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HOUSE RESEARCH ORGANIZATION

daily floor report

Friday, April 25, 2025
89th Legislature, Number 50
The House convenes at 9 a.m.
Part One

Forty-one bills are on the General State Calendar for second reading consideration today. The list of bills in Part One of the *Daily Floor Report* appears on the following page.



Gary VanDeaver
Chairman
89(R) - 50

HOUSE RESEARCH ORGANIZATION

Daily Floor Report

Friday, April 25, 2025

89th Legislature, Number 50

Part 1

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SUBJECT: Establishing the Texas Advisory Committee on Geopolitical Conflict

VOTE: 11 ayes — Hefner, R. Lopez, Canales, Cortez, Dorazio, Hickland, Holt, Isaac, Louderback, McLaughlin, Pierson

0 nays

WITNESSES: For - Jacqueline Deal, State Armor; Michael Lucci, State Armor
(*Registered, but did not testify*: Jose Melendez, Texas Public Policy Foundation; Steven Deline)

Against - None

On - (*Registered, but did not testify*: Susan Lucas)

DIGEST: CSHB 118 would establish the Texas Advisory Committee on Geopolitical Conflict to develop state security strategies and policies before a geopolitical conflict occurred and collect and prepare information to assist in enhancing Texas's command-and-control functions in the event of such a conflict. The bill could be cited as the Texas Geopolitical Stress Test Act.

The bill would establish various definitions, including:

- “critical infrastructure,” to mean a publicly or privately owned system or asset, whether physical or virtual, so vital to Texas or the United States that its incapacity or destruction would have a debilitating impact on state or national security, economic security, public health, or any combination of these; and
- “critical procurement,” to mean a purchase made by a state agency, local government, county district or a private nongovernmental organization that is critical to the proper functioning of state services, state operations, or the operations of this state's critical infrastructure, or the health, safety, or security of this state's citizens.

Powers and duties. The advisory committee would be authorized under the bill to conduct field investigations, hold hearings, receive testimony, consult with federal and state officials, and otherwise take any lawful action to carry out its purposes. The committee also could consult with and retain external advisors to provide expertise and collaborative research support.

The committee would have to create several initial reports on the potential impact of geopolitical conflict that would have to be produced and submitted to the governor by May 29, 2026. The committee also could ask for additional reports based on these findings, as deemed necessary.

Tabletop exercise report. With assistance from the Texas National Guard, the advisory committee would be required to conduct and create an initial report on a tabletop exercise centered on an invasion by a foreign adversary. The exercise would be required to explore a scenario that resulted in aggression against the U.S. Armed Forces and involved intentional or incidental damage to a state supply chain, a critical infrastructure facility, or another asset.

The committee could request additional tabletop exercise reports following the initial report. An entity providing electric or gas utility services would not be required to disclose the specific locations of the entity's critical infrastructure to the committee for the purposes of conducting the exercise.

Supply chains and critical procurements audit, report. With the assistance of the adjutant general, the advisory committee would be required to investigate and produce an initial report on critical procurements supplied through a state supply chain that would be disrupted in the event of a geopolitical conflict, recommend alternative sourcing strategies for critical procurements, and highlight the difficulties and risks associated with the supply chain disruption.

Drug supply chain audit, report. The advisory committee, in collaboration with the Health and Human Services Commission and the Department of State Health Services, would be required to investigate and create an initial report on the state's drug supply chain to identify prescription

drugs, including active pharmaceutical ingredients and key starting materials, produced in or by a foreign adversary or substantially sourced from a company subject to the jurisdiction of a foreign adversary.

The advisory committee also would be required to investigate and include in the initial report whether the prescription drugs identified were of low or questionable efficacy or were toxic or contained impurities known by certain agencies to pose a risk to human health.

The advisory committee also would have to study and include in the initial report whether the drug supply chain of the prescription drugs identified would be disrupted in the event of a geopolitical conflict, recommend alternative sourcing strategies for the prescription drugs, and determine the feasibility and cost of creating and maintaining a strategic supply of prescription drugs.

Critical infrastructure protection audit, report. The advisory committee would be required to investigate and create an initial report on potential threats to the state's critical infrastructure in the event of a geopolitical conflict and develop strategies to prevent and protect against these threats.

Other investigations. The advisory committee could investigate additional matters at its discretion by a majority vote of the committee.

Subpoena. The advisory committee could compel by subpoena the attendance of a relevant witness at a hearing or the production for inspection or copying of a relevant record. The committee, acting through the attorney general, could bring an action in a district court to enforce a subpoena against a person who failed to comply. The court would be required to order compliance with the subpoena if it found that good cause existed to issue the subpoena.

Confidentiality of information. Any research, data, reports, findings, and other information provided to or produced by the advisory committee would be considered confidential and excepted from public availability requirements. The governor's office would be required to maintain the information, and the governor could disclose information in the reports or findings that were excepted from public disclosure requirements.

Public report and policy recommendations. The advisory committee would be required to make an annual report with narrative and summary findings from its investigations available to educate the public. The report could include policy recommendations for consideration by state and local government officials and recommendations to improve the resilience of Texas citizens and critical infrastructure.

The report could not include any information the release of which would pose a risk to state security or national security. The advisory committee could only release the report if approved by a majority vote.

Composition and administration. The advisory committee would consist of nine members, which would have to include two members each appointed by the governor, the lieutenant governor, and the speaker of the House of Representatives, with one of the governor's appointments being a representative of the Texas National Guard. The committee would also have to include an adjutant general or designee, the public safety director of the Department of Public Safety or designee, and the chief of the Texas Division of Emergency Management or designee.

Members would be required to serve a two-year term, except the adjutant general or designee, the public safety director of DPS or designee, and the chief of TDEM or designee. Vacancies would be provided for in the same manner as the original appointment.

Members would not be entitled to compensation for service on the committee, but could be reimbursed for actual and necessary expenses from the performance of committee duties.

In making appointments to the advisory committee, the governor, lieutenant governor, and speaker of the House would be required to appoint individuals with applicable knowledge of the threats posed to Texas in the event of a geopolitical conflict. These appointments would have to be made by October 31, 2025.

Advisory committee officers. The member appointed by the governor who was not the Texas National Guard representative would be required

to serve as chair of the advisory committee. The member also would be required to have applicable knowledge of the threats posed to Texas in the event of a geopolitical conflict and the research and leadership experience to competently and comprehensively perform the advisory committee's duties. The lieutenant governor would be required to designate one appointee to serve as vice chair. The committee could elect additional officers from among its members and establish and approve the duties and responsibilities of advisory committee officers.

Meetings. The advisory committee would be required to meet at least once every three months, with additional meetings on the call of a majority of the members or the governor. Advisory committee meetings would not be subject to open meetings laws.

Gifts and grants. The advisory committee could accept gifts, grants, and donations to pay for the committee's activities.

Expiration. The advisory committee would be abolished, and this chapter would expire September 1, 2029.

CSHB 118 would take effect September 1, 2025.

SUPPORTERS
SAY:

By establishing the Texas Advisory Committee on Geopolitical Conflict under the Texas Geopolitical Stress Test Act to develop security strategies and prepare reports on the state's potential security and supply vulnerabilities, CSHB 118 would help Texas better prepare for the effects of a global conflict. A global conflict can potentially sever key supply chains, including pharmaceuticals, hospital equipment, power transformers, and semiconductors. Such a conflict also could threaten critical infrastructure, as noted in the governor's executive order prioritizing the protection of critical infrastructure.

As global tensions continue to grow, the state should identify potential security and supply vulnerabilities so they can be addressed. By investigating and developing contingency plans to address these vulnerabilities and conducting tabletop exercises to more effectively test alternative solutions, the advisory committee would help provide a better

understanding of what is needed to shield the state against the ramifications of a global conflict.

