic scholarships unfairly at risk. Generations of women have fought for the opportunity to compete and to have fair athletic play. Allowing biological men to compete against them immediately erodes everything they have fought for. Students should compete on athletic teams based on their God-given biological gender. You can't have fair competition when women are forced to compete against biological men." *It was left pending.*

Senate Subcommittee on Higher Education – On Tuesday, the Senate Subcommittee on Higher Education held an organizational meeting.

House State Affairs Committee – On Wednesday, the House State Affairs Committee took up:

HB 584 by Giovanni Capriglione (R-Keller) would require the Department of Information Resources to enter into an agreement with a public junior college district to offer a program leading to a **state information technology credential** to address shortages in the state information resources workforce. *It was left pending.*

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

SB 412 by Angela Paxton (R-McKinney) would prohibit institutions of higher education from requiring a **pregnant or parenting student** to take a leave of absence or withdraw from the student's degree or certificate program; limit the student's studies; participate in an alternative program; change the student's major, degree, or certificate program; or refrain from joining or cease participating in any course, activity, or program at the institution. *It was left pending.*

SB 459 by Angela Paxton (R-McKinney) would require institutions of higher education that provide **early registration** for courses or programs for any group of students, to provide early registration to **parenting students**. *It was left pending.*

SB 462 by Tan Parker (R-Flower Mound) would establish the **Texas Competency-Based Education Grant Program** to provide financial assistance to enable eligible students to enroll in competency-based baccalaureate degree programs. *It was left pending.*

SB 902 by Royce West (D-Dallas) would establish the **Texas Leadership Scholars Program** to assist Top 10 Percent students who are economically disadvantaged. *It was left pending.*

SB 1055 by Robert Nichols (R-Jacksonville) would abolish Stephen F. Austin State University and require the **University of Texas System** to establish a **new university in Nacogdoches**. *It was left pending.*

Proposed Texas University Fund – On March 10th, Senator Joan Huffman (R-Houston) announced the filing of **SB 19** and **SJR 5**, which would create the Texas University Fund. The multi-billion-dollar endowment fund would support four Texas universities to achieve national prominence as major research institutions. Senator Huffman said, “Higher education is crucial to the success of our state, and the Texas University Fund represents a significant investment in the future of our economy and workforce. By providing additional resources to these universities, we can ensure that our students have access to the best possible education, which will help the State of Texas continue to be a force in the global marketplace for generations to come. The eligible institutions for the Texas University Fund include Texas Tech University, the University of Houston, Texas State University, and the University of North Texas. Supporting these universities will help make Texas the premier location for higher education in the world, and the endowment will support them in perpetuity to achieve that goal. The creation of the Texas University Fund is a direct result of the state’s historic budget surplus, and further demonstrates my commitment to investing in the future of Texas.”

University of Texas System – On March 16th, Governor Greg Abbott appointed Robert Gauntt and reappointed Janiece Longoria and Rad Weaver to The University of Texas System Board of Regents for terms set to expire on February 1, 2029.

Robert Gauntt of Austin is the co-founder of Capital Creek Partners. He is a trustee of The University of Texas Investment Management Company (UTIMCO) and former trustee of the Texas Teachers Retirement System. He is a member of The University of Texas (UT) Chancellor’s Council and UT McCombs School of Business Advisory Council. Gauntt received a Bachelor of Business Administration and a Master of Business Administration from UT Austin.

Janiece Longoria of Houston is a retired attorney. She has served on The University of Texas System Board of Regents since February 2017 and is a member of the UTIMCO Board of Directors. She is the former chair of the Port of Houston Authority. She is a co-founder of the Center for Women in Law and the Kay Bailey Hutchison Energy Center for Business, Law, and Policy at UT School of Law. She has received the Distinguished Alumnus Award and the President's Citation for Distinguished Service from UT, as well as the Distinguished Alumnus Award for Community Service from UT School of Law. Longoria received a Bachelor of Arts from UT Austin and a Juris Doctor from UT School of Law.

