

Weekly Report
March 24, 2023

GOVERNOR:

Governor Speaks at Parent Empowerment Day – On March 21st, Governor Greg Abbott outlined his priority to secure education freedom for all Texans at Parent Empowerment Day at the Texas Capitol in Austin. Addressing a crowd of parents, teachers, students, legislators, and other parent empowerment advocates from the capitol's north steps, the governor encouraged Texans to voice their support for parent empowerment and expanding education freedom across Texas to their local legislators. Governor Abbott said, "I went to public schools, and I would not have had it any other way. However, I have heard so many parents and teachers across Texas raise concerns about what is being taught in classrooms today. Our schools are for education, not indoctrination. The solution to this problem is empowering parents to choose the school that's right for their child, and that's what we will pass this legislative session in Austin. It takes five minutes of your time: Call your state senator, call your state representative, and let them know you support school choice in the state of Texas." While speaking at Parent Empowerment Day, Governor Abbott noted that Texas' per-student funding is at an all-time high and that no other governor has authorized more funding for public schools in state history. Governor Abbott also pointed out that a majority of urban, suburban, and rural Texans are in favor of increasing a parent's right to make important decisions in their child's education, including having access to school curriculum, school libraries, and material being taught in the classroom. The Governor was joined at Parent Empowerment Day by Senators Paul Bettencourt, Mayes Middleton, and Kevin Sparks; Representatives James Frank, Brian Harrison, and Steve Toth; Texas Public Policy Foundation Campaign Director Mandy Drogin; San Jacinto Christian Academy Superintendent Roxanne Cheek; and other state and legislative leaders.

Governor Comments on Newsmax Medic, Inc/DIRECTTV Agreement – On March 22nd, Governor Greg Abbott issued a statement following the announcement of a multi-year distribution agreement between Newsmax Media, Inc and DIRECTV that will return the Newsmax channel to the satellite television provider: He said, "This agreement between Newsmax and DIRECTV is a huge win in protecting the right of conservative voices and viewpoints to be heard, and I am proud to have helped facilitate this pivotal business renewal to preserve the strength of public discourse on television. The United States was founded on freedom of speech and healthy public debate, and we must preserve the free flow of information in our country to maintain the dignity of our nation's core values. Efforts to silence conservative viewpoints are antithetical to the very principles our founding fathers wrote in our Constitution. This agreement will set

the standard for future business deals to maintain our nation's position as a beacon of freedom. Here in Texas, we will always fight to defend First Amendment rights for Texans and Americans."

Governor Speaks at Austin Chamber – On March 22nd, Governor Greg Abbott touted Texas' strong partnerships with businesses and discussed his vision for the state's continued economic success at a luncheon hosted by the Austin Chamber of Commerce. The governor detailed how Texas will continue partnering with businesses, like manufacturing giants in Austin, to maintain the state's surging economic development momentum. He said, "The 'Texas miracle' has brought companies like Tesla, Samsung, Oracle, and many more to Austin, and folks like you have ensured this city has become a driver of our state's success. Texas is seeing an uptick in advanced manufacturing, and Austin is its hub. A new report shows that the SH-130 corridor, just east of Austin, has the lowest operating cost of any high-tech corridor in the entire country. That's why we are the number one state in the nation for semiconductors, home to Tesla's Gigafactory and Samsung's huge new chip plant, and Austin is a top 10 city for venture capital investment. In Texas, we partner with our businesses to ensure they thrive—and we will continue to do that this session." During the luncheon, Governor Abbott discussed his robust economic development agenda that will spur further economic growth across the state. The governor highlighted cutting property taxes, fortifying the state's power grid, bolstering infrastructure projects, and rolling back unnecessary regulations as key components in keeping Texas' economy a place where every Texan can succeed.

SENATE:

The Senate was in session Monday through Thursday this week.

On Monday, the Senate passed:

- **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 passed by a vote of 25 to 6.*
- **SB 740** by Joan Huffman (R-Houston) would require a local government to obtain voter approval before passing a budget that reduces regular **funding for a prosecutor's office** compared to the previous fiscal year, as a percentage of the total annual budget. *It passed by a vote of 25 to 6.*
- **SB 1004** by Joan Huffman (R-Houston) 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. *The committee substitute and one floor amendment were adopted and it passed by a vote of 31-0.*
- **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 passed by a vote of 30 to 1.*

On Tuesday, the Senate passed:

- **SB 61** by Judith Zaffirini (D-Laredo) would allow the comptroller to serve **notice of permit revocation** hearings electronically. *The committee substitute was adopted and it passed by a vote of 31 to 0.*
- **SB 159** by Charles Perry (R-Lubbock) would require **applicants to take** the uniform **CPA examination** to have completed at least 120 (instead of 150) semester hours in board-recognized courses including at least 24 semester hours of accounting. *The committee substitute was adopted and it passed by a vote of 31 to 0.*
- **SB 271** by Nathan Johnson (D-Dallas) would require **local governmental entities** to **report security incidents** and comply with the same procedures as state agencies involving security incidents. *The committee substitute was adopted and it passed by a vote of 31 to 0.*
- **SB 656** by Judith Zaffirini (D-Laredo) would allow a **person who has a health condition or disability** that may impede effective communication with a peace officer to request an indication on the person's drivers' license or personal identification certificate that indicates the person has a health condition or disability that may **impede effective communication with a peace officer**. *The committee substitute was adopted and it passed by a vote of 31 to 0.*
- **SB 718** by Angela Paxton (R-McKinney) would provide that in family court, if a **parent** is found to have been **falsely accused of neglect**, the judge would be required to grant the parent the custody time they missed out on because of the false allegations. *It passed by a vote of 31 to 0.*
- **SB 811** by Lois Kolkhorst (R-Brenham) would authorize disclosure of information regarding **wildlife disease outbreak location** and nature to owners of adjacent property. *The committee substitute was adopted and it passed by a vote of 31 to 0.*
- **SB 896** by Bryan Hughes (R-Mineola) would provide that the **denial of a motion to dismiss** under the Texas Civil Practices Act would not be subject to the automatic stay if the order denying the motion states that the motion was denied as not timely filed, determined to be frivolous or solely intended to delay, or denied because the action is exempt. *One floor amendment was adopted and it passed by a vote of 31 to 0.*
- **SB 1032** by Lois Kolkhorst (R-Brenham) would allow the Parks & Wildlife Commission to establish a program to issue certificates of location for the **restoration of natural oyster beds**. *The committee substitute and one floor amendment were adopted and it passed by a vote of 31 to 0.*
- **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 passed to Third Reading by a vote of 19 to 12 on March 20th, and then received final passage on March 21st by the same vote.*