CRITICS
SAY:

No concerns identified.

SUBJECT: Requiring a uniform coordination of benefits questionnaire for health plans

COMMITTEE: Insurance — favorable, without amendment

VOTE: 7 ayes — Dean, J. González, Hopper, Morgan, Paul, Spiller, Wharton

0 nays

2 absent — Vo, Goodwin

WITNESSES: For — Abel Longoria, Hospitality Health 24 Hr ER (*Registered, but did not testify*: Rita Rolf, National Association of Benefit and Insurance Professionals; Steve Bresnen, Texas Association of Freestanding Emergency Centers; David Reynolds, Texas Chapter American College of Physicians; Drew Graham, Texas Coalition for Patients; Kelsey Bernstein, Texas Council of Community Centers; Joel Ballew, Texas Health Resources; John Hawkins, Texas Hospital Association; Jeff Addicks; Thomas Parkinson)

Against — None

On — (*Registered, but did not testify*: Rachel Bowden, Texas Department of Insurance)

DIGEST: HB 388 would require the commissioner of insurance, in collaboration with appropriate stakeholders, to adopt rules establishing a uniform coordination of benefits questionnaire to be used by all health benefit plan issuers in the state by January 1, 2026.

Each health benefit plan issuer offering a health benefit plan with a coordination of benefits provision would be required to use the uniform coordination of benefits questionnaire and make it available to health care providers as appropriate.

The bill would apply only to a health benefit plan that provided benefits for medical or surgical expenses incurred as a result of a health condition, accident, or sickness, including an individual, group, blanket, or franchise insurance policy or insurance agreement, a group hospital service contract,

or an individual or group evidence of coverage or similar coverage document that was issued by:

- an insurance company;
- a group hospital service corporation;
- a health maintenance organization;
- an approved nonprofit health corporation that held a certificate of authority;
- a multiple employer welfare arrangement that held a certificate of authority;
- a stipulated premium company;
- a Lloyd's plan; or
- a reciprocal or interinsurance exchange.

The bill would apply to:

- certain small employer health benefit plans;
- standard health benefit plans;
- basic coverage plans under the Texas Public School Employees Group Benefits Program;
- primary care coverage plans under Texas school employees uniform group health coverage;
- plans providing basic coverage under the Uniform Insurance Benefits Act for employees of the University of Texas system and the Texas A&M University system;
- alternative health benefit coverage offered by a subsidiary of the Texas Mutual Insurance Company;
- the state Medicaid program;
- the child health plan program;
- a regional or local health care program; and
- self-funded health benefit plans sponsored by professional employer organizations.

The bill would take effect September 1, 2025, and would apply only to the use of a coordination of benefits questionnaire on or after February 1, 2026.

SUPPORTERS
SAY:

By requiring health insurance carriers to use a standardized coordination of benefits questionnaire, HB 388 would streamline and expedite the insurance billing process. Currently, each of the five major health

insurance carriers in Texas uses a unique questionnaire to request the same or similar information, which can result in confusion in the billing process. This can cause errors that lead to surprise bills for consumers, especially for families with dual plans, despite having appropriate coverage. The bill would benefit both insurers and consumers, as both parties would quickly become familiar with the standardized form, and the bill would not impose any meaningful burden on health plans.

CRITICS
SAY:

No concerns identified.

- SUBJECT:** Amending and expanding veterans' mental health services
- COMMITTEE:** Homeland Security, Public Safety & Veterans' Affairs — favorable, without amendment
- VOTE:** 10 ayes — Hefner, R. Lopez, Canales, Cortez, Dorazio, Holt, Isaac, Louderback, McLaughlin, Pierson
- 1 nay — Hickland
- WITNESSES:** For — William West, The American Legion, Dept of Texas; Steven Price, The VOICES of Our Veterans; Mitch Fuller, VFW Department of Texas (*Registered, but did not testify*: Lyssette Galvan, NAMI Texas; Jim Brennan, Texas Coalition of Veterans Organizations; Sarah Berel-Harrop)
- Against — None
- On — George McEntyre, Health and Human Services Commission; Dr. Blake Harris, Texas Veterans Commission
- DIGEST:** CSHB 114 would amend provisions related to veterans' assistance in to establish a grant program for mental health services for veterans and their families, annual reporting requirements for this program, and a veteran suicide prevention action plan. The bill also would remove the requirement for the Texas Veterans Commission (TVC) to coordinate with the Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) in administering the statutory mental health program for veterans.
- TVC administration of veteran mental health program.** CSHB 114 would amend provisions on statewide coordination of a mental health program for veterans to specify that TVC would be required to administer the program on its own, rather than in coordination with HHSC, and would make conforming changes in statute to reflect this change.
- The bill would require that the veteran mental health program administered by TVC included:
- peer-to-peer counseling;

- access to licensed mental health professionals for peer service coordinators and peers;
- TVC-approved training and technical assistance for peer service coordinators, licensed mental health professionals, and peers;
- identification, retention, and screening of community-based licensed mental health professionals;
- suicide prevention training for peer service coordinators and peers;
- veteran jail diversion services, including veterans treatment courts; and
- coordination of mental health first aid for veterans training to veterans and their family members.

The bill also would require TVC to develop rural veterans and women veterans mental health initiatives and to solicit and ensure that specialized training was provided to peers who wanted to perform peer-to-peer counseling and other peer-to-peer services. Under the bill, TVC and HHSC, rather than TVC and DSHS, would jointly verify that state agencies authorized to award grants to an entity for the provision of mental health services adopted policies to comply with certain statutory requirements related to the program.

Grant program for mental health services for veterans and their families. To the extent that funds were appropriated to TVC for that purpose, the bill would require TVC to establish a grant program to support community mental health programs that provided services and treatment to veterans and their families. TVC would be required to ensure that each grant recipient obtained or secured contributions to match awarded grants, which could include cash or in-kind contributions from private contributors or local governments, as determined by the executive director, but could not include state or federal funds.

As authorized by the executive director, money appropriated to or obtained by TVC would have to be disbursed directly to grant recipients.

The bill would require that all grant awards be used for the sole purpose of supporting community programs that provided and coordinated mental health care services and other transition support services for veterans and their families. For services and treatment provided in a single county, the bill would require TVC to condition each grant on potential grant

recipients providing funds from non-state sources in a total amount at least equal to:

- 25 percent of the grant amount if the program provided services and treatment in a county with a population of less than 100,000;
- 50 percent of the grant amount if the program provided services and treatment in a county with a population of 100,000-250,000; or
- 100 percent of the grant amount if the program provided services and treatment in a county with a population of 250,000 or more.

For community mental health programs that provided services and treatment in more than one county, TVC would be required to condition each grant provided on a potential grant recipient providing funds from non-state sources in a total amount of at least:

- 25 percent of the grant amount if the county with the largest population served by the program was less than 100,000;
- 50 percent of the grant amount if the county with the largest population served by the program was between 100,000-250,000; or
- 100 percent of the grant amount if the county with the largest population served by the program was 250,000 or more.

TVC would be required to select grant recipients based on the submission of applications or proposals by nonprofit and governmental entities. The executive director would be required to develop application evaluation and grant selection criteria that met requirements specified by the bill, including criteria that addressed the possibility of and a method for making multiple awards.

The bill would limit the amount TVC could spend on administrative costs to implement the bill to no more than 5 percent of funds appropriated by the Legislature.

Reporting system. No later than December 1, the bill would require TVC to submit to the governor and the Legislature an annual report on the number of veterans who received services through the mental health program for veterans, the number of peers and peer service coordinators who were trained, an evaluation of the services provided, and recommendations to improve the program.

