



Austin Landline Report August 2020

Elections

The July 14th primary run-off election winners were:

M.J. Hegar- (D) - U.S. Senate (Will face incumbent Sen. John Cornyn)

Monica De La Cruz (R) - U.S. House (Opponent will be incumbent Rep. Vicente Gonzalez)

Chrysta Castañeda (D) - Railroad Commissioner (Open seat-Jim Wright from Orange Grove will be her opponent)

Eddie Lucio, Jr. (D) - Texas Senate (Brownsville)

There were also a number of significant outcomes around the state. I was particularly pleased to see that a veterinarian in Granbury, Glenn Rogers, whom I supported and advised on water and eminent domain issues, was elected to a Texas House seat. He is interested in being on relevant committees and I foresee him as a future ally.

Interim Charges

The House and Senate are now contemplating how to move forward with hearings on interim charges. On July 22nd, Eric Opiela, Charles Maley, and I participated in a meeting with Senator Charles Perry, chair of the Senate Committee on Water and Rural Affairs. Chairman Perry said that he thinks the coming regular session will be dominated by the budget, especially as related to education and public health, but that a few other issues need to be addressed as well. At the top of his list is water development because he sees a continued long-term increase in Texas' population. He had originally intended to hold numerous public hearings on water, but is now waiting on Senate policy guidance on how public input will be received. He also mentioned a renewed grassroots effort to get Washington D.C. leaders to pressure Mexico to address its water debt in the Rio Grande. Another issue he addressed that is important to us who are involved in rural Texas is the expansion of broadband service and the re-funding of the Universal Service Fund.

He was also somewhat optimistic about state revenue, even though the Comptroller is projecting a \$5 billion shortfall. He thinks that the \$11 billion in federal bailout money for the state and local governments, plus Economic Stabilization Fund (“Rainy Day”) monies will help ease the pain.

Chairman Perry said that the House was further along in its preparations to receive public input, having already placed plexiglass in some hearing rooms. In the meantime, the House Committees on Recreation, Culture and Tourism and Natural Resources have posted notices stating that they would receive public input on their interim charges via written comments.