On Wednesday, the Senate passed:

- **SB 3** by Paul Bettencourt (R-Houston) would increase the **homestead exemption** on school property taxes from \$40,000 to \$70,000. *The committee substitute was adopted and it passed by a vote of 31 to 0.*
- **SB 4** by Paul Bettencourt (R-Houston) would increase the allowable spread of **school districts' maximum compressed rates** (MCR) from within 90 percent of the highest district's MCR to within 80 percent, and stipulate no district have an MCR less than 80 percent of any other district; and would reduce the MCR for all school districts by a uniform amount. *One floor amendment was adopted and it passed by a vote of 31 to 0.*
- **SB 5** by Tan Parker (R-Flower Mound) would increase the **business personal property** exemption from \$2,500 to \$25,000; and would give a franchise tax credit of 20 percent of ad valorem taxes paid on **business inventory**, up to 20 percent of total franchise tax liability. *The committee substitute and one floor amendment were adopted and it passed by a vote of 31 to 0.*
- **SB 222** by Robert Nichols (R-Jacksonville) would establish a **paid parental leave** benefit for state employees following the birth or adoption of a child. *The committee substitute was adopted and it passed by a vote of 31 to 0.*
- **SB 347** by Judith Zaffirini (D-Laredo) would increase the length of driver's license suspension by 90 days for a person convicted of an **intoxication** offense if at the time the offense, the person was also driving with a **suspended driver's license**. *It passed by a vote of 31 to 0.*
- **SB 621** by Tan Parker (R-Flower Mound) would require the Department of Information Resources to employ a **Chief Information Security Officer** to oversee cybersecurity matters for the state. *It passed by a vote of 31 to 0.*
- **SB 904** by Drew Springer (R-Muenster) would make it an offense for a person to park in a **handicapped parking space** even if the marking on the parking space fails to comply with Texas law if the space is in general compliance and is clearly distinguishable as a designated accessible parking space for people who have disabilities. *One floor amendment was adopted and it passed by a vote of 31 to 0.*
- **SJR 3** by Paul Bettencourt (R-Houston) would propose a constitutional amendment increasing the school property tax **homestead exemption** from \$40,000 to \$70,000. *The committee substitute was adopted and it passed by a vote of 31 to 0.*

Lt. Governor Dan Patrick said, "Texas' budget windfall is due to the hard work of Texans and our strong and growing economy. Since the comptroller stated in 2022 that Texas would have a budget surplus for the 2022-2023 biennium, I have been very clear that a significant chunk of that surplus must be returned to the taxpayers before committing to any new spending. **SB 3**, by Senator Paul Bettencourt, increases the Homestead Exemption from \$40,000 to \$70,000 for 5.72 million Texas homeowners, an increase of 75 percent. Seniors 65 and over will receive a total homestead exemption of \$100,000. All 31 Senators,

Republicans and Democrats alike, were joint authors of this bill. **SB 4** further compresses school tax rates giving homeowners even more savings. SB 4 also reduces recapture for a number of school districts. These two bills will save the average homeowner \$756 in the first year. They will save the average over-65 homeowner \$1,033 in the first year. **SB 5**, by Senator Tan Parker, increases the Business Personal Property (BPP) tax exemption from \$2,500 to \$25,000. Increasing the BPP tax exemption also cuts business compliance costs. Additionally, SB 5 establishes new inventory tax credits for the first time in history at \$700 million per year. The Texas economy is stronger than ever, and Texans know lower government regulation will unleash further growth in our economy. This historic \$16.5 billion tax relief package decreases the size of government and ensures that Texas moves forward conservatively and on stronger economic footing.”

On Thursday, the Senate passed:

- **SB 58** by Judith Zaffirini (D-Laredo) would prohibit a person from selling or using a technology device or software (bots) related to **online sale of goods** that functions as a bypass in the purchasing process. *It passed by a vote of 26 to 5.*
- **SB 241** by Charles Perry (R-Lubbock) would require manufacturers of brand name **insulin prescription drugs** for which a generic prescription drug is not available to provide written notification stating whether the unavailability of generic insulin is the result of a scheme by the manufacturer to pay a generic prescription drug manufacturer to delay the generic drug. *The committee substitute and one floor amendment were adopted and it passed by a vote of 31 to 0.*
- **SB 415** by Angela Paxton (R-McKinney) would require **physicians** who designate a direct patient care practice on a licensing renewal application to complete at least one hour of continuing medical education regarding the **identification of trafficked persons**. *It passed by a vote of 31 to 0.*
- **SB 458** by Lois Kolkhorst (R-Brenham) would require a **nursing educational program offered by a for-profit entity** to provide evidence that the program will not result in a decrease in the number of clinical practice positions available to students enrolled in nursing programs in institutions of higher education in the region in which the program will be offered. *The committee substitute was adopted and it passed by a vote of 31 to 0.*
- **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. *The committee substitute was adopted and it passed by a vote of 31 to 0.*
- **SB 850** by Cesar Blanco (D-El Paso) would expand the **Texas Child Mental Health Care Consortium** to include regional education service

centers. *The committee substitute was adopted and it passed by a vote of 31 to 0.*

- **SB 1300** by Bryan Hughes (R-Mineola) would align the order of persons who can consent to remove a **decedent's remains** to be the same as the order of those who can initially dispose of a decedent's remains. *It passed by a vote of 31 to 0.*

Total number of bills reported out of Senate Committees this week: 57
Total number of bills passed by the Senate this week: 28
Total number of bills passed by the Senate this session: 44

Next Week: The Senate adjourned until 2:00 p.m. on Monday, March 27, 2023.

HOUSE:

The House was in session Monday through Thursday this week conducting routine business.

Total number of bills reported out of House Committees this week: 50
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 27, 2023. The House's first Daily House Calendar has been set for Tuesday, March 28, 2023. Tuesday's calendar has four bills. Wednesday's calendar has four bills.

