



Austin Landline Report February 2019

Speaker Dennis Bonnen announced House committee appointments and 10 out of 22 will be chaired by South Texans. Here is a breakdown of House committee appointments: https://house.texas.gov/_media/pdf/committee86.pdf

Especially notable chairmanship appointments of South Texans are Lozano for Environmental Regulation, Canales for Transportation, Nevárez for Homeland Security and Public Safety, Cyrier for Culture, Recreation and Tourism, Guillen for Resolutions, and Larson for Natural Resources.

Nearly 20 bills related to eminent domain have already been filed. The most comprehensive are companion bills HB 991 and SB 421 by Rep. Burns and Sen. Kolkhorst that target private entities and call for thorough, upfront disclosures to affected landowners, public meetings on projects, and penalties for low-ball offers, among other provisions. We are in the process of reviewing the bills and discussing possible revisions with stakeholders.

So far in the session, property owners and groundwater districts are most interested in House Bills 722, 724, and 726 by House Natural Resources Committee Chair Lyle Larson. These are bills that were either introduced or vetoed last session dealing with groundwater and brackish groundwater management and regulation. Sen. Perry, Chair of the Senate Water and Rural Affairs Committee, is expected to re-introduce his somewhat controversial omnibus groundwater management bill and his “loser-pays” attorneys’ fees legislation from last session.

Two closely watched bills will be House Bills 376 and 661 by Ken King which would be favorable to the deer breeding industry.

The Governor, Lt. Governor, and Speaker proposed voter approval for local property tax revenue in excess of 2.5 percent for the previous years. Their proposal will be vigorously opposed by local taxing authorities, citing their needs to comply with unfunded state mandates and respond adequately to cost growth.

For additional information about these or other bills, please go to <https://capitol.texas.gov/Home.aspx> or contact Robert Howard at robert@roberthowardandassociates.com or (512) 567-9470.