



Austin Landline Report September 2021

A quorum was finally established in the Texas House and the second called special session is well underway and nearing its end. Besides election laws and education policies, border security has been a major focus. Companion bills were introduced in the House (HB 9) and the Senate (SB 89) fulfilling the Governor's request for increased funding. The bills will increase funding to \$1.8 billion for the Department of Public Safety and the Texas National Guard to deploy more personnel to the border region. It will also provide funding for voluntary physical barriers, detention facilities, judicial functions, and health-related activities.

Sheriff Benny Martinez and several other border-region sheriffs travelled to Austin this week and last to testify at House and Senate committee hearings in support of the bills. Their compelling testimony on the realities they face brought many questions from the legislators and considerable press attention. The House has already passed its bill and the Senate is likely to do so soon. The bills as filed were identical, but any amendments will have to be resolved by both chambers before the bill can be sent to the Governor's desk.

Speculation abounds about when a third special session will be called to do redistricting and perhaps consider funding priorities for federal COVID relief funding. Conventional wisdom says that if a redistricting plan is in place by mid-November, the primary elections can take place in March. If it is not resolved until the end of the year, the primaries will likely be delayed until at least April.

Third special session begins September 20.

Your Austin Team,
Eric Opiela, Joe Maley, Charles Maley, and Robert Howard