

Texas Legislative Update

July Special Session

We need your help for this special session. Please be sure and see the ACTION item at the end.

On Thursday, July 8, 2021, the Texas Legislature will begin one of several special sessions planned for this year to complete unfinished business. Each special session lasts up to 30 days and there is no limit to the number of special sessions the governor can call. The governor stipulates which specific topics can be addressed through legislation and placed on the agenda (known as the call). It is not a guarantee that all the items the governor chooses will pass through the Legislature.

The Texas Legislature is in session every two years for 140 days with the 87th Legislative session having just ended on May 31, 2021. The only thing the Legislature is required to pass is a balanced biennial budget; however, thousands of bills are filed and considered at the request of citizens, lobbyists and/or statewide officials.

On July 1st, the SBTC delivered a letter to Governor Abbott asking for certain issues to be placed on the call. See here - sbtexas.com

Only one of the issues we raised is being considered by the governor (girls sports), but it may be weakened by not providing protections for young women at the collegiate level. Several legislators have stepped forward and are asking for him to also add a ban on child gender modification procedures to the call.

On July 7, Gov. Greg Abbott released his agenda that he would like to see addressed by the Legislature:

BAIL REFORM: Legislation reforming the bail system in Texas to protect the public from accused criminals who may be released on bail.

ELECTION INTEGRITY: Legislation strengthening the integrity of elections in Texas.

BORDER SECURITY: Legislation providing funding to support law-enforcement agencies, counties and other strategies as part of Texas' comprehensive border security plan.

SOCIAL MEDIA CENSORSHIP: Legislation safeguarding the freedom of speech by protecting social-media users from being censored by social-media companies based on the user's expressed viewpoints, including by providing a legal remedy for those wrongfully excluded from a platform.

ARTICLE X FUNDING: Legislation providing appropriations to the Legislature and legislative agencies in Article X of the General Appropriations Act.

FAMILY VIOLENCE PREVENTION: Legislation similar to Senate Bill 1109 from the 87th Legislature, Regular Session, requiring schools to provide appropriate education to middle- and high-school students about dating violence, domestic violence and child abuse, but that recognizes the right of parents to opt their children out of the instruction.

YOUTH SPORTS: Legislation identical to Senate Bill 29 as passed by the Texas Senate in the 87th Legislature, Regular Session, disallowing a student from competing in University Interscholastic League athletic competitions designated for the sex opposite to the student's sex at birth.

ABORTION-INDUCING DRUGS: Legislation similar to Senate Bill 394 from the 87th Legislature, Regular Session, which prohibits people from providing abortion-inducing drugs by mail or delivery service, strengthens the laws applicable to the reporting of abortions and abortion complications, and ensures that no abortion-inducing drugs are provided unless there is voluntary and informed consent.

THIRTEENTH CHECK: Legislation similar to House Bill 3507 from the 87th Legislature, Regular Session, relating to a “thirteenth check” or one-time supplemental payment of benefits under the Teacher Retirement System of Texas.

CRITICAL RACE THEORY: Legislation similar to House Bill 3979 concerning critical race theory as originally passed by the Texas Senate in the 87th Legislature, Regular Session.

APPROPRIATIONS: Legislation providing appropriations from additional available general revenue for the following purposes:

- Property-tax relief;
- Enhanced protection for the safety of children in Texas’ foster-care system by attracting and retaining private providers for the system; and
- To better safeguard the state from potential cybersecurity threats.

ACTION: We are seeking to gather witnesses (oral and/or written) for testimony on the “Youth Sports” issue which would disallow a student from competing in University Interscholastic League athletic competitions designated for the sex opposite to the student’s sex at birth. If you would be willing to testify on behalf of keeping the male/female God-given distinction in women’s sports and/or know of someone who may have personally dealt with this, please contact casmussen@sbtxas.com as soon as possible.

Also, the “**Family Violence Prevention**” item on the call that would require schools to provide instruction to middle- and high-school students about dating violence, domestic violence and child abuse is of extreme concern. There may be a provision to allow opt-out for parents, but it should be opt-in only and the curriculum made available for parents to see before deciding.

Even so, the bill referenced (SB 1109) is unnecessary (the subjects of abuse, family and dating violence are already covered in the newly adopted Health TEKS), violates local control and parental rights, and would require the State Board of Education to edit Texas Administrative Code 115. It would also be a “vehicle” for Comprehensive Sex Education. This bill should not be supported.

We will keep you updated as the special session unfolds. Please be praying for our leaders during this important time for our state and nation.

To call or email the Governor - gov.texas.gov/contact and Lt. Governor - ltgov.texas.gov
To find out who represents you, go to wrm.capitol.texas.gov

For more about the 87th Legislative session and an end of session summary, please visit our page here sbtxas.com/terlc.