BUDGET:

House Appropriations Committee:

On Monday, the House Appropriations Committee took up:

SB 30 by Joan Huffman (R-Houston) is the **supplemental appropriations** bill. *It was left pending.*

On Thursday, the House Appropriations Committee took up:

HB 1 by Greg Bonnen (R-Friendswood) is the House version of the **general appropriations** bill. *It was voted out favorably as substituted.*

Senate Veteran Affairs Committee – On Tuesday, the Senate Veteran Affairs Committee took 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. *It was reported out favorably as substituted.*

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**. *It was left pending.*

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

SB 10 by Joan Huffman (R-Houston) would **increase the monthly annuity for Teacher Retirement System members** of four percent if the annuitant retired before September 1, 2013 and two percent if the annuitant retired between September 1, 2013 and January 1, 2022; and would provide a one-time \$7,500 payment to members age 75 or older. *It was voted out favorably as substituted.*

SB 22 by Drew Springer (R-Muenster) would establish a grant program to provide **financial assistance to sheriff's departments** and district and county attorney's offices in **rural areas**. *It was reported out favorably as substituted.*

SB 987 by Lois Kolkhorst (R-Brenham) would require the comptroller to release a report to the governor and legislature regarding **recovery audits** of payments made to vendors by state agencies if a recovery audit was completed during the preceding state fiscal biennium. *It was voted out favorably as substituted.*

SB 1237 by Pete Flores (R-Pleasanton) would require the comptroller to ensure that a security officer or **investigator commissioned as a peace officer by the comptroller** is compensated according to the commissioned officer classification salary schedule prescribed by the General Appropriations Act. *It was left pending.*

SCR 28 by Joan Huffman (R-Houston) would urge Congress to repeal the **Government Pension Offset** and the Windfall Elimination Provision of the Social Security Act. *It was reported out favorably.*

HEALTH:

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

HB 1898 by Jacey Jetton (R-Fort Bend) would establish a grant program providing grants to children's hospitals to support and expand **mental and behavioral health services to children**. *It was left pending.*

Senate Health & Human Services Committee – On Wednesday, the Senate Health & Human Services Committee took up:

SB 26 by Lois Kolkhorst (R-Brenham) would establish the **Innovation Grant Program for Mental Health Early Intervention and Treatment** to provide support to eligible entities for community-based initiatives that promote identification of mental health issues and improve access to early intervention and treatment for children and families. *It was left pending.*

Reported from Committee:

SB 24 by Lois Kolkhorst (R-Brenham) would be the **Thriving Texas Families Act** to consolidate services during pregnancy and early childhood including the Prevention and Early Intervention division and Department of Family & Protective Services and the Family Support Services division within the Health & Human Services Commission. *It was reported favorably as substituted from the Senate Health & Human Services Committee. It is on the Senate Intent Calendar for March 23, 2023.*

SB 850 by Cesar Blanco (D-El Paso) would expand the **Texas Child Mental Health Care Consortium** to include regional education service centers. *It was*

reported favorably as substituted from the Senate Health & Human Services Committee and recommended for the Local & Uncontested Calendar. It passed the Senate on March 23, 2023.

Next Week:

Monday, March 27, 2023 – House Public Health Committee will meet at 8:00 a.m. in Room 120 of the John H. Reagan State Office Building to take up: **HB 2059** by Four Price (R-Amarillo) would provide grants to local mental health authorities or local behavioral health authorities to cover **training costs** related to the risk factors and **warning signs for various mental illnesses** and the skills, resources, and knowledge to assess a situation and develop and implement an appropriate intervention to help an individual experiencing a mental health crisis obtain appropriate professional care for employees of institutions of higher education; school districts, charters, and private schools; child-care facilities; first responders; military service members and veterans; and judges

Monday, March 27, 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 1680** by Donna Howard (D-Austin) would allow a minor who is otherwise eligible for a **home visiting program** to consent to enrollment in and to receive services from a home visiting program.

HB 2404 by Ann Johnson (D-Houston) would require Medicaid reimbursement for **functional family therapy services** (an intensive, short-term, family-based therapeutic treatment program for at-risk youth designed to improve family dynamics, communication, and support).

HB 2638 by Ann Johnson (D-Houston) would require Medicaid reimbursement for **multisystemic therapy services**.

Tuesday, March 28, 2023 – House Human Services Committee will meet at 8:00 a.m. in E2.030 of the capitol extension to take up:

HB 1571 by J.M. Lozano (R-Kingsville) would require **Medicaid reimbursement to local educational agencies** for health care services covered under Medicaid, including behavioral health services and nursing services.

HIGHER EDUCATION:

House Higher Education Committee – On Monday, the House Higher Education Committee took up:

HB 8 by Gary VanDeaver (R-New Boston) would implement the recommendations of the **Texas Commission on Community College Finance**. *It was voted out favorably as substituted.*

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. *They were voted out favorably as substituted.*

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. It was voted out favorably.

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. It was voted out favorably.

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**. *It was left pending.*

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. *It was voted out favorably as substituted.*

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

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. *It was left pending.*

Senate Veteran Affairs Committee – On Tuesday, the Senate Veteran Affairs Committee took 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**. *It was reported out favorably as substituted.*

Senate Subcommittee on Higher Education – On Thursday, the Senate Subcommittee on Higher Education took up:

SB 16 by Bryan Hughes (R-Mineola) would prohibit a faculty member at an institution of higher education from compelling a student to adopt a belief that any race, sex, or ethnicity or **social, political, or religious belief** is inherently superior to any other race, sex, ethnicity, or belief. *It was voted out favorably as substituted.*

SB 1563 by Brandon Creighton (R-Conroe) would repeal Section 96.66(h) of the Education Code which prohibits the **Sam Houston State University College of Osteopathic Medicine** from receiving formula funding. It was voted out favorably.

SB 2539 by Brandon Creighton (R-Conroe) would implement the recommendations of the **Texas Commission on Community College Finance**. *It was left pending.*

Reported from Committee:

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 reported favorably as substituted from the House State Affairs Committee.*

Next Week:

Monday, March 27, 2023 – House Higher Education Committee will meet at 10:00 a.m. in E2.010 of the capitol extension to take up:

HB 683 by Sheryl Cole (D-Austin) would require institutions of higher education to give a tuition and fee exemption for students enrolled in an **emergency medical services curriculum** who is employed as a paramedic by a political subdivision.

