



STPRA Testifies on Eminent Domain Reform at House Committee Hearing

STPRA board member and chair of the Eminent Domain Sub-Committee, Eric Opiela traveled to Houston on Wednesday to represent STPRA as an invited witness before the House Land and Resource Management Committee. That committee, chaired by Rep. Abel Herrero of Robstown, is under an interim charge by Speaker Joe Straus to study the need for eminent domain reform and investigate possible fixes to the current law.

As a landowner and experienced attorney, Eric took a strong leadership role on the witness panel that included representatives of the Texas and Southwestern Cattle Raisers Association, the Texas Wildlife Association, and the Texas Farm Bureau. He emphasized the six principles of reform that STPRA is advocating and advised the committee that we have received a broad-base of agreement from legislative candidates and office-holders from all over the state. The six principles are:

- 1. Full disclosure of size, location, product(s), and number of utilities/roadways/pipelines to be installed**
- 2. Incentives for fair and reasonable first offers of purchase prices by condemning entities**
- 3. Disclosure of all appraisals in advance of purchase transactions and appeals**
- 4. Admission of all evidence of land values in appeals proceedings**
- 5. Protection against unfair property taxation obligations**
- 6. Bonding requirements to ensure against default by condemning entities**

While the crowd was mainly composed of paid representatives of condemning entities, Eric's arguments were hard for them to counter.

We look forward to the coming legislative session and believe that with Eric's leadership on the issue and the backing STPRA's members, we can be a formidable force in helping promote meaningful eminent domain reform in the 2019 legislative session. If you would like more information or would like to get more involved with eminent domain reform, please contact Robert Howard.