Veteran suicide prevention action plan. The bill would require TVC to collaborate with certain federal agencies, state entities, veterans advocacy groups, medical providers, and other organizations that the commission considered appropriate to develop a comprehensive action to prevent veteran suicides by increasing access to and availability of professional veteran health services.

The action plan would have to:

- identify opportunities for raising awareness of and providing resources for veteran suicide prevention;
- identify opportunities to increase access to veteran mental health services;
- identify funding resources to provide accessible, affordable veteran mental health services;
- provide measures to expand public-private partnerships to ensure access to quality, timely mental health services;
- provide for proactive outreach measures to reach veterans needing care;
- provide for peer-to-peer service coordination, including training, certification, recertification, and continuing education for peer coordinators; and
- address suicide prevention awareness, measures, and training regarding veterans involved in the justice system.

The bill would require TVC to make specific short-term and long-term statutory, administrative, and budget-related recommendations to the Legislature and the governor on policy initiatives and reforms necessary to implement the plan. The action plan would need to be fully implemented by September 1, 2027, and provisions relating to the plan would expire on that date.

Other provisions. CSHB 114 would repeal certain provisions of the Health and Safety Code related to mental health services for veterans.

The bill would take immediate effect if finally passed by a two-thirds record vote of the membership of each house. Otherwise, it would take effect September 1, 2025.

SUPPORTERS
SAY:

CSHB 114 would support veterans' mental health and suicide prevention efforts by establishing grant programs to expand community mental health services for veterans and their families and transferring the sole administration of such initiatives to TVC.

Many veterans have suffered from a lack of access to services and licensed professionals trained to meet their unique mental health needs. The bill would address this issue by conferring sole administrative responsibilities of veterans' health initiatives on TVC, rather than HHSC, as TVC's mental health department already administers training oversight, certification, and data collection efforts for veterans' programs. Shifting mental health programs for veterans to TVC would allow the commission to provide consistent oversight, steward grants, and help veterans access life-saving services sooner. In addition, the bill would serve to increase the efficiency of the program, since the two agencies would no longer have to navigate coordination for the program.

Additional veterans' mental health initiatives proposed by the bill would help strengthen programs like peer support networks and veterans' treatment courts and improve collaboration efforts between TVC, federal agencies, and local providers to better serve veteran populations. Through the consolidation of veterans' mental health services and implementation of a dedicated suicide prevention strategy, HB 114 would help reduce veteran suicide rates, provide support for veteran families, and ensure that veterans received timely and effective mental health care.

CRITICS
SAY:

No concerns identified.

- SUBJECT:** Expanding grant eligibility for certain alternative fueling facilities
- COMMITTEE:** Environmental Regulation — favorable, without amendment
- VOTE:** 6 ayes — Landgraf, Ordaz, K. Bell, Bumgarner, Oliverson, Reynolds
1 nay — Toth
2 absent — Anchía, Morales Shaw
- WITNESSES:** For — (*Registered, but did not testify*: Melissa Shannon, Bexar County Commissioners Court; Carrie Rogers, City of Austin; Alexa Aragonz, City of Houston; Christine Wright, City of San Antonio; Josie Castro Garcia, Dallas County; Cyrus Reed, Lone Star Chapter Sierra Club; Adrian Shelley, Public Citizen; James Lovett, San Antonio Mobility Coalition, Inc.; Cheyenne Rendon, Society of Native Nations; Dale Laine, VIA Transit)
Against — None
On — Phillip Martin, Environmental Defense Fund (*Registered, but did not testify*: Nate Hickman, Texas Commission on Environmental Quality)
- BACKGROUND:** Health and Safety Code sec. 393.004 requires the Texas Environmental Quality Commission (TCEQ) to establish eligibility and prioritization criteria for grants under the Texas Alternative Fueling Facilities Program. The prioritization criteria must provide that, for each grant round, TCEQ may not award a grant to an entity that does not agree to make the alternative fueling facility accessible and available to the public at times designated by the grant contract until each eligible entity that agrees to those terms has been awarded a grant.
Health and Safety Code sec. 386.001 assigns “nonattainment area” the meaning designated under 42 U.S.C. sec. 7407, which defines a nonattainment area as an area where air quality exceeds the established national ambient air quality standards for one or more criteria pollutants.

DIGEST: HB 205 would exempt certain fueling facilities from the prohibition under Health and Safety Code sec. 393.004 against certain grant awards. The bill would establish that the prohibition would not apply to a facility that was:

- owned or operated by metropolitan rapid or regional transit authorities;
- located in a county with a population of more than one million; and
- located in a nonattainment area or an affected county as defined by Health and Safety Code sec. 386.001.

The bill would take effect September 1, 2025.

SUPPORTERS SAY: HB 205 would expand grant eligibility for the Texas Alternative Fueling Facilities Program to transit authorities by removing the public accessibility requirement for facilities owned by transit authorities in certain larger counties. This change would support state efforts to transition fleet vehicles from diesel to cleaner, cost-effective fuels like compressed natural gas.

Under the program, the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) awards grants to fueling stations that offer alternative fuels, such as compressed natural gas, within designated clean transportation zones. Currently, facilities must meet specific operating hours outlined in the grant contract and be publicly accessible to qualify. This criteria disqualifies most transit authorities, whose alternative fuel facilities are typically reserved for their own fleets and not open to the public. By expanding access to these grants, the bill would empower transit authorities to reduce long-term fuel costs and stimulate economic growth through job creation in the clean energy sector.

The bill would not alter the total funding available or mandate awards to transit authorities, it would only give certain transit authorities a fair opportunity to compete for existing funds. Moreover, eligibility would be narrowly tailored to include only transit authority facilities in counties with over one million residents in designated nonattainment areas, meaning that few entities would be added to the eligible list.

CRITICS
SAY:

By removing the requirement for certain facilities to be publicly accessible to qualify for Texas Alternative Fueling Facilities Program grants, HB 205 could reduce the amount of available funds for other eligible entities that met all current criteria.

SUBJECT: Amending requirements for certain child welfare licenses and facilities

COMMITTEE: Human Services — favorable, without amendment

VOTE: 11 ayes — Hull, Manuel, A. Davis, Dorazio, C. Morales, Noble,
Richardson, Rose, Schatzline, Slawson, Swanson

0 nays

WITNESSES: For - Brandon Logan, One Accord for Kids; Rachel Walters, Texas Alliance of Child and Family Services (TACFS); Andrew Brown, Texas Public Policy Foundation (*Registered, but did not testify*: Andrea Sparks, Buckner International; Adam Haynes, Conference of Urban Counties; Bryan Mares, National Association of Social Workers-Texas; Madeleine Greene, TCCB; Kate Murphy, Texans Care for Children; Allison Billodeau, Texas Alliance of Child and Family Services; Sarah Crockett, Texas CASA)

Against — None

On — (*Registered, but did not testify*: Jordan Dixon, Health and Human Services Commission)

DIGEST: CSHB 2789 would revise various provisions of the Human Resources Code related to regulations for child welfare services and facilities.

Single source continuum contractors. HB 2789 would exempt from the requirement to obtain a child-placing agency license a single source continuum contractor that contracts with the Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) to provide community-based care, including the management and oversight of foster care and other child welfare services, consistent with the community-based care implementation plan.

A single source continuum contractor would not be required to obtain a child-placing agency license for the purpose of fulfilling its contractual obligations to DFPS. This exemption would not relieve a contractor from compliance with other applicable laws, rules, or regulations governing the

provision of foster care, adoption services, or other child welfare services, including requirements to ensure the health, safety, and well-being of children in its care.

