

Interim Committee Charges

Texas House of Representatives

81st Legislature

The following is a list of selected Interim Committee Charges that will be of interest to the City of Austin. The Government Relations Office and the City's Lobby Team will monitor these issues and provide input to the Committees when appropriate.

November 2009

House Committee on Appropriations

- Monitor the use of funds, adherence to state and federal reporting requirements, and ongoing development of federal rules and regulations provided under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). Evaluate the impact of those funds on the state's economy. *Joint Interim Charge with House Select Committee on Federal Economic Stabilization Funding*

House Committee on Business and Industry

- Examine ways to increase the creation of jobs in the Texas manufacturing industry.

House Committee on County Affairs

- Study the current practices and tools available to counties to manage growth and development. Consider incompatible land uses and county rulemaking authority, including rulemaking authority bracketed to counties of a certain population.
- Study county-level health care delivery models for indigent health care that emphasize community-based care to improve the continuity and quality of care. Compare urban and rural health care delivery models and make necessary legislative recommendations.
- Examine how local governments can better inform the public about local government debts.

House Committee on Energy Resources

- Survey current local ordinances governing surface use of property in oil and gas development. Recommend changes, if any, to the authority of the Railroad Commission to regulate the operation of oil and gas industries in urban areas of the state, particularly the Barnett Shale.
- Monitor the implementation of recent legislation dealing with carbon capture and storage and make recommendations as to whether further action is required to resolve outstanding issues. Examine proposed legislation from other states and review federal initiatives.
- Examine the state's portfolio of electric generation resources, including traditional sources, emerging renewable technologies, and energy efficiency. Determine whether the existing state regulatory programs and incentives are adequate to meet the energy needs of the future. Consider factors relating to reliability, requirements for additional transmission, or auxiliary services. *Joint Interim Charge with House Committee on State Affairs*
- Consider the establishment of uniform statutes and codes relating to liquid petroleum gas permitting and operations as a means to resolve conflicts of interpretation between state and local jurisdictions.

House Committee on Environmental Regulation

- Examine the regulation of air quality in the areas of permitting new and modified sources, public participation, and enforcement. Consider data and proposed federal standards and rules as they relate to the State Implementation Plan.
- Survey existing recycling programs and suggest needed improvements.

- Monitor federal legislative and regulatory initiatives as they pertain to climate change. Consider Texas' responses to proposals and make recommendations as to any further preparations.
- Study the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality's use of supplemental environmental projects in its enforcement process.

House Committee on Land and Resource Management

- Examine unresolved issues relating to eminent domain legislation introduced during the 81st Legislative Session. Monitor any pending litigation.

House Committee on Licensing and Administrative Procedures

- Review the current training standards used for emergency telecommunications personnel, particularly evaluating their effectiveness in adequately training 911 operators.

House Committee on Natural Resources

- Evaluate groundwater regulations and permitting processes throughout the state, including the role of state agencies in groundwater management, the development of desired future conditions, and the adoption of groundwater management plans in relation to regional and state water planning.
- Monitor the effects of current and proposed federal initiatives that could impact the implementation of the State Water Plan. Evaluate the policies and investments developed by other states dealing with water issues similar to the State of Texas.
- Monitor ongoing drought conditions and initiatives to promote water conservation through the review of the following: state requirements for the submittal of water conservation plans and annual reporting; the "trigger" for use of drought contingency plans; recommendations by state agencies and the Water Conservation Advisory Council; and progress toward the development of recycled water resources and desalination projects.
- Evaluate the regulatory model for investor-owned water and sewer utilities, including rate case process and timing, consultant fee recovery, overall cost reductions, and more effective consumer participation.
- Monitor the agencies and programs under the committee's jurisdiction.

House Select Committee on Federal Economic Stabilization Funding

- Monitor the use of funds, adherence to state and federal reporting requirements, and ongoing development of federal rules and regulations provided under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). Evaluate the impact of those funds on the state's economy. *Joint Interim Charge with House Committee on Appropriations*
- Review the Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs' Weatherization Assistance Program and increased funding from ARRA. Examine the methodology used to distribute funds and the program's effectiveness at reducing residential energy costs. *Joint Interim Charge with House Committee on Urban Affairs*

- Monitor the agencies and programs under the committee's jurisdiction.

