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Artificial Intelligence, General Government

Texas AI laws, broadband funding could be affected by AI Executive Order

January 16— Artificial intelligence (AI) laws enacted during the 89th Texas legislative session could be subject to federal scrutiny after President Trump [signed](#) an executive order on December 11, 2025, to ensure “a minimally burdensome national policy framework for AI.” Through the executive order, the administration aims to limit state-by-state AI regulations in favor of national uniformity, with the goal of promoting innovation and strengthening American competitiveness globally against foreign actors leveraging technological advancements without comparable restrictions. Though the order cannot, without a change in federal law, preempt state laws or override statutes, it expresses policy goals of the White House and could affect certain federal broadband funding that many states rely on to expand high-speed internet access and use.

Among other provisions, the executive order requires the U.S. attorney general to establish an AI Litigation Task Force to challenge state AI laws that conflict with the policy set forth by the order or other federal law. States with AI laws identified under the order as conflicting with federal policy would be ineligible for certain funding under the [Broadband Equity Access and Deployment \(BEAD\) Program](#). The order also requires the development of a legislative recommendation that codifies the federal AI policy outlined in the order and preempts conflicting state AI laws except for those related to certain topics, such as child safety protections.

The executive order comes amid rapid advances in AI and efforts by state legislatures to regulate this technology. [According](#) to the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL), all 50 states introduced AI legislation during their 2025 legislative sessions. Thirty-eight states adopted or enacted around 100 measures related to AI last year.

During the 89th regular legislative session, which ran from January to June 2025, Texas legislators advanced a series of AI-related bills largely aimed at building a responsible AI policy framework that reduces harmful outcomes without undermining the state’s pro-business environment. Lawmakers and stakeholders discussed risks of hindering technological progress as well as adequate consumer protections, discrimination, and harmful uses of AI, especially those that threaten child safety. More than 65 AI-related bills were introduced, of which 13 were enacted into law and

took effect between September 1, 2025, and January 1, 2026, including:

- [HB 149](#) by Capriglione, which creates a statewide regulatory framework for AI, establishes the Texas AI Council within the Department of Information Resources (DIR), and prohibits certain AI uses, such as the creation or usage of an AI system for certain sexually explicit content;
- [SB 1964](#) by Parker, which creates a regulatory framework, including the development of a code of ethics, for AI use by state agencies and local governments;
- [HB 2818](#) by Capriglione, which establishes an AI division within DIR to assist with the implementation of generative AI technologies;
- [HB 3512](#) by Capriglione, which provides for AI training programs for certain government employees;
- [SB 815](#) by Schwertner, which establishes provisions for the use of automated systems, including AI, in the health benefit claims process;

- [HB 581](#) by M. González, which requires age and consent verification for websites that publicly offer means to create artificial sexual material harmful to minors;
- [SB 20](#) by Flores, which creates an offense for the possession, promotion, or production of certain explicit child sexual abuse visual material, including AI images appearing to depict a minor; and
- [SB 1621](#) by Huffman, which expands the offenses that qualify as possession or promotion of sexually explicit visual material involving the depiction of children to include computer-generated visual material.

At the federal level, lawmakers also [addressed](#) concerns about AI and online safety in 2025 by passing U.S. Senate Bill 146, also known as the Take It Down Act, sponsored by Sen. Ted Cruz. The bill prohibits nonconsensual online publication of intimate visual depictions of individuals, especially targeting AI-generated deepfakes of minors, and requires certain online platforms to promptly remove such depictions upon receiving notice of them.