The exemption could not be construed to exempt any subcontractor or child-placing agency working under a single source continuum contractor from applicable licensing requirements. A single source continuum contractor could choose to obtain a child-placing agency license if it determined that obtaining such a license would facilitate the performance of its contractual obligations or provide additional operational flexibility. However, the bill would specify that single source continuum contractors were not required to obtain a license to fulfill their duties.

Liability insurance. The bill would decrease the amount of liability insurance coverage the holder of a license or registration for certain facilities, homes, and agencies that provide child-care services would be required to maintain from \$300,000 to \$100,000 for each occurrence of negligence. For a listed family home that provides child-care services, the bill also would reduce the amount of liability insurance required from \$300,000 to \$100,000 for each occurrence of negligence. In addition, a listed family home would no longer be required to file a certificate of insurance annually with the Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC). These provisions would take effect January 1, 2026.

Initial license. The bill would extend the period during which an initial license for certain facilities, homes, and agencies that provide child-care services would be valid from six months to 12 months from the date it was issued.

“No Trespassing” notices at residential treatment centers. The bill would remove provisions specifying the locations at which each general residential operation operating as a residential treatment center must post "No Trespassing" notices, as well as provisions specifying the content and format of the notices.

Qualifications for child-care administrator and child-placing agency administrator license. The bill would remove the requirement to have a master's or doctoral degree in social work or other area of study, or a

bachelor's degree and two years' full-time experience in child care or a closely related field, to be eligible for a child-care administrator or child-placing agency administrator license. The bill also would remove the requirement that a person have one year of full-time experience in management or supervision of child-care or child-placing personnel and programs. Instead, in addition to existing testing and criminal background check requirements, a person would have to have an experiential or educational equivalent to that of a bachelor's degree in social work, child development, or a similar field.

For a person licensed as a child-care or child-placing agency administrator whose license had been expired for longer than 90 days but less than one year, the bill would decrease the cost of renewing the license from two times the required renewal fee to one and one-half times the required renewal fee.

Tuberculosis testing. The DFPS would no longer require that each child in certain state-regulated facilities, including child-care facilities, child-placing agencies, and continuum-of-care residential operations, have a test for tuberculosis at an appropriate age.

Screening records. The bill would repeal the requirement that a day-care center or group day-care home maintain individual vision, hearing, and other sensory screening records for children attending the facility who are required to be screened.

The commissioner of DFPS would be required to adopt rules necessary to implement the bill no later than December 1, 2025. The bill would require the adopted rules to implement the exemption for single source continuum contractors to ensure that such contractors operated in a manner that continued to prioritize the safety and well-being of children in the foster care system.

The bill would take effect September 1, 2025.

SUPPORTERS
SAY:

CSHB 2789 would simplify and streamline the regulatory process for child welfare services by updating statutory requirements and reducing administrative burdens. The bill would allow DFPS and HHSC to

continue to implement recommendations from an independent third-party audit of the rules and regulations governing child welfare services as required by the 88th Legislature.

The bill would return oversight to a focus on safety rather than compliance with outdated or unnecessary rules, helping to make the system more efficient. Exempting certain providers from licensure under specific conditions would promote a more tailored and accountable regulatory framework, particularly for community-based care settings. The bill also would support a safe, transparent, and sustainable regulatory environment by revising experience and education requirements for administrators to better reflect workforce needs.

CRITICS
SAY:

No concerns identified.

NOTES:

According to the Legislative Budget Board, the fiscal implications of the bill related to the change in the liability insurance coverage cannot be determined due to the uncertainty of the impact on the insurance premium tax revenue.

SUBJECT: Authorizing procurement practices by TWC for certain programs

COMMITTEE: Trade, Workforce & Economic Development — committee substitute recommended

VOTE: 10 ayes — Button, Talarico, K. Bell, Bhojani, Harris Davila, Longoria, Lujan, Luther, Ordaz, Richardson

0 nays

1 absent — Meza

WITNESSES: For — None

Against — None

On — Tammy Martin, Texas Workforce Commission

DIGEST: CSHB 2791 would authorize the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) to enter into contracts for goods or services related to its vocational rehabilitation programs. The bill would allow TWC to use any procurement method it approved that provided the best value to the commission. The bill would require the commission to consider all relevant factors in determining best value, including installation costs, delivery terms, product quality and reliability, vendor performance history, compliance with state contracting priorities, long-term costs, training expenses, impact on agency productivity, and any other relevant considerations.

The bill would permit the TWC to adopt rules and procedures for the acquisition of goods and services, including rules allowing purchases through open-enrollment contracting if enrolling multiple vendors served the state’s interests.

If TWC did not receive any responsive bids on an open solicitation for goods and services for the vocational rehabilitation program in a specific area of the state, TWC could negotiate with and award a contract to any

qualified vendor at a price consistent with the current market value and for a term of up to five years.

The bill would take immediate effect if finally passed by a two-thirds record vote of the membership of each house. Otherwise, it would take effect September 1, 2025.

**SUPPORTERS
SAY:**

CSHB 2791 would ensure that TWC could continue to operate its vocational rehabilitation services efficiently and without interruption by addressing statutory changes that unintentionally removed provisions granting TWC the authority to manage procurement for these services. Restoring this authority would allow TWC to maintain service continuity for Texans with disabilities who depend on vocational rehabilitation programs.

**CRITICS
SAY:**

No concerns identified.

- SUBJECT:** Requiring mental health warning labels on social media platforms
- COMMITTEE:** Public Health — committee substitute recommended
- VOTE:** 11 ayes — VanDeaver, Campos, Bucy, Cunningham, Frank, Johnson, J. Jones, Pierson, Schofield, Shofner, Simmons
- 1 nay — Olcott
- 1 absent — Collier
- WITNESSES:** For - Lyssette Galvan, NAMI Texas; Ayaan Moledina, Students Engaged in Advancing Texas; Dr. Lauren Gambill, Texas Medical Association and Texas Pediatric Society (*Registered, but did not testify*: Stacy Wilson, Children’s Hospital Association of Texas; Michelle Wittenburg, David’s Legacy Foundation; David Reynolds, Texas Chapter American College of Physicians; Carl Isett, Kelsey Bernstein, Texas Council of Community Centers; Bruce Harris)
- Against — (*Registered, but did not testify*: Renzo Soto, TechNet)
- On — (*Registered, but did not testify*: Thomas Parkinson)
- DIGEST:** CSHB 499 would require a social media platform operating in Texas to display on the platform’s landing page each time a user opened the platform a warning label concerning the association between a minor’s social media usage and significant mental health issues. The warning label would be required to include:
- information on available resources for persons experiencing significant mental health issues, including the phone number or link to the website for the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline; and
 - a statement concerning the use of an individual’s personal data by social media platforms and the addictive nature of social media usage.
- The social media platform would be required to ensure the user was unable to operate the platform until the user had verified that the user

understood the warning.

The bill would require the executive commissioner of the Health and Human Services Commission to adopt evidence-based rules regarding the form and content of the warning label.

The bill would take effect September 1, 2025.

**SUPPORTERS
SAY:**

CSHB 499 would help inform social media platform users about the mental health risks associated with excessive social media use, which has been linked to anxiety, depression, and increased suicide rates among adolescents. Social media use beyond three hours per day can double the risk of mental health issues and has been associated with earlier and more frequent suicide attempts among teens. Modeled after tobacco and alcohol warnings, the labels would promote awareness, support informed decisions, and encourage healthier habits. Further, the Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) could adopt additional safeguards through the rulemaking process to ensure the warning label remained responsive to evolving risks and best practices.

**CRITICS
SAY:**

CSHB 499 would not go far enough to protect minors online, as warnings alone could be insufficient to address the evolving risks associated with social media use. Stronger measures, such as age verification requirements and parental oversight mechanisms, could better ensure minors' safety when using these platforms.