Rad Weaver of San Antonio is CEO and chairman of CW Interests. He has served on The University of Texas System Board of Regents since February

2017 and currently serves as the vice chairman. Previously, he was appointed by Governor Abbott as the presiding officer of the Alamo Regional Mobility Authority. He is a former director of the of the Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas – San Antonio Branch and former chairman of the San Antonio Chamber of Commerce. Weaver received a Bachelor of Business Administration from UT Austin.

Next Week:

Monday, March 20, 2023 – House Higher Education Committee will meet at 10:00 a.m. in E2.010 of the capitol extension to take up:

HB 8 by Gary VanDeaver (R-New Boston) would implement the recommendations of the **Texas Commission on Community College Finance.**

HB 15 and **HJR 135** by Senfronia Thompson (D-Houston) would propose a constitutional amendment establishing the Mental Health and **Brain Research Institute of Texas** to research all forms of mental health human brain disease and disorders.

HB 750 by Jay Dean (R-Longview) would allow a public **junior college library to donate library materials** if they have little or no monetary value, duplicate library materials that are part of the library’s collection, or are no longer appropriate for inclusion in the library’s collection due to age, condition or obsolete content.

HB 1114 by Kyle Kacal (R-College Station) would expand the **Blinn Junior College District** service area to include the part of the Waller Independent School District that is located in Harris County.

HB 1192 by Chris Turner (D-Arlington) would require students to complete one year of ROTC training for each year that a student is enrolled in a degree or certificate program (up to four years) to qualify for the **Texas Armed Services Scholarship Program.**

HB 1590 by DeWayne Burns (R-Cleburne) would establish the **Texas Leadership Scholars Program** to provide merit-based scholarships and leadership opportunities for high-achieving, emerging leaders with financial need.

HB 1636 by Terry Canales (D-Edinburg) would allow **South Texas College** to offer up to six (instead of five) **baccalaureate degree** programs.

HB 2415 by John Kuempel (R-Seguin) would take **Darrell K. Royal-Texas Memorial Stadium** or improvements related to the stadium out of the capitol view corridor.

Tuesday, March 21, 2023 – Senate Veteran Affairs Committee will meet at 9:00 a.m. in 2E.20, The Betty King Committee Room in the capitol building to take up:

SB 371 by Sarah Eckhardt (D-Austin) would require students to complete one year of ROTC training for each year that a student is enrolled in a degree or certificate program (up to four years) to qualify for the **Texas Armed Services Scholarship Program.**

PUBLIC EDUCATION:

House Select Committee on Youth Health & Safety Committee – On Monday, the House Select Committee on Youth Health & Safety Committee took up:

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

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. *It was left pending.*

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. *It was left pending.*

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. *It was left pending.*

HB 1157 by J.M. Lozano (R-Kingsville) would require **excused absences** for a student to attend an appointment with a **mental health professional**. *It was left pending.*

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**. *It was left pending.*

House Public Education Committee – On Tuesday, the House Public Education Committee took 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. *It was left pending.*

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. *It was left pending.*

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. *It was left pending.*

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**. *It was left pending.*

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. *It was left pending.*

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

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. *It was left pending.*

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. *It was left pending.*

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. *It was left pending.*

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

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. *It was left pending.*

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. *It was left pending.*

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

SB 562 by Kevin Sparks (R-Midland) 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. *It was left pending.*

SB 838 by Brandon Creighton (R-Conroe) 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. *It was left pending.*

SB 992 by Juan “Chuy” Hinojosa (D-McAllen) would establish the **Rural Pathway Excellence Partnership (R-PEP) program** to incentivize and support multidistrict, cross-sector, rural college and career pathway partnerships that expand opportunities for underserved students to succeed in school and life while promoting economic development in rural areas. *It was left pending.*

SB 1008 by Pete Flores (R-Pleasanton) 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. *It was left pending.*

SB 1068 by Mayes Middleton (R-Wallisville) would remove restrictions on funding for full-time **on-line educational programs**. **SB 1144** by Bryan Hughes (R-Mineola) would require school districts before expelling a student to consider the feasibility of enrolling the student in a full-time virtual education program through the state **virtual school network**. *It was left pending.*

SB 2032 by Brandon Creighton (R-Conroe) would allow school districts, junior colleges, universities, and governmental entities to contract with a nonprofit entity to operate an **adult charter school**. *It was left pending.*

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

SB 959 by Donna Campbell (R-New Braunfels) would add **open-enrollment charter schools** to the definition of “governmental entity” for purposes of laws prohibiting governmental entities from **assisting a person in obtaining an abortion**.