— Sumaiya Malik

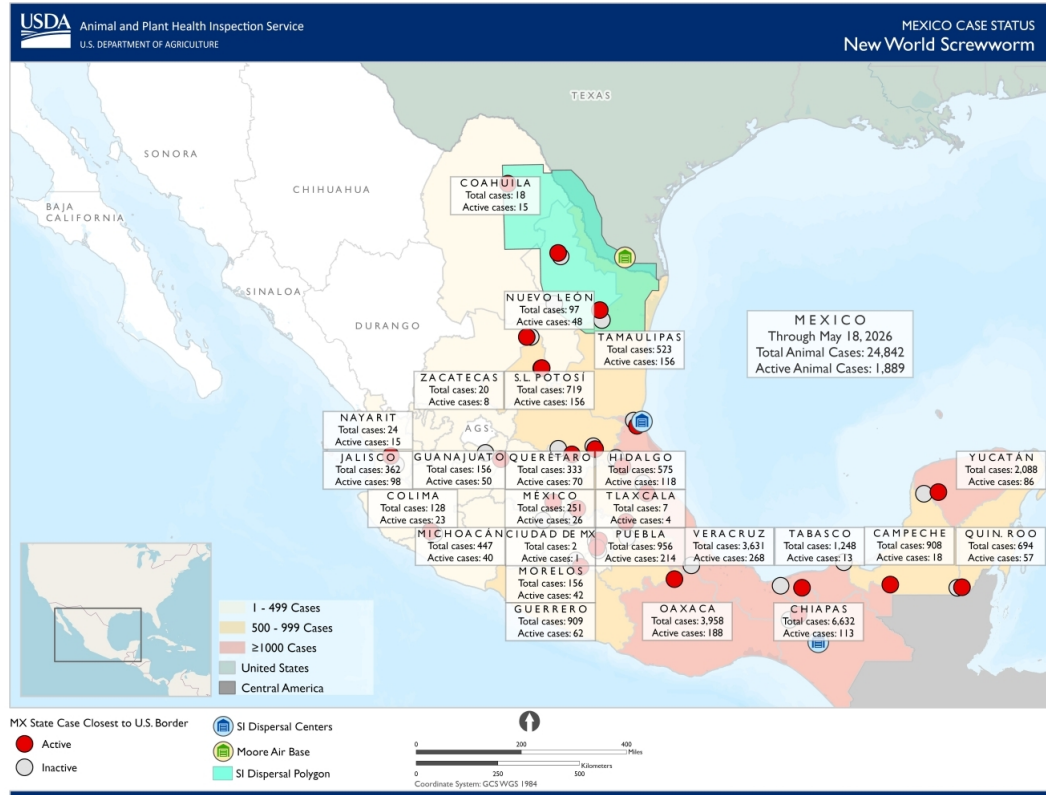
Agriculture and Livestock

Texas House continues to study New World screwworm risk this interim

[April 2](#)— This interim, Texas lawmakers have continued to discuss proposals to address the risk of New World screwworm (NWS) flies amid growing concerns about the threat. The parasite could pose to Texas’ livestock and wildlife industries, and to public health. In a joint hearing [held](#) by the House Committee on Agriculture and Livestock and the House Committee on Culture, Recreation, and Tourism on December 9, 2025, committee members heard testimony from various federal and state agencies and relevant stakeholders, including federal partners, academic entities, and livestock associations, on the potential economic and public health impacts of NWS, which has been [detected](#) in the Mexican border states of Tamaulipas and Nuevo Leon. Interim charges released last week for the [House](#) and the [Senate](#) also direct relevant committees

to study the state’s preparedness and response plans related to NWS.

[NWS](#) is a flesh-eating parasitic fly that infects mammals and causes a deadly condition called myiasis within two weeks if left untreated. NWS was eradicated from the United States in the late 1960s, but has moved northward from Central and South America in recent years. Analyses of past outbreaks [suggest](#) that the pest’s reemergence in the United States could cause billion-dollar economic losses to Texas’ livestock and wild game industries, threaten the food supply, and endanger animal and public health. Citing a severe and imminent threat posed by the continued northward spread of the NWS, Gov. Abbott [issued](#) a statewide disaster declaration in January to better equip the state’s [NWS Response Team](#).



Source: [U.S. Department of Agriculture Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service](#)

In addition to conversations about pursuing preventative, scientifically-sound containment strategies that have worked historically, like the [sterile insect technique](#) detailed in previous hearings, discussions during the December 9 joint committee hearing included proposals to accelerate U.S. Food and Drug Administration approval for medicating animal feed with ivermectin, conduct gene drive research to further curb fly populations, and strengthen the relationship between American and Mexican federal agencies responsible for confronting the NWS risk.

During the hearing, committee members and witnesses highlighted recent action taken to address the threat of NWS, including the [opening](#) of a sterile fly dispersal facility at Moore Air Base in Edinburg, Texas, and federal grant [opportunities](#) to incentivize innovative screwworm eradication strategies. However, some expressed apprehension regarding the operational timelines of sterile fly dispersal and production [facilities](#) in Mexico and Texas. Concerns were also raised about cartel and organized crime in presence cattle trade, echoing expert testimony from previous hearings as a contributing factor to the northward spread of NWS.

