



Monthly Summary from STPRA's Austin Team

September / October 2016

--On September 20th, the House Subcommittee on Special Water Districts, chaired by Rep. Larson, held a hearing in Fort Stockton. A major area of discussion was regulation of brackish groundwater. STPRA is closely monitoring these discussions and will work to maintain control by local groundwater districts.

--The House Committees on Natural Resources and Agriculture and Livestock held a joint hearing on October 13th where they heard invited testimony on advances already made and how water can better be utilized for food and fiber production.

--On October 18th, the House and Senate Joint Committee on Border Security heard invited testimony on the effectiveness of H.B. 11 thus far in its implementation. Speakers were led by Steve McCraw, ED of the Texas DPS. He cited statistics showing a net decrease in border-related illegal activity, though Cameron and Zapata Counties showed a slight rise due to stepped up efforts in Starr and Hidalgo Counties. The head of the new Border Prosecution Unit and the Webb County DA reported advances in prosecutions. Zavala County Sheriff Eusevio Salinas, chair of the Texas Border Sheriff's Coalition, advocated for more resources to hire local personnel, while Victor Rodriguez, McAllen Police Chief, reported progress in setting up the new border crime data resource center.

These interim hearings do not involve the consideration of any specific proposed legislation, since bills for next spring's legislative session cannot be filed until November.

Archived and live videos of committee hearings can be accessed at:

<http://www.capitol.state.tx.us/>

--The Farm Bureau, TSCRA, and TWA have organized an effort to advance eminent domain reform in the coming legislative session. STPRA has signed on as a partner. The push will involve a comprehensive legislative package that includes landowner reimbursement of expenses, bona fide offers, fair tax valuations, bond requirements, accurate appraisals, possession and use agreements, and royalty payments. Regional grassroots meetings with landowners will be held to discuss the plan. These meetings will begin in Jourdanton on October 27th, which is the only scheduled meeting in South Texas. All STPRA members are encouraged to attend. See our daily news updates or website for details.

-- Early voting is October 24th through November 4th.

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