Note: The Senate State Affairs Committee is still meeting.

TEA Takeover of Houston ISD – On March 15th, Senator Paul Bettencourt (R-Houston) stated his support for TEA Commissioner Mike Morath installing a Board of Managers for HISD, the state’s largest school district. Senator Bettencourt said, “I’ve watched, at best, an ineffective HISD Board of Trustee governance for eight years as the second longest serving member on the Senate Education Committee. A highly critical TEA report of nefarious trustees activity and a subsequent FBI investigation with multiple indictments which resulted in a plea deal with a former HISD trustee, have concerned me greatly. Therefore, I strongly support Commissioner Mike Morath’s decision to install a Board of Managers for the HISD school district. As the principle author of SB 136t, which restored the A-F accountability system in the 87th Legislative Session, the commissioner could have closed Wheatley High School or installed a board of Managers. Commissioner Morath made the right decision by choosing to install a Board of Managers for the future of the students, families, and staff of HISD.”

Texas State Teachers Association President Ovidia Molina said, “The Texas Education Agency’s takeover of Houston ISD is an injustice to HISD students and educators, especially at a time when the locally elected board, its administrators and its teachers have been scoring marked improvements in student progress. Since 2019, when TEA began taking steps toward the

takeover, HISD voters have replaced board members who were accused of misconduct. Under new leadership, the hard work of students and educators has reduced the number of campuses with a D or an F rating from 50 to 10. HISD's nearly 200,000 students, their parents and other taxpayers have a lot invested in HISD, including the futures of these children. To continue the district's progress, it is important for these parents and taxpayers to remain in control of their students' educations through their ability to keep electing school board members who will remain accountable to them. They will lose that control when their elected board members are replaced with board members handpicked by the unelected state education commissioner. The commissioner is not responsible to HISD parents and taxpayers. He is responsible only to Governor Greg Abbott, whose top education priority is taking millions of dollars in tax money from HISD and other public-school districts and transferring it to unregulated private schools. Abbott is less interested in supporting HISD and other public schools than he is in privatizing them. Another problem with the state takeover is the flawed law and state accountability system under which it has been ordered. Real progress in HISD is being disrupted because too many students failed to pass STAAR, a high-stakes standardized test that isn't - and never has been - an accurate measure of student progress."

Next Week:

Monday, March 20, 2023 – House Select Committee on Youth Health & Safety will meet at 2:30 p.m. in E2.026 of the capitol extension to take up: **HB 98** by Joe Moody (D-El Paso) would authorize school districts to contract with a local mental health authority to provide **mental health services** on a campus of the district; and would allow a school district to enroll as a provider under Medicaid to provide and receive reimbursement for the provision of mental health services to the district's students who are medical assistance recipients.

HB 459 by Lacey Hull (R-Houston) 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.

HB 516 by Gene Wu (D-Houston) would require superintendents to electronically submit to Texas Education Agency a report containing **incident-based data** describing the total number of the following incidents occurring during the preceding school year (disaggregated by age, gender, race or ethnicity, special education students, emergent bilingual students, foster care students, homeless students, nature of the offense, type of restraint administered; offense; and campus):

- sending of a student to the campus behavior coordinator's or other administrator's office or removal of a student from class;
- restraints administered to a student;
- complaints filed against a student; and
- incidents occurring on school property that result from a district employee's request for intervention by a law enforcement agency, district peace officer, or school resource officer citations issued to a student and arrests made of a student.

HB 655 by Steve Allison (R-San Antonio) would allow school districts to place a **student who engages in habitually violent behavior** towards other students and district staff in a virtual setting and provide virtual instruction and instructional materials for remote learning to the student; consult with local and state law enforcement agencies to determine whether a student's habitually violent behavior poses a legitimate ongoing threat; establish conditions that a student or a student's parent must fulfill to allow the student to return to an alternative, general, or hybrid educational setting; and if a student receives special education services and has been determined to pose an ongoing threat to the physical safety of students and district staff, require the student's admission, review, and dismissal committee to meet to determine an appropriate education setting for the student.