Authorities from the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (USDA-APHIS) discussed recent meetings with leaders from SENASICA, Mexico’s agriculture agency, and its plans to improve inspection, data collection, and information sharing related to livestock movements in Mexico. USDA officials discussed the proposed NWS Response Playbook which outlines response protocols for federal, state, and industry partners in the event NWS is detected in the United States. Officials also talked about plans to review Mexican livestock movement protocols and the prevalence of fraudulent certificates to better understand the distribution of NWS in Mexico, and confirmed that the rapid spread of NWS could be traced largely to animal movement.

Veterinary science experts suggested that authorities should educate producers about necessary changes to certain animal husbandry practices, such as implementing enhanced monitoring and preventative treatment for cattle and other livestock, to help manage the seasonal nature of NWS. They also stressed the importance of watching the threat posed by unregulated wildlife as a host of the pest, which thrives in warm weather and can travel up to 12 miles daily in pursuit of a warm-blooded host. They noted that Mexico’s past successful eradication programs have involved the release of significantly more sterile male

flies as well as thousands more field staff compared to current efforts. State animal health officials discussed the development of state response plans in collaboration with industry groups and the USDA, and argued that animal movement controls, such as lockdowns and carcass surveillance, are paramount to controlling the spread of NWS.

Some livestock industry stakeholders expressed concerns that border trade remained suspended, arguing that interruptions to cattle trade with Mexico have negatively impacted U.S. consumers, and called for restoring cross-border livestock trade with enhanced tracking, inspection, and treatment protocols. Concerns were also raised about the USDA's proposed NWS Response Playbook. For example, some suggested that policies

requiring ear tags for cattle being moved out of infested zones could make livestock more susceptible to NWS because the practice would create fresh wounds that could attract screwworm larvae. They argued that a more flexible approach to NWS response protocols that better reflect industry needs would help to ensure business continuity while safeguarding animal health. These issues, it was argued, should be addressed promptly since the risk of NWS emerging in South Texas could rise dramatically with the arrival of spring, according to certain data and projections.

— Michelle Kuroda De La Cruz

Public Health, Public Safety

Expansion of Texas medical marijuana program followed by federal rescheduling

[May 14](#)— Following the Texas Legislature's passage of [HB 46](#) by Rep. King, which expanded the state's medical cannabis program, known as the [Texas Compassionate Use Program](#) (TCUP), the [regulatory landscape](#) for medical marijuana and THC products has continued to evolve at the state and federal levels. The outcome of a current legal challenge to the state's smokable hemp product ban, as well as federal regulatory changes, could prompt lawmakers to consider additional measures on cannabis use in the 90th legislative session.

The state's medical cannabis program was initiated in 2015 through the [adoption](#) of the Texas Compassionate-Use Act by the 84th Legislature, which allowed the medical use of low-THC cannabis to treat intractable epilepsy. In subsequent legislative sessions, TCUP has been expanded to broaden the list of authorized medical conditions. HB 46, which took effect September 1, 2025, added terminal illnesses requiring palliative and hospice care, traumatic brain injury, inflammatory bowel disease, and chronic pain to these conditions. The bill also expanded the definition of "medical use" to include absorption, insertion, or pulmonary inhalation as a lawful means of administration.

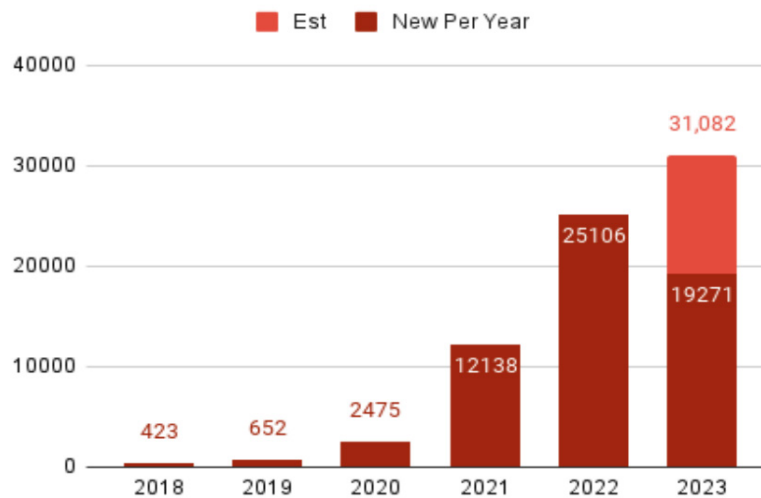
In addition, HB 46 lowered the concentration of THC allowed in a dosage unit of low-THC cannabis and limited distribution of such products to only those derived from naturally occurring

cannabinoid substances in packages or medical devices that allow treatment with low-THC contain no more than one total gram of THC. Other provisions included establishing new registration requirements and operation timelines for license holders, authorizing product storage at satellite locations, and increasing the total number of operational dispensary licenses to be issued by the Department of Public Safety to 15, with 12 new licenses to be issued across the state's public health regions.