SUBJECT: Voiding out-of-state venue provisions in construction contracts

COMMITTEE: Judiciary & Civil Jurisprudence — committee substitute recommended

VOTE: 10 ayes — Leach, Johnson, Dutton, Dyson, Flores, J. González, Hayes, LaHood, Moody, Schofield

0 nays

1 absent — Landgraf

WITNESSES: For — Stephanie Cook, AGC- Texas Building Branch; Ana Husted, Associated Builders and Contractors of Texas Inc.; Jennifer Fagan, Texas Construction Association; Carson Fisk (*Registered, but did not testify*); Eric Woomer, Precast Concrete Manufacturers Assoc. of Texas, Texas Crane Owners Association; Tracey Borders Mittnacht, The Associated General Contractors of Texas - Highway, Heavy, Utilities and Industrial Branch; Tara Snowden, Zachry Construction Corporation)

Against — None

DIGEST: CSHB 2960 would make void as against public policy a provision in a construction contract that made the contract or any conflict arising under it subject to another state’s law, litigation in another state, or arbitration in another state, rather than the provision being voidable by the party obligated to perform the work under the contract. If a contract’s venue provision was void under the bill, an action arising out of the contract could be brought only in the Texas county in which the property that was the subject of the litigation was located, unless the parties stipulated to another venue after the dispute arose.

The bill would make a conforming change in the law related to the venue of actions arising from certain major transactions.

The bill would take effect September 1, 2025.

SUPPORTERS SAY: By making out-of-state venue provisions in construction contracts void, CSHB 2960 would protect Texas contractors from having to deal with

unfamiliar law in distant jurisdictions. Current law protects contractors from being forced to litigate disputes out of state. However, in 2023, the case of *In re MVP Terminalling LLC* by the 14th Court of Appeals in Houston held that a contractor and a subcontractor, by signing a construction contract, waived their right to void an out-of-state venue provision. The case upset a longstanding interpretation of the law that assumed out-of-state venue provisions were voidable without exception by contractors and subcontractors, creating uncertainty in the construction industry and placing Texas contractors at a disadvantage in negotiations.

By making out-of-state venue provisions in construction contracts void as against public policy rather than voidable by the contractor or subcontractor, CSHB 2960 would clarify the law and assure contractors that they would not have to resolve disputes in distant and unfamiliar jurisdictions. The bill would protect smaller businesses that lacked the resources to pursue or defend claims in other states and that would be unlikely to challenge the venue provisions buried in contracts because they were presented as non-negotiable. The bill also would create legal consistency by aligning the venue law with existing lien law, which requires liens to be filed in the county where the property is located.

CRITICS
SAY:

No concerns identified.

SUBJECT: Amending location of court-ordered mental health services applications

COMMITTEE: Judiciary & Civil Jurisprudence — favorable, without amendment

VOTE: 11 ayes — Leach, Johnson, Dutton, Dyson, Flores, J. González, Hayes, LaHood, Landgraf, Moody, Schofield

0 nays

WITNESSES: For — Guy Herman, Statutory Probate Judges of Texas; Nicole Lusardi, Texas Hospital Association; Sheila Hemphill, Texas Right To Know (*Registered, but did not testify*: Michael Bullock, Austin Police Association; Stacy Wilson, Children's Hospital Association of Texas; Adam Haynes, Conference of Urban Counties; Eric Woomer, Federation of Texas Psychiatry; Maya Grever, Harris County Commissioners Court; Ray Hunt, Houston Police Officers' Union; Christine Busse, NAMI Texas; Mackenzie Lyra, Texas Health Resources)

Against — None

BACKGROUND: Health and Safety Code sec. 574.001(b) requires an application for court-ordered mental health services to be filed with the county clerk in the county in which the proposed patient resides, is found, or is receiving mental health services by court order or under emergency detention.

DIGEST: HB 3163 would amend court-ordered mental health service application filing requirements under Health and Safety Code 574.001(b) to include a county in which the proposed patient was located at the time of the application or a county in which the proposed patient was apprehended for emergency detention by a peace officer, and would remove a county where the proposed patient was found.

The bill would take effect September 1, 2025, and would apply only to an application submitted on or after that date.

SUPPORTERS SAY: HB 3163 would expedite treatment for patients with mental health emergencies and ease administrative burdens for hospitals by clarifying

the locations in which an application for court-ordered mental health services could be filed.

Current law can be confusing to courts that provide orders of protective custody (OPCs) for persons who were detained as a result of a mental health crisis. Due to competing interpretations, some jurisdictions allow the application for an OPC to be filed in the same county in which the patient is located and receiving treatment, while others require that the application be filed in the county in which the patient was apprehended. This can lead to delays in treatment as the patient and hospital staff may have to travel out of their county to file the application and receive the OPC. In some cases, a patient in acute mental distress may be released from care because an application for an OPC cannot be filed in the county in which the patient is located.

HB 3163 would clarify that the application could be filed in both the county where the patient was located and the county where the patient was apprehended. The bill would prevent confusion, provide flexibility in the filing of applications, and avoid the delay of critical treatment. The bill also would reduce the financial strain on hospitals that have to send staff to other counties to comply with current application filing requirements.

CRITICS
SAY:

No concerns identified.

SUBJECT: Requiring the creation of specialty license plates for retired firefighters

COMMITTEE: Transportation — favorable, without amendment

VOTE: 12 ayes — Craddick, M. Perez, Curry, Gámez, Harris Davila, Hefner,
LaHood, Little, C. Morales, E. Morales, Patterson, Paul

0 nays

1 absent — Canales

WITNESSES: For — (*Registered, but did not testify*: Thomas Parkinson)

Against — None

On — (*Registered, but did not testify*: Annette Quintero, TxDMV)

DIGEST: HB 3135 would require the Texas Department of Motor Vehicles to design and issue, without a fee, specialty license plates for retired firefighters. The bill would define "retired firefighter" as a person who was formerly:

- a volunteer firefighter certified by the Texas Commission on Fire Protection or the State Firefighters' and Fire Marshals' Association of Texas; or
- fire protection personnel, as defined by certain provisions regarding the regulation of and assistance for firefighters and fire departments.

The bill would take effect September 1, 2025.

SUPPORTERS SAY: HB 3135 would honor retired firefighters who have served and protected the state's communities and give them a way to showcase their professional pride by requiring the Texas Department of Motor Vehicles to create specialty license plates for retired firefighters. Specialty license plates are currently available for several categories of active firefighters, but not for retired ones. Specialty license plates have been made available

for former public servants, such as former US Armed Forces members, former National Guard, retired peace officers, and retired classroom teachers. The bill would show appreciation for retired firefighters by adding them to this list of public servants.

CRITICS
SAY:

No concerns identified.

SUBJECT: Amending roads eligible for heavyweight vehicles in Hidalgo County

COMMITTEE: Transportation — favorable, without amendment

VOTE: 11 ayes — Craddick, M. Perez, Gámez, Harris Davila, Hefner, LaHood,
Little, C. Morales, E. Morales, Patterson, Paul

0 nays

2 absent — Canales, Curry

WITNESSES: For — Luis Bazan, Pharr International Bridge (*Registered, but did not testify*); Karen Rove, City of Pharr; Steven Deline)

Against — (*Registered, but did not testify*: John Wilkerson, Texas Municipal Police Association (TMPA); Dennis Kearns, Texas Railroad Association)

On — Omar Villarreal, Texas Department of Public Safety (*Registered, but did not testify*); Lance Simmons, Texas Department of Transportation)

BACKGROUND: Transportation Code Sec. 623.363 establishes the roads on which the Texas Transportation Commission may authorize a regional mobility authority to issue permits for the movement of oversize or overweight vehicles carrying cargo in Hidalgo County. These roads include Spur 29 between its intersection with U.S. Highway 281 and its intersections with Doffin Canal Road.