HB 1249 by J.M. Lozano (R-Kingsville) would remove the 25 percent cap on **continuing education requirements for a counselor** to include instruction regarding assisting students in developing high school graduation plans; implementing dropout prevention strategies; informing students concerning college admissions and opportunities, mental health and substance abuse counseling, and implementation of a comprehensive school counseling program.

HB 1626 by Alma Allen (D-Houston) would prohibit a school district from refusing to admit a student based on the **student's criminal, juvenile, or disciplinary history**.

HB 2857 by Harold Dutton (D-Houston) would allow, but not require, a student to be removed from class and placed in a **disciplinary alternative education program** for possession of marijuana or a controlled substance.

Tuesday, March 21, 2023 – House Public Education Committee will meet at 8:00 a.m. in E2.036 of the capitol extension to take up:

HB 166 by Mary Gonzalez (D-Clint) would allow educational representatives to be appointed for **students with disabilities**.

HB 900 by Jared Patterson (R-Frisco) would require **book vendors to rate** and identify books that contain **sexually relevant or explicit material** before selling copies to public schools and submit 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; and would require parents to provide written consent before their child could access material with a sexually relevant rating.

HB 1605 by Brad Buckley (R-Salado) would establish a **high-quality instructional materials** program.

HB 1614 by Harold Dutton (D-Houston) would make free prekindergarten for children who are at least three years of age if the school district or charter partners with a community-based child-care provider.

HB 1662 by DeWayne Burns (R-Cleburne) would require **school districts** to post on the district's website the **employment policy** adopted by the district's board of trustees including compensation plans, employee leave conditions and procedures, and professional development requirements.

HB 2162 by Harold Dutton (D-Houston) would prohibit school districts and charters from administering a reading instrument to a student more than three

times during a school year; would require the Commissioner of Education to adopt a list of **reading instruments** that a school district or charter must use to diagnose student reading development and comprehension; and would require the instrument to include the foundational literacy components of phonemic and phonological awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency and comprehension. It also provides guidelines for **reading interventions**.

HB 2484 by Ryan Guillen (R-Rio Grande City) would ban spectators, including parents of a student participant, from attending future **University Interscholastic League competitions** if the spectator engages in conduct that intentionally, knowingly, or recklessly causes bodily injury to a person serving as a referee or official.

HB 2729 by Cody Harris (R-Palestine) would provide different qualifications for a **prekindergarten program supervisor** (must be a certified teacher) than for a prekindergarten teacher (have child development certification or child care or prekindergarten classroom experience).

HB 2923 by Harold Dutton (D-Houston) would require a school district to contract with a **community-based child-care provider** to provide **prekindergarten** classes if a district election to issue bonds for construction of prekindergarten classroom facilities has filed in the previous 24 months or the district is unable to adequately staff the prekindergarten class.

HB 2929 by J.M. Lozano (R-Kingsville) would remove special education and bilingual education from the list of **continuing education** items for classroom teachers that no more than 25 percent training can include.

Wednesday, March 22, 2023 – Senate Education Committee will meet at 9:00 a.m. in E1.028 of the capitol extension to take up:

SB 8 by Brandon Creighton (R-Conroe) would establish a **parental bill of rights** and school responsibilities regarding instructional materials; and would establish an **education savings account program**.

SB 9 by Brandon Creighton (R-Conroe) would establish an **educator bill of rights**; and would establish a grant program to reimburse school districts and charters that hire a teacher who retired before September 1, 2022.

SB 176 by Mayes Middleton (R-Wallisville) would establish the **Texas Parental Empowerment Program**; would provide premium tax credits for contributions to educational assistance organizations to award scholarships and assistance for qualifying educational expenses to eligible students who demonstrate the greatest financial and academic need and enroll in a nonpublic school.

SB 960 by Donna Campbell (R-New Braunfels) would require the comptroller to administer the **taxpayer savings grant program** to reimburse parents of eligible students for tuition paid for enrollment at a private school of the amount of the tuition paid, or 60 percent of the amount of state funding per student under the Foundation School Program.