HB 989 by Donna Howard (D-Austin) would require the Department of State Health Services to develop a state plan for preventing and treating **human papillomavirus** and the health problems caused by the infection among students enrolled at **institutions of higher education**.

HB 1595 and **HJR 3** by Greg Bonnen (R-Friendswood) would propose a constitutional amendment renaming the National Research University Fund as the **Texas University Fund** to fund public institutions of higher education to achieve national prominence as major research universities.

HB 1604 by Mary Gonzalez (D-Clint) would require the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board to report on **enrollment and success** in higher education for **students with disabilities**.

HB 1912 by Angie Chen Button (R-Richardson) would increase the student union and buildings fee at the **University of Texas at Dallas** from \$60 per semester to \$100 per semester.

HB 2132 by Caroline Harris (R-Round Rock) would establish a campus of the **Texas State Technical College System** in Williamson County. **HB 2804** by John Kuempel (R-Seguin) would prohibit the use of an institution's facility, uniform, registered trademark, copyright-protected product, or official logo, mark, or other indicia in connection with a contract for the **use of a student athlete's name, image, or likeness**, unless the student athlete obtains the institution's express permission and the institution is compensated for the use in a manner consistent with market rates.

HB 3997 by John Raney (R-Bryan) would require the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (instead of the Veterans Commission) to maintain **data** related to tuition and fee exemptions at institutions of higher for military personnel and their family members (**Hazelwood scholarships**).

HB 4434 by John Kuempel (R-Seguin) would require (instead of allow) a student to graduate with a **Texas First high school diploma**.

HB 4437 by John Kuempel (R-Seguin) would clarify that **information** regarding current, former, or prospective applicant or student of an institution of higher education that is obtained, received, or **held by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board** to be considered **confidential** and excepted from disclosure as an educational record.

PUBLIC EDUCATION:

House Select Committee on Youth Health & Safety – On Monday, the House Select Committee on Youth Health & Safety took 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. *It was left pending.*

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. *It was left pending.*

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.

It was left pending.

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. *It was left pending.*

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**. *It was left pending.*

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. *It was left pending.*

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

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

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. *It was left pending.*

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

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. *It was left pending.*

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. *It was left pending.*

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**. *It was left pending.*

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. *It was left pending.*

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). *It was left pending.*

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. *It was left pending.*

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. *It was left pending.*

Senate Education Committee – On Wednesday, the Senate Education Committee took 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**. *It was left pending.*

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. *It was left pending.*

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. *It was left pending.*

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. *It was left pending.*

SB 2483 by Angela Paxton (R-McKinney) would establish the **Parent Empowerment Act** to allow parents to direct education funding to the educational setting of their choice for their child through creation of an **education savings account program**. *It was left pending.*

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.

It was left pending.

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

SB 1575 by Mayes Middleton (R-Wallisville) would authorize a member of the State Board of Education to request an **attorney general opinion**. *It was left pending.*

Reported from Committee:

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 reported favorably from the House Public Education Committee.*

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 reported favorably as substituted from the House Public Education Committee.*

HB 699 by James Frank (R-Wichita Falls) would require the **University Scholastic League** to use the same **student enrollment calculation** formula for a school that allows a non-enrolled student to participate in a league activity as the formula used to determine the student enrollment of a school that does not allow a non-enrolled student to participate in the league activity. *It was reported favorably from the House Public Education Committee.*

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**. *It was reported favorably as substituted from the Senate State Affairs Committee. It is on the Senate Intent Calendar for March 23 (first placement).*

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**. *It was reported favorably from the Senate State Affairs Committee.*

Democratic Caucus Press Conference on State Takeover of HISD – On March 16th, Chairman of the House Democratic Caucus Representative Trey Martinez Fischer (D-San Antonio) said, "We had plans to talk about our Invest In Texas program, something we have been working on for a little over six weeks now. But what happened this morning in the halls of the capitol in our extension was very tragic, very sad. And for a state as large as Texas, it is a very undignified way to show our support for public education, which we believe is what happens when you do not invest in Texas kids. After a protracted legal battle and several weeks of conjecture, the Texas Education Agency confirmed Wednesday it will remove the Houston Independent School District's democratically elected school board and superintendent. The state will now take charge of its largest school district, the seventh largest in the nation. The state education agency first assumed control over a struggling school district in 2000. The HISD takeover puts the TEA in charge of the largest administrative division it's ever overseen, with 276 schools and an enrollment of nearly 200,000 students. State Education Commissioner Mike Morath indicated Wednesday that

'a board of managers' will be appointed to replace locally elected HISD Superintendent Millard House II and the current school board, once they finish the school year June 1st. This move follows years of TEA scrutiny of the district over repeated poor academic performance of one school - Phillis Wheatley High School - as well as reports of misadministration by previous trustees. TEA Commissioner Morath said state law calls for his agency to either close that campus or appoint a new board overseeing the district." Representative Ron Reynolds (D-Missouri City), Chair of the Legislative Black Caucus added, "Whoever thought HISD would be taken over because of one school, which has a C rating? And HISD has an overall B rating, which Commissioner Morath could not deny." Representative Reynolds claimed research proves educational quality suffers following such "hostile takeovers," alongside a loss of good public school teachers. He said, "If the TEA can take over the largest school district in Texas as a result of one failing school, who's to say that other school districts aren't next?" Representative Christina Morales (D-Houston), Vice-Chair of the Mexican-American Legislative Caucus said, "Since 2019, HISD has turned around. Parents, teachers and students have all worked hard to improve our schools. And all of this during a pandemic. This is all while HISD is on an upward trajectory. HISD teachers, parents and students have all worked to reduce the number of D and F campuses from 58 to 9, less than Dallas ISD."