DIGEST: HB 2427 would amend the list of roads eligible for oversize or overweight vehicle permits to include Spur 29 between its intersection with U.S. Highway 281 and its intersection with West Doffing Road, rather than Doffin Canal Road. The bill also would add West Doffing Road between its intersection with Spur 29 and its eastern intersection with Doffin Canal Road to the list of eligible roads.

The bill would take effect September 1, 2025.

**SUPPORTERS
SAY:**

By adding an additional route designation for the movement of oversized vehicles in Hidalgo County, HB 2427 would reduce congestion, enhance cross-border trade efficiency, and ensure that infrastructure planning kept pace with the increased volume of commercial transportation that is expected following the completed expansion of the Pharr-Reynosa International Bridge.

The Pharr International Bridge is estimated to be responsible for roughly \$47 billion in global trade, with over a million trucks crossing the port of entry each year. This is expected to increase following the completion of the bridge's expansion. HB 2427 would create an additional route designation close to the bridge that would allow for goods to be moved quickly and safely to their intended destinations while keeping commercial vehicles off of local roads and mitigating further congestion.

**CRITICS
SAY:**

HB 2427 could cause damage to local roads, create safety hazards, and indirectly subsidize competition to Texas railroads by incentivizing the use of oversized and overweight vehicles. Heavyweight vehicles can be less safe and more damaging to infrastructure compared to transporting goods by rail. Further enabling the use of these vehicles is unnecessary, as railroads offer a safe and efficient alternative for transporting commerce.

- SUBJECT:** Authorizing certain ASR projects that transect the Edwards Aquifer
- COMMITTEE:** Natural Resources — favorable, without amendment
- VOTE:** 12 ayes — Harris, Martinez, Ashby, Barry, C. Bell, Buckley, Fairly, Gámez, J. Garcia, Romero, Villalobos, Zwiener
- 0 nays
- 1 absent — M. González
- WITNESSES:** For — Brian Sledge, Stasi Vance, Brazos River Authority (*Registered, but did not testify*); Matt Phillips, Brazos River Authority; Vanessa Puig-Williams, Environmental Defense Fund; Evgenia Spears, Sierra Club Lone Star Chapter; Steven Deline; Thomas Parkinson)
- Against — None
- On — (*Registered, but did not testify*): Ashley Forbes, TCEQ)
- DIGEST:** HB 1618 would allow the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) to authorize by permit or rule an aquifer storage and recovery (ASR) project that included an ASR injection well transecting the Edwards Aquifer in the area of Williamson County east of I-35 for the purpose of injecting water into a geologic formation under the Edwards Aquifer.
- The bill also would allow TCEQ to authorize certain other water injection projects by permit, rather than only by rule. TCEQ would be required to adopt rules to implement the bill by March 1, 2026.
- The bill would take immediate effect if finally passed by a two-thirds record vote of the membership of each house. Otherwise, it would take effect September 1, 2025.
- SUPPORTERS SAY:** HB 1618 would authorize two ASR projects in Williamson County, providing valuable tools to help meet increasing demand for water as the

county's population grows. Under current TCEQ rules, waste injection wells cannot be authorized if they transect the Edwards Aquifer unless the Legislature grants an exception. Although ASR wells inject treated water, rather than waste, into the ground, they are still subject to the prohibition. HB 1618 would provide the legislative exception necessary for the county to store treated, collected rainwater in the aquifer, which would help recovery in periods of drought and high demand.

CRITICS
SAY:

No concerns identified.

SUBJECT: Exempting certain TxDMV actions from the Administrative Procedure Act

COMMITTEE: Delivery of Government Efficiency — favorable, without amendment

VOTE: 11 ayes — Capriglione, Alders, Bowers, Cain, Campos, Cook, Curry, L. Garcia, Olcott, Tinderholt, Troxclair

0 nays

2 absent — Bhojani, Rodríguez Ramos

WITNESSES: For — None

Against — None

On — (*Registered, but did not testify:* Corrie Thompson, Texas Department of Motor Vehicles)

BACKGROUND: Government Code sec. 2001.221 establishes that the Administrative Procedure Act does not apply to a suspension, cancellation, denial, or disqualification of a driver’s license or commercial driver’s license.

DIGEST: HB 1672 would add to the actions exempted under Government Code sec. 2001.221 an action by the Texas Department of Motor Vehicles (TxDMV) related to an order to cease intrastate operation under the Department of Public Safety’s compliance review and safety audit program for commercial motor vehicles.

The bill would take immediate effect if finally passed by a two-thirds record vote of the membership of each house. Otherwise, it would take effect September 1, 2025.

SUPPORTERS SAY: HB 1672 would enhance public safety and reduce the administrative burden on state agencies by eliminating a redundant TxDMV appeal process related to the DPS compliance review program for commercial motor carriers. Under this program, DPS investigates and assigns safety ratings to such carriers. If a carrier is rated ‘unsatisfactory’ and fails to

take corrective action within the required period, DPS issues an order to cease operations in the state and sends the order to the DMV so the carrier's status can be entered into DMV's public database.

It is important for public safety that entry into the database occurs as soon as possible so that DPS troopers can take appropriate action when they encounter an unsafe commercial vehicle. However, current law requires a period of due process appeal to the DMV for a cease order, despite that department having no role in enforcing compliance. DPS also provides motor carriers a due process period as required by law and the Texas Administrative Code. HB 1672 would eliminate this due process redundancy, streamlining the safety rating enforcement process and strengthening DPS's ability to protect public safety on Texas roads.

CRITICS
SAY:

No concerns identified.

SUBJECT: Prohibiting TxDOT from restricting access to certain property

COMMITTEE: Transportation — committee substitute recommended

VOTE: 11 ayes — Craddick, M. Perez, Gámez, Harris Davila, Hefner, LaHood, Little, C. Morales, E. Morales, Patterson, Paul

0 nays

2 absent — Canales, Curry

WITNESSES: For — (*Registered, but did not testify:* Leonard Aguilar, Texas AFL-CIO; Drew Fuller, Texas Farm Bureau; Terri Hall, TURF, Texans for Tollfree Highways, We the People - Liberty in Action)

Against — (*Registered, but did not testify:* Jason Wills)

On — (*Registered, but did not testify:* Kyle Madsen, Texas Department of Transportation)

DIGEST: CSHB 1722 would prohibit the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) from prohibiting or otherwise restricting a person from accessing property the person owned or leased that:

- was adjacent to a highway right-of-way;
- could be accessed legally from the roadway before TxDOT assumed authority over the right-of-way; and
- had been acquired or constructed before TxDOT assumed authority over the right-of-way.

The bill would not prohibit TxDOT or the Texas Transportation Commission from acquiring a person's interest in such property through purchase, condemnation, or other authorized means.

The bill would take effect September 1, 2025.

**SUPPORTERS
SAY:**

By ensuring a right of access to private property adjacent to a highway right-of-way, CSHB 1722 would protect property rights that have been limited by the expansion of TxDOT authority. TxDOT has increasingly assumed authority over roadways and instituted rules, including banning access to certain private property from the right-of-way. As a result, many landowners have found themselves unable to access private property that existed for decades such as commercial signage and utility or farm infrastructure. The bill would address this issue by prohibiting TxDOT from preventing access to properties that were legally accessible before the department assumed authority.

**CRITICS
SAY:**

No concerns identified.