SB 2354 by Paul Bettencourt (R-Houston) would establish an **Education Savings Account Program** to allow disadvantaged children to use public money to pursue educational alternatives to public schools.

SJR 29 by Angela Paxton (R-McKinney) would propose a constitutional amendment establishing a **parent's right to direct the education of the parent's child** including the right to:

1. Make reasonable choices within the public school system;
2. Choose an alternative to public education including a private school, parochial school, or home school;
3. Access and view public school teaching materials, textbooks and other instructional materials, and library books;
4. Attend meetings of the governing body of a public school;
5. Access public school student records for the parent's child, including the child's student health records; and
6. Access and view academic assessment instruments, including state-mandated academic assessment instruments, provided the access and viewing of the assessment may be controlled to protect the security of the assessment prior to the administration of the assessment.

STATEWIDE:

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

SB 175 by Mayes Middleton (R-Wallisville) would prohibit public funds being expended for **lobbying by political subdivisions**. Senator Middleton said, "Political subdivisions like cities and counties shouldn't use taxpayer dollars to hire people who may advocate against the interests of those taxpayers. Local governments spent \$75 million in public funds on lobbying during the 2021 legislative session. Taxpayers don't need an Austin lobbyist middleman. We should not give certain elected officials special treatment to use taxpayer funds to have an advantage over the voices of local voters at their state capitol. They are lobbying currently against trusting and empowering Texas parents through parental rights." *It was left pending.*

Senate Local Government Committee – On Monday, the Senate Local Government Committee held an organizational meeting.

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

HB 28 by Shelby Slawson (R-Stephenville) would be the Todd-Hogland Act, and would enhance the penalty for **assault with a deadly weapon** during the commission of an assault that **causes a traumatic brain or spine injury** that results in a persistent vegetative state or irreversible paralysis. *It was voted out favorably.*

HB 914 by Cole Hefner (R-Mount Pleasant) would make it a Class A misdemeanor to tamper with a **temporary license tag**. *It was left pending.*

HB 1004 by Matt Shaheen (R-Plano) would make **trafficking a person with a disability** punishable in the same way as trafficking a child. *It was left pending.*

HB 1394 by Joe Moody (D-El Paso) would expand the authority of **drug court programs** and allow them to provide services to persons that committed an offense involving use of a firearm or use of force. *It was left pending.*

HB 1730 by Matt Schaefer (R-Tyler) would increase the penalty for a second **offense of indecent exposure** from a Class B to a Class A misdemeanor; and would increase the penalty for a third or consecutive offense(s) of indecent exposure to a state jail felony. *It was left pending.*

HB 1737 by Jeff Leach (R-Allen) would entitle a person to nondisclosure of **criminal history record information** upon dismissal and discharge of deferred adjudication community supervision. *It was voted out favorably.*

HB 1910 by Rafael Anchia (D-Dallas) would presume that a person in possession of **money that is forged** intended to obtain a property or service of a value equal to the total purported value of the forged money. *It was left pending.*

House Homeland Security & Public Safety Committee – On Tuesday, the House Homeland Security & Public Safety Committee took up:

HB 560 by Richard Pena Raymond (D-Laredo) would require the Public Safety Commission to conduct an analysis of emerging and potential future **threats to transportation security** in the state. *It was left pending.*

HB 568 by Rhetta Andrews Bowers (D-Rowlett) would require **peace officer** training to include instruction on **interacting with persons with Alzheimer’s** disease and other dementias. *It was voted out favorably.*

HB 1076 by Victoria Neave Criado (D-Dallas) would allow police departments to hire **peace officers** if they are not a U.S. citizen but are **legal permanent residents**. *It was left pending.*

HB 1275 by Mihaela Plesa (D-Dallas) would require the Department of Public Safety to adopt procedures to allow a person who is **65 years of age or older** to apply for a **personal identification certificate** online or by phone if the person’s driver’s license is surrendered. *It was left pending.*

HB 1486 by Stan Gerdes (R-Smithville) would require law enforcement agencies, state agencies and political subdivisions that employ a full-time telecommunicator to allow **mental health leave for those telecommunicators**. *It was voted out favorably.*