AG Opinion on School Choice – On March 20 Attorney General Ken Paxton issued a legal opinion indicating that there no constitutional barrier prohibiting school choice in Texas. Paxton said, "Texas parents should have the right to choose the best school for their kids, and every Texas child deserves the opportunity to attend a good, safe school where they can learn and thrive. Today I issued a legal opinion which informs the Texas legislature that there are no constitutional barriers to enacting school choice in Texas. It's time to empower Texas parents and provide additional educational opportunities so every Texas child can reach their dreams." Requested by State Senator Brandon Creighton, Chair of the Senate Education Committee, Paxton's opinion states that Education Savings Account ("ESA") programs do not violate the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment. Paxton continued, "ESAs can offer parents and students a better educational experience by providing them with education assistance payments that can be directed to public and private schools, including sectarian schools. ESAs can provide parents with a choice to ensure that all students, regardless of income or zip code, can receive a world class education in Texas." Paxton also determined that two provisions in the Texas Constitution - known as Blaine Amendments - that could exclude religious schools from receiving ESA program funds violate the Free Exercise Clause of the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. Accordingly, any law, action, or policy implemented to comply with them is unconstitutional.

Lt. Governor Dan Patrick issued the following statement in response to Attorney General Ken Paxton's legal opinion: "Attorney General Paxton's opinion that school choice is legal and constitutional in Texas is not surprising, but it is still great news for all Texans. All Texas children deserve an education that best

fits their needs, and parents should not be forced to send their children to schools that they do not believe are best for their child. The Attorney General's legal opinion is grounded in the United States Constitution and is common sense. Republicans, Independents and Democrats overwhelmingly support school choice."

Association of Texas Professional Educators Executive Director Shannon Holmes said, "We urge lawmakers not to be distracted by the political theater. Instead, legislators should listen to the voices of the thousands of Texas public school parents and educators who have already visited the capitol this year to share that vouchers, no matter what they are called, will take money out of our neighborhood schools – the very neighborhood schools that serve any student who shows up at their doors, no matter the circumstances. Instead, this funding will be siphoned away to be spent by individuals without accountability to the taxpayer. Our Texas Constitution specifies that it is the duty of the legislature to establish and make suitable provision for the support and maintenance of an efficient system of public free schools. We urge lawmakers to focus on that duty."

Texas School Safety Center – On March 22nd, Governor Greg Abbott appointed Melissa Dunbar and reappointed Edwin Flores, Ph. D., James Mosley, Noe E. Perez, Michael Slaughter, and Jill Tate to the Texas School Safety Center Board for terms set to expire February 1, 2025. The board reports to the governor, the legislature, the State Board of Education, and the Texas Education Agency regarding school safety and security and advises the Center on its function, budget, and strategic planning initiatives.

Melissa Dunbar of Center Point is a principal for the Medina Independent School District. She received a Bachelor of Arts in English, a Master of Education, and principal certification from Schreiner University.

Edwin Flores, Ph.D. of Dallas is the managing partner at Chalker Flores, LLP and is a member of the Dallas Independent School District (ISD) Board. He is a member of the State Bar of Texas and the United States Patent and Trademark Office. He volunteers on the board of the Mary Crowley Cancer Research Centers, Dallas Central Appraisal District, and the Medical City Hospital Dallas. Flores received a Bachelor of Science in Microbiology from The University of Texas at Austin (UT), a Doctor of Philosophy in Immunology from Washington University, and a Juris Doctor from UT School of Law.

James Mosley of Borger is the Judge of the 316th District Court. Judge Mosley was previously appointed by Governor Abbott to the Crime Victims' Institute Advisory Council. He is a member of the State Bars of Texas and Colorado, American Board of Trial Advocates, and the Administration of the Rules of Evidence Committee for the State Bar of Texas. He volunteers with local Boy Scout troops and is a lifetime member of both the Veterans of Foreign Wars and American Legion. Mosley received a Bachelor of Science in Finance from the University of Colorado, a Master's in Public Administration from Troy State University, and a Juris Doctor from the University of Denver. Additionally, he was honorably discharged from the United States Air Force at the rank of Captain.

Noe E. Perez of Laguna Vista is a social studies teacher for the Los Fresnos Consolidated Independent School District, where he teaches U.S. government and personal financial literacy at Los Fresnos High School. He has over 30 years of teaching experience, including as an adjunct instructor with UT at Brownsville. He has authored historical articles published by UT Rio Grande Valley and Texas Southmost College and by the Texas State Historical Association Handbook of Texas Online. He is a former volunteer for the March of Dimes, Relay for Life, and the Laguna Madre Lions Club. Perez received a Bachelor of Science in Mathematics from UT Pan American in Edinburg, a Master of Arts in Interdisciplinary Studies with a major in History and minors in Government and Sociology from UT Brownsville.

Michael Slaughter of Wylie is an assistant principal at Princeton High School in Princeton, Texas and an ordained minister. He is a member of the National Association of Secondary School Principals, Association of Texas Professional Educators, and the Texas Association of Secondary School Principals. Additionally, he volunteers with Habitat for Humanity and Wylie Youth Soccer Association. Slaughter received a Bachelor of Arts in Christian Studies from Union University, a Master of Education in Educational Technology Leadership from Lamar University, and is currently pursuing a Doctor of Philosophy in General Psychology from Grand Canyon University.

Jill Tate of Colleyville is former small business owner and served as a project manager at Turley Associates, Inc. and as an assistant property manager at Trammell Crow Company. Additionally, she is a community member of the Grapevine Colleyville ISD Parent Teacher Associations, an ambassador for the nonprofit Patriot Paws, and volunteer for the Grapevine Relief and Community Exchange program. Tate received a Bachelor of Business Administration in Real Estate from Baylor University.

Next Week:

Monday, March 27, 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 3 by Dustin Burrows (R-Lubbock) is an omnibus **school safety** bill.

HB 13 by Ken King (D-Canadian) would make several requirements related to **school safety**.

HB 1905 by James Talarico (D-Austin) would require school districts to make **school safety training courses** to employees of **child-care facilities** and other organizations providing out-of-school-time care to children who reside in the district.

HB 2269 by Harold Dutton (D-Houston) would authorize school districts to employ **security personnel** through a memorandum of understanding with a county or municipality that is the employing political subdivision of commissioned peace officers.

HB 3623 by Cole Hefner (R-Mount Pleasant) would allow school districts and charters to enter into a memorandum of understanding between schools authorizing the **school marshals** of each school to provide services at an event at which both schools participate.