SUBJECT: Expanding commissioners courts that can enforce uniform work hours

COMMITTEE: Intergovernmental Affairs — committee substitute recommended

VOTE: 11 ayes — C. Bell, Zwiener, Cole, Cortez, Garcia Hernandez, Leo Wilson, Lowe, Luther, Rosenthal, Spiller, Tepper

0 nays

WITNESSES: For — (*Registered, but did not testify:* Adam Haynes, Conference of Urban Counties)

Against — None

DIGEST: CSHB 1338 would lower the county population threshold from 355,000 or more to 265,000 or more to allow for a county commissioners court to adopt and enforce uniform rules on the hours of work of department heads, assistants, deputies, and other employees whose compensation is set or approved by the court.

The bill would take immediate effect if finally passed by a two-thirds record vote of the membership of each house. Otherwise, it would take effect September 1, 2025.

SUPPORTERS SAY: CSHB 1338 would create an organized and efficient system for citizens to know when county commissioners court offices were open by allowing commissioners courts to establish predictable work hours for its employees across more Texas counties.

CRITICS SAY: No concerns identified.

SUBJECT: Authorizing vehicle jump-starting on the Galveston-Port Bolivar Ferry

COMMITTEE: Transportation — committee substitute recommended

VOTE: 12 ayes — Craddick, M. Perez, Canales, Curry, Gámez, Harris Davila,
Hefner, LaHood, Little, C. Morales, E. Morales, Paul

0 nays

1 absent — Patterson

WITNESSES: For — None

Against — None

On — Lance Simmons, P.E., Texas Department of Transportation
(TxDOT)

DIGEST: CSHB 787 would permit the operator of a vehicle being transported on the Galveston-Port Bolivar ferries operated by the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) to attempt to restart the vehicle's battery only if a ferry employee confirmed the absence of hazardous gas. Ferry employees would not be required to attempt to restart a vehicle's battery on the ferry.

At the request of the vehicle operator, a ferry employee who had completed training established under the bill would be required to check for hazardous gas. TxDOT could charge a fee for providing this service in an amount set by the department that was reasonable and necessary to cover the costs of administering the bill.

TxDOT would be required to provide training to ferry employees regarding the safe use of equipment to detect hazardous gas and to provide and maintain in good operating condition equipment for detecting hazardous gas.

The bill would take effect September 1, 2025. TxDOT would be required to adopt the rules necessary to implement the bill by December 1, 2025.

**SUPPORTERS
SAY:**

CSHB 787 would allow for stranded vehicles on the Galveston-Port Bolivar ferries to be jump-started, rather than pushed or pulled off the ferries. Vehicles can occasionally stall on the ferries as drivers leave their cars idling, which can drain the vehicle's battery. Attempting to restart a vehicle by jump-starting can be a more efficient way of dealing with stalled vehicles compared to the current policy of returning the ferry to port and waiting for a tow truck to remove the vehicle. However, jump-starting a vehicle can be dangerous if hazardous gases are present. By providing adequate training and equipment to ferry staff for detecting hazardous gas, the bill would allow drivers to jump-start their vehicles safely and enable the ferry to continue to its destination uninterrupted.

As TxDOT has expressed willingness to adopt these practices, the bill would help ensure timely implementation and address liability concerns that ferry workers have had about the jump-starting of vehicles on the ferry.

**CRITICS
SAY:**

No concerns identified.

SUBJECT: Requiring certain state entities to develop severe weather adaptation plans

COMMITTEE: State Affairs — committee substitute recommended

VOTE: 14 ayes — King, Hernandez, Anchía, Darby, Y. Davis, Geren, Guillen,
Hull, McQueeney, Metcalf, Raymond, Smithee, Thompson, Turner

0 nays

1 absent — Phelan

WITNESSES: For - Micalah Spenrath, Houston Advanced Research Center; Kevin Doffing, Project Vanguard; Jeremy B. Mazur, Texas 2036; Beaman Floyd, Texas Coalition for Affordable Insurance Solutions; Larry Linenschmidt (*Registered, but did not testify*: Joshua Sanders, City of Houston; Luke Metzger, Environment Texas; Sandra Haverlah, Environmental Defense Fund; Cyrus Reed, Lone Star Chapter Sierra Club; Adrian Shelley, Public Citizen; Josiah Neeley, R Street Institute; Matthew Boms, Texas Advanced Energy Business Alliance; Kyle Riley, Texas Impact)

Against - None

On - John Nielsen-Gammon, Office of the Texas State Climatologist; Nim Kidd, TDEM; Bruce James, Texas Department of Public Safety (*Registered, but did not testify*: Barksdale English, Public Utility Commission of Texas; Kelly Cook, Texas Commission on Environmental Quality; Jet Hays, Texas General Land Office; Angie Pettigrew, Texas General Land Office; John Dupnik, Texas Water Development Board)

DIGEST: Not later than September 1 of an even-numbered year, CSHB 2618 would require the following state entities to publish a severe weather adaptation plan to assess each entity's role with respect to severe weather events:

- the Department of Agriculture;
- the Department of Public Safety;
- the General Land Office;

- the Health and Human Services Commission;
- the Office of the Comptroller of Public Accounts;
- the Parks and Wildlife Department;
- the Public Utility Commission;
- the Texas A&M Forest Service;
- the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality;
- the Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs;
- the Texas Department of Insurance;
- the Texas Department of Transportation; and
- the Texas Division of Emergency Management.

An entity's severe weather adaptation plan would be defined under the bill as a strategy to identify, minimize, and adequately prepare for the effects of changes in the incidence and prevalence of severe weather on the social, economic, and ecological systems of the state and to manage the associated risks. The bill would require a plan to be based on current research-based science that identified the likely effects of severe weather on the state.

A plan would have to include:

- a severe weather vulnerability assessment;
- a review of existing programs in the context of severe weather events;
- analysis of how the entity's efforts to adapt to changes in severe weather would affect the entity's budget over the next two, five, and 10 years;
- potential funding sources to support the entity's efforts to adapt to changes in the incidence and prevalence of severe weather events; and
- a statewide strategy to monitor the continuing effects of severe weather.

In developing a plan, each entity could consult with the Houston Advanced Research Center and the Office of the State Climatologist. If an entity also was required to develop a continuity of operations plan under the Labor Code, the entity would be required to include the severe weather

vulnerability assessment in a continuity of operations plan developed or adopted after the bill's effective date.

No later than September 1 of each even-numbered year, each entity would be required to post its severe weather adaptation plan on a public website and electronically submit a copy to:

- the governor, lieutenant governor, and speaker of the House of Representatives;
- the presiding officer of each legislative standing committee or subcommittee with primary jurisdiction over environmental matters; and
- the executive director of the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality.

Before posting its plan, an entity would be required to redact information that might compromise its operational security. The plans would be subject to audit by the state auditor.

The bill would take immediate effect if finally passed by a two-thirds record vote of the membership of each house. Otherwise, it would take effect September 1, 2025.

**SUPPORTERS
SAY:**

By requiring various state agencies to prepare severe weather adaptation plans every two years, CSHB 2618 would help Texas take a more proactive approach to mitigating the effects of severe weather. Extreme weather events have taken thousands of lives in Texas and imposed major costs on the state's economy. The state climatologist predicts that there will be more frequent and intense extreme weather events in the next decade, including heat waves, drought, hurricanes, and flooding. It is imperative that the state prepare for such events to reduce loss of human life and property.

The growth of Texas' population in areas increasingly prone to extreme weather has made the cost of providing insurance more expensive, leading insurers to raise rates and, in some cases, leave the state. By requiring executive agencies to publish plans for their respective roles in responding to extreme weather, CSHB 1618 would facilitate the intergovernmental

coordination needed to make the state as resilient as possible in the face of extreme weather. The bill would be a step toward systemic risk mitigation, which could help keep insurance carriers in the state and lower insurance rates for residents.