HB 1675 by Justin Holland (R-Rockwall) would require Texas Department of Public Safety to establish a **border operations training program** for peace officers employed by local law enforcement agencies. *It was voted out favorably.*

House State Affairs Committee – On Wednesday, the House State Affairs Committee took up:

SB 149 by Drew Springer (R-Muenster) would prohibit **municipal regulation** of statewide **commercial activity**. *It was left pending.*

House Licensing & Administrative Procedures Committee – On Wednesday, the House Licensing & Administrative Procedures Committee took up:

HB 431 by Senfronia Thompson (D-Houston) 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 left pending.*

House State Affairs Committee – On Wednesday, the House State Affairs Committee took up:

HB 390 by Donna Howard (D-Austin) would require **state agencies** whose budgets exceed \$10 million per year to provide an **internet broadcast** of each open meeting of the governing body. *It was left pending.*

HB 2127 by Dustin Burrows (R-Lubbock) would prohibit **municipalities and counties** from **adopting ordinances** related to agriculture, finance, insurance, labor, natural resources or occupations unless explicitly authorized by statute. *It was left pending.*

House Culture, Recreation & Tourism Committee – On Thursday, the House Culture, Recreation & Tourism Committee took up

HB 1693 by Stan Lambert (R-Abilene) would authorize designation of more than one **state musicians** including a musician for the classical genre and a musician for the nonclassical genre. *It was left pending.*

Senate Border Security Committee – On Thursday, the Senate Border Security Committee took up:

SB 602 by Brian Birdwell (R-Granbury) would clarify that a **border patrol agent** of the U.S. Customs and Border Protection is not a peace officer, but has the **powers of arrest and search and seizure** under state and federal laws. *It was left pending.*

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

SB 162 by Charles Perry (R-Lubbock) would require inclusion of the **biological sex** on a **birth certificate**.

SB 500 by Royce West (D-Dallas) would increase the cap on the **value of a residential dwelling** that can be offered or awarded as a **prize at a charitable raffle** from \$250,000 to \$1,000,000.

Note: The Senate State Affairs Committee is still meeting.

Senate Special Committee on Redistricting – On Thursday, the Senate Special Committee on Redistricting Committee took up:

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

Reported From Committees:

HB 178 by Andrew Murr (R-Junction) would require **testing laboratories** to test for **fentanyl** if evidence that it may be a controlled substance is submitted to the laboratory for testing. *It was reported favorably from the House Criminal Jurisprudence Committee.*

HB 218 by Joe Moody (D-El Paso) would make **possession** of one ounce or less of **marihuana** a Class C (instead of a Class B) misdemeanor punishable by a citation (not an arrest); and would make other changes to the controlled substance statutes. *It was reported favorably as substituted from the House Criminal Jurisprudence Committee.*

HB 513 by Will Metcalf (R-Conroe) would **increase the penalties** for manufacture or delivery of a **controlled substance** or marihuana if the substance caused the death or serious bodily injury to the person to whom the substance was delivered. *It was reported favorably from the House Criminal Jurisprudence Committee.*

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 reported favorably from the Senate State Affairs Committee and recommended for the Local & Uncontested Calendar. It was on the Senate Intent Calendar on March 16, 2023 (first placement).*

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 reported favorably as substituted from the Senate Business & Commerce Committee and recommended for the Local & Uncontested Calendar.*

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 reported favorably from the Senate State Affairs Committee. It was on the Senate Intent Calendar on March 16, 2023 (first placement).*

Proposed Border Security Bill – On March 10th, Senator Brian Birdwell (R-Granbury), filed **SB 2424**. Lt. Governor Dan Patrick said, “The Texas Senate’s dedication to securing our southern border is unwavering, and our commitment is exhibited by the \$4 billion in our base budget to continue Operation Lone Star. In addition, SB 2424 will empower the State of Texas to truly protect our border, as the federal government has completely abdicated its constitutional responsibility. Senator Birdwell’s bill would create a new state crime for entering Texas illegally. SB 2424 would authorize Texas law enforcement to arrest and prosecute all people who cross the border illegally anywhere in Texas. Punishment starts with up to 1 year in jail for a first-time offender, two years in state jail for a second-time offender and up to life in prison for convicted felons who illegally cross the border.”