HB 4406 and **HJR 170** by Ken King (R-Canadian) would propose a constitutional amendment creating the **State School Safety Fund** to provide financial support for projects that enhance the safety of schools.

Tuesday, March 28, 2023 – House Human Services Committee will meet at 8:00 a.m. in E2.030 of the capitol extension to take up:

HB 1238 by Gary VanDeaver (R-New Boston) would establish the **School Health and Related Services Program Advisory Council** to advise Texas Education Agency and the Health & Human Services Commission on administering the school health and related services program; and would require written parental consent for a student’s personally identifiable information to be provided to a **school health and related services program**.

Tuesday, March 28, 2023 – House Public Education Committee will meet at 8:00 a.m. in E2.036 of the capitol extension to take up:

HB 681 by Keith Bell (R-Forney) would remove the sunset date on provisions allowing a **teacher certification** candidate to satisfy certification requirements through an internship that provides the candidate employment as a teacher for courses offered through a local remote learning program or the state virtual school network. It would also remove the sunset dates for **student remote learning options**.

HB 1263 by Senfronia Thompson (D-Houston) would prohibit a local authority from adopting or enforcing an order that prohibits or precludes the designation of a **school crossing zone** or school crosswalk at a high school campus located in a municipality with a population of two million or more.

HB 1507 by Ken King (R-Canadian) would prohibit a school district or charter from organizing or hosting a program dedicated to celebrating or providing **special instruction regarding a sexual preference**; and would require the State Board of Educator Certification to impose sanctions against a district of school employee who organizes or hosts such a program including a fine of between \$500 and \$10,000 or termination or suspension of a teaching permit.

HB 1959 by Candy Noble (R-Lucas) would authorize a **peace officer** to request a transfer of the officer’s student to another school district or district campus.

HB 2012 by Tom Olverson (R-Cypress) would require public schools and institutions of higher education to allow the **display of the national motto** “In God We Trust” in classrooms.

HB 2209 by J.M. Lozano (R-Kingsville) 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.

HB 2234 by Senfronia Thompson (D-Houston) would require the written notice to parents of **special education students** about **video cameras** activated in a self-contained classroom to be provided at least within the first ten days of activation of the video camera.

HB 2890 by Charles Cunningham (R-Humble) would require a two-thirds vote of the membership of the State Board of Education to overrule the education commissioner's recommendation on **granting a charter**.

HB 2892 by Brad Buckley (R-Salado) would require school districts to transfer a student to another district or campus upon require of a **military parent** who is a member of the U.S. military or Texas National Guard.

HB 3803 by Charles Cunningham (R-Humble) would authorize **parents to elect for a student to repeat any course or grade** the student was enrolled in during the previous school year unless the school or charter determines the student has met all of the requirements for graduation.

HCR 90 by John Kuempel (R-Seguin) would designate April 6th as **Texas High School Football Coaches Day**.

Tuesday, March 28, 2023 – House Criminal Jurisprudence Committee will meet at 10:30 a.m. in E2.016 of the capitol extension to take up:

HB 2055 by Venton Jones (D-Dallas) would repeal the criminal offense of homosexual conduct and delete homosexual references in **sex education course materials**.

STATEWIDE:

House Select Committee on Youth Health & Safety – On Monday, the House Select Committee on Youth Health & Safety took 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. *It was left pending.*

Senate State Affairs Committee:

On Monday, the Senate State Affairs Committee took up:

SB 29 by Brian Birdwell (R-Granbury) would prohibit **governmental entities** from implementing or enforcing a **vaccine mandate**, mask requirement; and would **prohibit the closure of a school or a private business** to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Senator Birdwell said, "If the state disaster declaration is not renewed, then these executive orders will lack the effect of law and local governments across Texas would have the ability to restrict Texans' freedoms in the name of protecting them from COVID-19." *It was reported favorably.*

SB 1104 by Brian Birdwell (R-Granbury) would provide that during a **declared state of disaster**, only the legislature has the authority to restrict the operation of businesses by category or region; and would require the governor to convene the legislature in special session to respond to a declared state of disaster. *It was reported out favorably.*

SJR 58 by Brian Birdwell (R-Granbury) would propose a constitutional amendment requiring the governor to convene a **special session** of the legislature to renew a **disaster declaration**. *It was reported out favorably.*

SJR 59 by Brian Birdwell (R-Granbury) would propose a constitutional amendment allowing the legislature to act on bills and resolutions at any time during a **regular legislative session**. *It was reported favorably. It is on the Senate Intent Calendar for March 23, 2023 (first placement).*

On Thursday, the Senate State Affairs Committee took up:

SB 12 by Bryan Hughes (R-Mineola) would prohibit a municipality from authorizing a **sexually oriented performance** on public property or in the presence of a child; and would prohibit a sexually oriented performance on the premises of a commercial enterprise in the presence of a child (younger than 18). *It was left pending.*

SB 1601 by Bryan Hughes (R-Mineola) would prohibit a **municipal library** that hosts an **event** at which a **man presents as a woman** or a woman presenting as a man reads a book or story to a minor from receiving state funds. *It was left pending.*

Senate Veteran Affairs Committee – On Tuesday, the Senate Veteran Affairs Committee took 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**. *It was reported favorably.*

SB 1598 by Kelly Hancock (R-North Richland Hills) would add one Senate member and one House member to the **Homeland Security Council**. *It was reported favorably and recommended for the Local & Uncontested Calendar for March 23, 2023 (first placement).*

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

HB 1759 by John Bucy (D-Austin) would allow **charitable raffle tickets** to be sold at the home venue of the professional sports team or through digital interactive media provided by the professional sports team associated with the foundation conducting the raffle. *It was left pending.*

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

HB 567 by Rhetta Bowers (D-Rowlett) would prohibit a public school or institution of higher education from **discriminating** against a student in dress or grooming policy **based on hair texture** or protective hairstyle commonly or historically associated with race. *It was left pending.*

HB 904 by Joe Moody (D-El Paso) would exempt a fantasy or simulated game or contest from the definition of “bet” for purposes of **gambling offenses**. *It was left pending.*

HB 1422 by Will Metcalf (R-Conroe) would require the state observe **daylight saving time** year-round. *It was left pending.*