CRITICS
SAY:

No concerns identified.

- SUBJECT:** Licensing certain military veterans as health care providers in Texas
- COMMITTEE:** Public Health — committee substitute recommended
- VOTE:** 13 ayes — VanDeaver, Campos, Bucy, Collier, Cunningham, Frank, Johnson, J. Jones, Olcott, Pierson, Schofield, Shofner, Simmons
- 0 nays
- WITNESSES:** For — Mercedes Dodge, Texas Academy of Physician Assistant; Carl Isett, Texas Association of Benefit Administrators (*Registered, but did not testify*); Stephanie Mace, AARP Texas; Samuel Sheetz, Americans for Prosperity; Colette Vallot, San Antonio Chamber of Commerce; Maureen Milligan, Teaching Hospitals of Texas; Annie Spilman, Texans for Affordable Healthcare; Charles Miller, Texas 2036; Faith Villarreal, Texas Association of Business; Jason Baxter, Texas Association of Health Plans; David Reynolds, Texas Chapter American College of Physicians; Will Holleman, Texas Hospital Association; Clayton Stewart, Texas Medical Association; Snapper Carr, Tx Mayors of Military Communities Coalition)
- Against — None
- On — (*Registered, but did not testify*: Stephen Carlton, Texas Medical Board)
- DIGEST:** CSHB 879 would require the Texas Medical Board (TMB) and the Texas Board of Nursing (TNB) to issue a license to practice medicine and a license to practice nursing, respectively, to an applicant who:
- was licensed in good standing as a physician or nurse in another state;
 - was a veteran of the U.S. Armed Forces who retired from or otherwise left military service not more than one year before the application date for a license under the bill;
 - was, at the time of retiring from or leaving military service, serving on active duty in this state, authorized as a licensed physician or nurse to treat persons enlisted in the armed forces or veterans; and

- had passed the Texas Medical Jurisprudence or Nursing Jurisprudence examination.

The bill would prohibit TMB and the TNB from issuing a license to an applicant who:

- was discharged or separated from the armed forces on the basis of substandard conduct or for any act of misconduct or moral or professional dereliction;
- held a medical license, nursing license, or a license to prescribe, dispense, administer, supply, or sell a controlled substance that was under active investigation or was subject to a disciplinary order or action or to denial by another jurisdiction;
- was convicted of, was on deferred adjudication community supervision or deferred disposition for, or was under active investigation for the commission of a felony or a misdemeanor involving moral turpitude.

The bill would take effect September 1, 2025.

**SUPPORTERS
SAY:**

CSHB 879 would help address healthcare workforce shortages by allowing qualified military health care professionals to continue practicing in Texas after retirement without unnecessary licensing barriers. The bill would help the state retain experienced physicians and nurses who want to remain in Texas, preventing them from having to leave to continue practicing. The bill also would support military professionals as they transition into civilian healthcare and help bring more providers into the state.

**CRITICS
SAY:**

No concerns identified.

SUBJECT: Exempting judges from certain vehicle sunscreening device restrictions

COMMITTEE: Transportation — committee substitute recommended

VOTE: 10 ayes — Craddick, M. Perez, Gámez, Harris Davila, Hefner, LaHood,
Little, C. Morales, E. Morales, Paul

1 nay — Patterson

2 absent — Canales, Curry

WITNESSES: For — None

Against — (*Registered, but did not testify*): Jennifer Szimanski, Combined
Law Enforcement Associations of Texas (CLEAT))

BACKGROUND: Transportation Code Sec. 547.613(a) establishes that a person commits a
misdemeanor offense if the person:

- operates a motor vehicle that has an object or material that is placed on or attached to the windshield or side or rear window and that obstructs or reduces the operator's clear view; or
- places on or attaches to the windshield or side or rear window of a motor vehicle a transparent material that alters the color or reduces the light transmission.

Transportation Code Sec. 547.613(b) establishes exemptions to this offense.

DIGEST: CSHB 1126 would amend the Transportation Code by adding to the list of exemptions to sec. 547.623(a) vehicles that displayed or qualified for the issuance of a state judge, federal judge, federal administrative law judge, or county judge specialty license plate.

The bill would take effect September 1, 2025.

**SUPPORTERS
SAY:**

CSHB 1126 would enhance the security and privacy of judges by extending exemptions to the prohibition on suncreening devices to a vehicle that displayed or qualified for the issuance of judicial license plates. Judges have reported incidents of being followed or attacked while in their cars and have feared for their personal safety. The bill would address this concern by allowing judges to make it more difficult for bad actors to identify them and track their movements.

While some have suggested CSHB 1126 should apply to all individuals, broadly extending window tinting or sunscreening exemptions could hinder law enforcement by enabling bad actors to obscure their identities and activities, potentially compromising public safety.

**CRITICS
SAY:**

CSHB 1126 should be applied universally rather than exclusively to judges, ensuring that all citizens are allowed the same opportunity to increase the window tint on their vehicles.

- SUBJECT:** Amending rules on electronic convenience fees for motor vehicles
- COMMITTEE:** Pensions, Investments & Financial Services — favorable, without amendment
- VOTE:** 7 ayes — Lambert, Plesa, Bryant, L. Garcia, Hayes, Holt, Vo
0 nays
2 absent — Bumgarner, Schoolcraft
- WITNESSES:** For — Clay Scheitzach, DriveTime (*Registered, but did not testify*: Tyler Simmons, Abilene Used Car Sales, Inc; Mark Vane, HB Strategies; Darren Whitehurst, Texas Automobile Dealers Association; J. McCart, Texas Consumer Credit Coalition; Matthew Bentley, Texas Independent Automobile Dealers Association)
Against — None
On — (*Registered, but did not testify*: Matthew Nance, Office of Consumer Credit Commissioner)
- BACKGROUND:** Finance Code sec. 348.001(6) defines a retail installment contract as one or more instruments entered into in this state that evidence a retail installment transaction, also defined in this section as a transaction in which a retail buyer purchases a motor vehicle from a retail seller other than principally for the purpose of resale and agrees with the retail seller to pay part or all of the cash price in one or more deferred installments.
- DIGEST:** HB 4134 would authorize the holder of a retail installment contract or the holder’s agent to collect a fee for processing a retail buyer’s electronic payment for a motor vehicle under the contract only if:
- the fee was reasonably related to the expense of processing the electronic payment;
 - the fee does not exceed the lesser of 10 dollars or 5 percent of the payment amount; and

- the holder or the holder's agent did not establish electronic payment as the expected form of payment and allowed the buyer to make a payment by a method other than an electronic payment that did not incur a fee.

Before a buyer agreed to make an electronic payment, the holder of the retail installment contract or the holder's agent would be required to inform the buyer of the fee amount, that the buyer could make a payment by an alternative method that would not incur a fee, and that electronic payment could not be established as the expected form of payment.

The bill would take effect September 1, 2025.

**SUPPORTERS
SAY:**

HB 4134 would give consumers more affordable ways to make car loan payments by allowing certain regulated creditors to offer the option of electronic payments for a small fee. These options would likely cost less than the high fees charged by unregulated third parties, who are currently the only entities allowed to offer and recoup associated fees for providing such services. The bill would provide guardrails for consumers by capping the fees and requiring that the creditor disclose both the fees and alternative options that did not incur a fee, while also ensuring that creditors could recover electronic payment processing costs.

By providing a framework for electronic car loan payments, the bill would allow Texans to make credit card payments directly to their lender when needed, helping them to save money, avoid late fees, and reduce the risk of delinquency.

**CRITICS
SAY:**

HB 4134 would impose rules on car dealers, including the duty to make fee disclosures, for which dealers may not be prepared.