Next Week:

Monday, March 20, 2023 – House Select Committee on Youth Health & Safety will meet at 2:30 p.m. in E2.026 of the capitol extension to take up: **HB 16** by Joe Moody (D-El Paso) 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; and 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.

Tuesday, March 21, 2023 – Senate Business & Commerce Committee will meet at 8:30 a.m. in E1.012 of the capitol extension to take up:
SB 1010 by Tan Parker (R-Flower Mound) would **prohibit bail** for a person accused of **trafficking or sexual offenses against a child** while released on bail for committing a similar offense.

Tuesday, March 21, 2023 – Senate Veteran Affairs Committee will meet at 9:00 a.m. in 2E.20, The Betty King Committee Room in the capitol building to take up:
SB 493 by Bryan Hughes (R-Mineola) would provide that a veteran of the armed forces who received a less than honorable discharge due to the individual's **refusal to receive a vaccination against COVID-19** would be considered to have received an **honorable discharge**.
SB 1598 by Kelly Hancock (R-North Richland Hills) would add one Senate member and one House member to the **Homeland Security Council**.

Thursday, March 23, 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**.

TAX:

Senate Tax Relief Plan – On March 14th, Lt. Governor Dan Patrick, Senators Paul Bettencourt (R-Houston) and Tan Parker (R-Flower Mound) held a press conference to announce the Senate's tax relief plan. A bi-partisan group of Senators joined them for the announcement. The plan would give Texas homeowners the largest cut to their property taxes in history. The three bills presented represent \$16.5 billion in tax savings across Texas. Senator Bettencourt said, "It's important to know that we're touching every taxpayer, every homeowner, every business owner, with needed tax relief. We're spending the money as wisely as we can to get the maximum tax relief possible - and this plan has eye-popping numbers."

- **SB 3** by Bettencourt, would increase the **homestead exemption** by 75 percent up to \$70,000, and would triple the senior property tax exemption for homeowners 65 years of age and older to \$30,000. Combined with the increase in the base exemption, Texas seniors would qualify for an exemption of \$100,000. Based on the average home value, Senator Bettencourt said homeowners would see a reduction in their property tax bill of around \$800 in the first two years. For senior homeowners, Bettencourt said they would see savings above \$1000 each year. There

are 2.2 million homesteads in Texas, and about 40 percent of them are owned by seniors.

- **SB 4**, also by Bettencourt, would **buy down local school property taxes** by another \$5.83 billion on top of on-going rate compression from 2019's education reform bill for a total of \$10.68 billion in school property tax rate reduction. Senate Finance Committee chair and bill co-author Joan Huffman said that the legislature will ensure the state will cover any lost local revenue. "Where this empties the bucket, the state is going to continue to fill up the bucket," she said.
- **SB 5** by Parker, is aimed at business taxes, and would increase the exemptions for the tax on **business personal property** up from 2.5 to 20 percent, and would reduce **inventory taxes** by 20 percent. Senator Parker said, "We hear so much from the business community about the importance of reducing the inventory tax. In all, the bill would represent \$1.5 billion in tax reductions for Texas business owners."

Senator Bettencourt said, "The Senate plan focuses on exemptions because that's the best way to deliver lasting cuts to taxpayers. An exemption is permanent. These permanent exemptions will be there year after year to save Texas homeowners and Texas business owners the money they need plus tax rate compression." He said that combination has led to the reduction of the property tax burden across the state. Lt. Governor Patrick added, "Because the state capped local government spending growth in 2019 - 3.5 percent for counties and cities and 2.5 percent for schools - when appraisal values go up, the taxing entity must lower their tax rate to stay under the spending cap. This has largely disconnected appraisal growth and property tax growth. We all got calls about appraisals going up, but we didn't get calls in October when the bills went out. The real key to saving Texans' taxes is limiting the size of government. It's the state's cap on its own spending, combined with record revenue projections and a record budget surplus. that's driving the size of the relief package." Senator Bettencourt agreed, "We've never had \$16.5 billion to throw at property tax relief, and that is a record number. It is well spent and I believe it's going to be well received by the citizens and taxpayers of the great state of Texas."

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