HB 1580 by Will Metcalf (R-Conroe) would provide **parental leave** for state employees. *It was left pending.*

HB 1942 and **HJR 102** by Jeff Leach (R-Allen) would propose a constitutional amendment legalizing **sports betting**. *They were left pending.*

HB 2060 by Giovanni Capriglione (R-Keller) would establish the **Artificial Intelligence Advisory Council** to study and monitor artificial intelligence systems developed, employed or procured by state agencies and assess the need for a state code of ethics for artificial intelligence systems in state government. *It was left pending.*

HB 2142 by Ryan Guillen (R-Rio Grande City) would exempt a fantasy or simulated game or contest from the definition of “bet” for purposes of **gambling offenses**. *It was left pending.*

HB 2843 by John Kuempel (R-Seguin) would authorize, license, and regulate **casino gaming and sports wagering**; and would establish the **Texas Gaming Commission** to regulate casino gaming activities, sports wagering and other gambling and ensure it is conducted fairly and in compliance with the law. *It was left pending.*

HB 3033 by Brooks Landgraf (R-Odessa) would require the attorney general to rule on **public information requests** within 30 (instead of 45) business days; and would require governmental bodies to produce the information within 15 days after the attorney general’s authorization. *It was left pending.*

HJR 155 by Charlie Geren (R-Fort Worth) would propose a constitutional amendment creating the **Texas Gaming Commission**, authorizing **sports wagering**, requiring a license to conduct **casino gaming**, requiring the imposition of casino gaming and sports wagering taxes, and authorizing Tribal-State compacts related to gaming. *It was left pending.*

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

HB 540 by Oscar Longoria (D-Mission) would allow the Texas State Library and Archives Commission to provide **library construction grants** to encourage the establishment of new public libraries or the improvement of existing public libraries. *It was left pending.*

HB 2719 by Trent Ashby (R-Lufkin) would authorize the Texas Historical Commission to acquire by purchase or gift real property to become a **designated historic site**. *It was left pending.*

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

HB 1928 by Ryan Guillen (R-Rio Grande City) would allow **supplemental pay** for members of **Texas military forces** (not just Texas National Guard) for people who suffer an economic hardship as a result of serving on military duty. *It was left pending.*

HCR 12 by Ray Lopez (D-San Antonio) would designate September 30th as **Texas Veterans Suicide Prevention Day**. *It was left pending.*

Senate Special Committee on Redistricting – On Thursday, the Senate Special Committee on Redistricting too, up:
SB 375 by Joan Huffman (R-Houston) is the redistricting bill for **Texas Senate districts**. *It was reported favorably. It is on the Senate Intent Calendar for March 27, 2023 (first placement).*

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

SB 600 by Brian Birdwell (R-Granbury) would institute minimum penalties for the **smuggling of persons**. *It was left pending.*

SB 1403 by Tan Parker (R-Flower Mound) would require the governor to develop and execute an **interstate compact for border security** among interested states. *It was left pending.*

SB 1427 by Pete Flores (R-Pleasanton) would increase criminal penalties for criminal conduct and organizations that threaten the **security of the state**, its residents, and **borders**. *It was left pending.*

SB 1709 by Phil King (R-Weatherford) would add transnational criminal organizations to **organized criminal activity** statutes; and would enhance the punishment for using or exhibiting a deadly weapon during organized criminal activity. *It was left pending.*

SB 1900 by Brian Birdwell (R-Granbury) would prohibit a **foreign terrorist organization** from purchasing or acquiring title to real property in Texas. *It was left pending.*

SB 2424 by Brian Birdwell (R-Granbury) would create a new **state crime for illegally entering** the State of Texas from a foreign nation; and would authorize state law enforcement to arrest and prosecute individuals who illegal cross the border anywhere in the state. *It was left pending.*

SCR 23 by Lois Kolkhorst (R-Brenham) would urge the federal government to declare foreign drug cartels as **foreign terrorist organizations**. *It was left pending.*

Reported from Committee:

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 reported favorably from the House Criminal Jurisprudence Committee.*

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 reported favorably from the House State Affairs Committee.*

HB 861 by J.M. Lozano (R-Kingsville) would institute regulations on the processing and sale of kratom or **kratom products** (any part of the leaf of the plant *Mitragyna speciosa*). *It was reported favorably from the House Public Health Committee. The companion, SB 497, has passed the Senate.*

HB 1161 by Morgan Meyer (R-Dallas) would maintain the confidentiality of home address information for **victims of child abduction**.

HB 1348 by Lynn Stucky (R-Sanger) would prohibit municipalities from regulating the practice of **veterinary medicine**. *It was reported favorably from the House Criminal Jurisprudence Committee.*

SB 162 by Charles Perry (R-Lubbock) would require inclusion of the **biological sex** on a **birth certificate**. *It was reported favorably from the Senate State Affairs Committee.*

SB 175 by Mayes Middleton (R-Wallisville) would prohibit public funds being expended for **lobbying by political subdivisions**. *It was reported favorably as substituted from the Senate State Affairs Committee.*

Texas Emergency Services Retirement System Board of Trustees – On March 17th, Governor Greg Abbott appointed Brad Landi to the Texas Emergency Services Retirement System Board of Trustees for a term set to expire on September 1, 2027. The board oversees and governs a dedicated retirement fund for volunteer firefighters and emergency services personnel in Texas.

Brad Landi of Austin is the fire chief for the Jollyville Fire Department. He is a member of the Travis County Fire Chiefs Association and treasurer of the Williamson County Fire Chiefs Association and the Capitol Area Fire Chiefs Association. He is a board member for the Rescued Sanctuary for Animals and the Brotherhood of Heroes Foundation and a former trustee for the Austin Firefighters Relief and Retirement Fund. Landi received a Bachelor of Arts in Communication from California State University Chico, an Associates of Applied Science in Fire Protection Technology from Austin Community College, and an Associates of Applied Science in Emergency Management from Frederick Community College. Additionally, he has multiple Masters Level certifications from both the Texas Commission on Fire Protection and the State Firefighters and Fire Marshalls Associations. He has obtained his Certified Fire Executive, Fire Service Chief Executive Officer, and Chief Fire Officer certifications.

