



Legislative Update

Austin-Travis County Food
Policy Board

March 13, 2017

The 85th Legislative Session

- Friday was the deadline to file bills. 847 were filed Friday. Anything now can only be filed under special circumstances.
- Currently, there are 6,786 bills filed.
- To date, only emergency items have been heard on the House and Senate floors—DFPS, ethics, sanctuary cities, etc.
- It is “committee time” currently. More floor debate happens in April.
- Session ends May 29.

Food Access Legislation

- HB 1/SB 1: General Appropriations Bill
- HB 146 (Davis): would require ID to use a Lone Star Card
- HB 148 (Schaefer): would require a photo on a Lone Star Card
- HB 164 (Lucio), HB 1047 (Thierry), SB 723 (Miles), HB 3299 (Thierry), SB 2156 (Zaffirini): grocery access investment, healthy corner stores, food deserts

Food Access Legislation

- HB 842 (Burrows): prohibits the purchase of energy drinks, carbonated beverages, sweetened beverages, and certain types of snack foods with SNAP benefits
- HB 1126 (Springer): waives any exemptions from work requirements for SNAP recipients
- HB 1533 (Farrar): eliminates liquid assets and autos from the asset test for SNAP
- HB 2159 (Giddings): sets a standard policy for how school districts handle unpaid meal balances

Food Access Legislation

- HCR 35 (Metcalf): urges Congress to amend the Farm Bill to limit the types of food eligible for purchase with SNAP
- SB 596 (Lucio): imposes a statewide tax on sugar-sweetened beverages, as well as powders and syrups
- SB 725 (Miles) and 755 (Menendez): allows surplus food from a school district to be donated to a nonprofit

Food Access Legislation

- SB 1303 (Lucio): requires a school district SHAC to review policies related to food marketing at a school district
- SB 1308 (Hall): makes the school breakfast program and offering a free breakfast to students at high-need schools optional
- SB 1310 (Hall): makes the requirement for a school district to have a SHAC optional
- HB 4022 (E. Rodriguez): creates a statewide study on access to healthy foods

Local Ag Legislation

- HB 231/SB 700 (Zaffirini/E. Rodriguez): clarifies tax code by specifying that fruit and vegetable production qualify as “agricultural uses,” and requires clear guidelines for ag valuation qualification
- HB 950/SB 330 (J. Rodriguez and J. Rodriguez): reduces waiting period for ag valuation to one year for veterans who become farmers and for young beginning farmers
- SB 60 (Zaffirini): allows school districts that purchase agricultural products to give preference to Texas products

Local Ag Legislation

- HB 1926 (E. Rodriguez): expands the types of foods that can be made in home kitchens and sold to the public
- SB 656 (Zaffirini): creates an agricultural and rural ombudsman in Dept of Eco Devo to help farmers and local food businesses navigate multiple regulations from multiple agencies
- HB 57 (Flynn): allows raw milk to be sold directly to consumers at farmers markets
- SB 1172/HB 2758 (Perry/Geren): would prevent cities and counties from regulating any seed in any manner, including planting seed or cultivating plants grown from seed
- SB 1983 (Miles): creates Texas Urban Agricultural Innovation Authority.
- SB 1984 (Miles): creates Urban Farming Pilot Program

Other Info

Central Texas Legislators on Key Committees:

Appropriations: Dawnna Dukes, Larry Gonzales, Donna Howard

Finance: Lois Kolkhorst, Charles Schwertner, Kirk Watson

House Ag: John Cyrier

Senate Ag: Lois Kolkhorst

Senate Health and Human Services: Charles Schwertner, Dawn Buckingham, Lois Kolkhorst, Kirk Watson

House Calendars: Donna Howard

House State Affairs: Eddie Rodriguez

Senate State Affairs: Charles Schwertner, Judith Zaffirini

Ways to Keep Connected

- Texas Legislature Online:
www.capitol.state.tx.us
- Texas Tribune: www.texastribune.org
- Farm and Ranch Freedom Alliance:
www.farmandranchfreedom.org
- Center for Public Policy Priorities:
<http://forabettertexas.org/home.html>
- Michael and Susan Dell Center for Healthy Living:
<https://sph.uth.edu/research/centers/dell/85th-texas-legislature/>