House Committee on State Affairs

- Review state compliance with federal law regarding undocumented immigrants. Evaluate the costs of services and benefits provided to undocumented immigrants by state agencies and local governments.
- Examine state policy on "green" technologies for all state buildings and costs associated with such implementation.
- Monitor federal legislation and regulatory initiatives pertaining to climate change and its effects on utilities and consumers. Consider Texas' response to proposals and make recommendations as to any further preparations.
- Examine the state's portfolio of electric generation resources, including traditional sources, emerging renewable technologies, and energy efficiency. Determine whether the existing state regulatory programs and incentives are adequate to meet the energy needs of the future. Consider factors relating to reliability, requirements for additional transmission, or auxiliary services. *Joint Interim Charge with House Committee on Energy Resources*
- Monitor the agencies and programs under the committee's jurisdiction.

House Committee on Technology, Economic Development, and Workforce

- Identify promising technologies being developed that could establish Texas as a leader in emerging industries. Examine the adequacy and focus of research in these areas and the state's efforts to commercialize proven technologies.
- Examine ways to keep Texas' workforce and economy competitive. Determine how Texas can enhance its competitiveness in a strategic manner, including bringing new jobs to Texas.
- Study opportunities to expand broadband access in underserved communities through innovative new technologies and identify whether federal funding sources may be utilized.
- Analyze the awards that have been granted under the Texas Enterprise Fund and Emerging Technology Fund and determine how these awards have impacted job creation, capital investment, and economic development in the state.

House Committee on Transportation

- Monitor the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) to ensure the agency is implementing recommended legislative, sunset, and Grant Thornton management audit changes.
- Review the organization and operation of Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs). Consider the relationship between MPOs and TxDOT regarding transportation planning and programming.
- Study the practices and procedures used in the development of toll roads and make recommendations as necessary.
- Review federal, state, and local programs to promote traffic light signalization, improve traffic flow, and reduce congestion.

- Study methods for improving safety on Texas roadways. Study the funding levels of crash prevention programs directed toward pedestrians, bicyclists, motorcyclists, and other vulnerable road users. Explore ways to improve safety for roadside workers.
- Study the safety and efficiency of the existing agriculture-related transportation infrastructure. Consider the air, ground, and rail transportation needs of rural Texas and analyze the effect on economic development. *Joint Interim Charge with House Committee on Agriculture and Livestock.*
- Monitor the agencies and programs under the committee's jurisdiction.

House Committee on Urban Affairs

- Examine the Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs' (TDHCA) regional allocation formula policies and determine methodologies that could enhance equitable distribution.
- Review the TDCHA's Weatherization Assistance Program and increased funding from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. Examine the methodology used to distribute funds and the program's effectiveness at reducing residential energy costs. *Joint Interim Charge with House Select Committee on Federal Economic Stabilization Funding*
- Evaluate the method of distributing federal hurricane relief funds and recommend improvements. *Joint Interim Charge with House Committee on Appropriations*
- Make recommendations regarding the feasibility of a housing initiative that promotes independence and prevents unnecessary institutionalization of eligible populations.
- Monitor the agencies and programs under the committee's jurisdiction.

House Committee on Ways and Means

- Monitor the revised franchise tax and identify changes to simplify the tax and improve compliance and fairness.
- Examine the state's major tax exemptions to determine how the current costs and benefits compare with the original legislative objectives. Make recommendations for adjustments as needed.
- Study methods for improving the quality and uniformity of, and communications to taxpayers about, property tax appraisals.
- Evaluate the impact of the transfer of administrative law judges from the Comptroller's Office to the State Office of Administrative Hearings on the dispute resolution process.
- Study the tax structure as applied to cable versus satellite service to determine if any unfair competition results from state tax policies.
- Monitor the implementation of property tax appraisal and alternative valuation appeal reforms enacted by the 81st Legislature.
- Monitor the agencies and programs under the committee's jurisdiction.