Public Safety Commission – On March 21st, Governor Greg Abbott reappointed Steven P. “Steve” Mach to the Public Safety Commission for a term set to expire on January 1, 2028. The commission oversees the Texas Department of Public Safety, which enforces laws protecting public safety and provides for the prevention and detection of crime.

Steven P. “Steve” Mach of Houston is vice president and chief financial officer of Mach Industrial Group, LP and has served as the chairman of the Public Safety Commission (PSC) since March 2017. As PSC chairman, he also serves as a member of the Texas Racing Commission. He is past chairman of the Houston Symphony Board of Trustees and former chairman of the Houston Symphony Endowment. He serves as secretary of the Trinity University Board of Trustees, vice chairman of the Kinkaid School Board of Trustees, a member of the executive committee of the Sam Houston Area Council of the Boy Scouts of America, and former chairman of the board of Family Services of Greater

Houston, Inc. He is an Eagle Scout and a life member of the Houston Police Foundation, 100 Club of Houston, and the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo. Mach received a Bachelor of Arts from Trinity University.

Texas Parks & Wildlife Commission – On March 22nd, Governor Greg Abbott reappointed Oliver Bell and Dick Scott to the Parks and Wildlife Commission for terms set to expire on February 1, 2029. The commission manages and conserves the natural and cultural resources of Texas and provides hunting, fishing, and outdoor recreation opportunities for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations.

Oliver Bell of Cleveland is chief executive officer of Oliver Bell, Inc., a consulting firm that emphasizes teaching and developing leadership skills. He is also the chief operating officer of the Barndominium Company, which designs luxury Barndominium residences across the country. Previously, he served as vice president of a large labor relations consulting firm and worked for Mobil Oil's human resources group. He is a member of the 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment Association and the Association of the United States Army. He is a past board member of the West Point Society of greater Houston and the Sigma Pi Phi Fraternity -The Boulé. He is a former member of the Texas Southern University Board of Regents and former chairman of the Texas Board of Criminal Justice and the Windham School District Board of Trustees. He is a graduate of the U.S. Military Academy at West Point and was an Airborne-Ranger qualified Army officer.

Dick Scott of Wimberley is the former co-owner of Trans Global Solutions, Inc., retiring after almost 40 years. He is vice chairman of the Parks and Wildlife Commission and a member of the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo Board of Directors and the Boys and Girls Country Executive Committee. He is a volunteer contributor for the Hays County FFA and 4H clubs. He is also a lifetime member of the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo and serves on their International Committee. Additionally, he previously served on the Lower Colorado River Authority. Scott received a Bachelor of Business Administration in Accounting from Lamar University.

Next Week:

Tuesday, March 28, 2023 – House Criminal Jurisprudence Committee will meet at 10:30 a.m. in E2.016 of the capitol extension to take up:

HB 6 by Craig Goldman (R-Fort Worth) 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.

HB 17 by David Cook (R-Mansfield) would add to the definition of “incompetency” for **district and county attorneys** to adopt a policy **prohibiting** or limiting the **enforcement of a criminal offense**.

HB 382 by Nicole Collier (D-Fort Worth) would provide that possession of consumable hemp is not an offense if the person purchased the product from a retailer the person reasonably believed was authorized to sell a **consumable hemp product**.

WORKFORCE:

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

HB 2237 by Senfronia Thompson (D-Houston) would require the Department of Family & Protective Services to operate a **child first grant program** to award grants to implement, expand, and maintain child first programs in the state based on the program model developed by the Child First National Service Office. *It was left pending.*

HB 1615 by Angie Chen Button (R-Garland) would require the Texas Workforce Commission to establish and administer a **prekindergarten partnership program** to assist Texas Rising Star program providers in partnering with local school districts and charters to provide the required prekindergarten classes. *It was left pending.*

JET Grants – On March 22nd, Governor Greg Abbott announced two Jobs and Education for Texans (JET) grants totaling more than \$311,000 by the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) to Copperas Cove Independent School District (ISD) to support career training. The two grants will help the district purchase and install equipment to train students in the plant science program on greenhouse operations and students in the advanced manufacturing program learn robotic operations. The district will continue to use the new equipment to train more students in the future. Governor Abbott said, "The State of Texas continues actively working to advance and support our exceptional workforce through comprehensive career and skills development programs. The Jobs and Education for Texans grant program is an effective tool in providing more opportunities for students who choose to pursue careers in good-paying, high-demand industries across our state. I thank the Texas Workforce Commission for working to boost our highly trained workforce to meet the needs of our growing economy." TWC Chairman Bryan Daniel added, "The greenhouse and robotics programs developed by Copperas Cove ISD will prepare students with high-demand skills for the future. Texas is investing in programs like these so high school students can gain high-value credentials and quickly become a part of the Texas workforce - the fastest growing workforce in the country." Through funding provided by the legislature each biennium, TWC uses JET grants to defray start-up costs of developing career and technical education programs for public community, state and technical colleges, school districts, and open enrollment charter schools. Equipment funded through JET grants must be used to train students for jobs in high-demand occupations.

Next Week:

Tuesday, March 28, 2023 – House Human Services Committee will meet at 8:00 a.m. in E2.030 of the capitol extension to take up:

HB 940 by Harold Dutton (D-Houston) would establish the **private child care task force** to study private child care providers and methods to reduce the

amounts charged for and increase the availability of child care provided by private child care providers.

Tuesday, March 28, 2023 – House International Relations & Economic Development Committee will meet at 8:00 a.m. in E1.026 of the capitol extension to take up:

HB 1338 by John Raney (R-Bryan) would allow a **community-based organization** to provide workforce training through a **Skills Development Fund grant** without partnering with a community or technical college or the Texas Engineering Extension Service if at least six weeks before the date the organization applies for a grant, the organization submitted a written request for partnership to a community or technical college or the Texas A&M Engineering Extension Service and was unable to obtain the partnership.

HB 1703 by Claudia Ordaz Perez (D-El Paso) would require the Texas Workforce Commission to maintain an **automated follow-up and evaluation system** that includes **unemployment wage records and student follow-up information** available through the Texas Education Agency and Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board.

HB 2575 by Angie Chen Button (R-Richardson) would allow entities working in partnership with an entity eligible to grant a high school diploma to participate in the **workforce diploma pilot program**.

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