Supporters of HB 46 applauded the bill's increased oversight of operational standards and the authorized use of additional THC products such as patches, lotions, inhalers, and vaping devices, which they said would allow patients with debilitating medical conditions to gain more immediate pain relief than oral medications. Many in favor of expanding TCUP also suggested that cannabis can offer some patients a safer medical alternative to dangerous and addictive opiates and antidepressants.

However, some critics said that greater restrictions should be put in place to ensure patient safety, such as prohibiting pregnant and nursing women from enrolling in TCUP. Other critics opposed the use of cannabis for medical treatment entirely, citing concerns that its use may worsen PTSD symptoms, increase violent behaviors or substance use, or lead to the onset of chronic health and psychotic disorders in some cases. Additionally, some raised concerns about the [prevalence](#) of marijuana use by caregivers in child abuse and neglect-related fatalities.

New Patients Enrolled, per Year



Source: [Compassionate Use Program Evaluation Report 2024](#)

Stakeholders also discussed the potential impact of HB 46 on the cannabis market. Many supporters of the bill said that expanding licenses would increase market competition, which could help reduce costs for patients and improve product quality. Certain medical cannabis providers also said that by authorizing overnight storage of products at additional satellite locations, the bill would increase access to dispensaries by shortening travel times for patients and providers. However, some critics raised concerns that the small number of distributors licensed by the state to sell medical marijuana could continue to price out small businesses and incentivize cost-burdened patients to seek more affordable, illegal alternatives. Others raised concerns about the dosage limits established by the bill, arguing that physicians should be able to determine doses based on patients' medical histories and conditions to keep prescriptions affordable and effective. Some also said that TCUP patients should be issued ID cards identifying them as authorized medical marijuana users to avoid jeopardizing those who are subject to drug testing or community supervision requirements.

The recent federal rescheduling of marijuana, as well as Congress's [revision](#) of the federal definition of hemp set to take effect in November, could further impact state medical marijuana regulation. On December 18, 2025, President Trump [issued](#) an executive order to increase medical marijuana and cannabidiol research and expedite the rescheduling of marijuana within the Controlled Substances Act (CSA) from a Schedule I drug, characterized as substances with high potential for abuse and no accepted medical use, to a Schedule III, which is defined as drugs with low to moderate potential for dependence. Following

this executive order, the Department of Justice last month [placed](#) certain FDA-approved cannabis products, including some regulated by a state medical marijuana license, in Schedule III of the CSA.

The orders sought to improve the legal landscape and research infrastructure of medical marijuana to better serve seniors and veterans, who were prohibited from enrolling in medical marijuana programs through the Department of Veterans Affairs when cannabis was a Schedule I substance. Additionally, some analyses have [suggested](#) that rescheduling marijuana could reduce the hemp industry's tax burden by allowing hemp businesses in states with regulated medical marijuana markets to receive certain tax breaks. However, some proponents of cannabis reform have suggested that rescheduling marijuana does not fully address the misalignment between the federal prohibition and regulated state markets.

Numerous cannabis-related bills, ranging from broader legalization to complete prohibition, also were deliberated in the 89th regular and special sessions. These included [SB 3](#) by Sen. Perry, a regulatory measure approved by lawmakers but [vetoed](#) by Gov. Abbott for its conflict with federal law and potential constitutional and enforcement challenges. The governor ultimately [issued](#) an executive order directing certain state agencies to adopt rules prohibiting the sale of hemp-derived products to minors and requiring age verification, revising THC content testing requirements and licensing fees, and setting product labeling requirements, among other regulations. The Texas Alcoholic Beverage Commission [approved](#) its rules on

Impact of Conditions on Program Growth

	2019	2020	2021	2022		2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022
ALS	2	117	74	76	ALS	5750.0%	-36.8%	2.7%
Autism	163	428	623	734	Autism	162.6%	45.6%	17.8%
Cancer	16		1,298	2,795	Cancer	-100.0%	-	115.3%
- Includes terminal cancer					- Includes terminal cancer			
Epilepsy & Seizure Disorders	180	390	791	995	Epilepsy & Seizure Disorders	116.7%	102.8%	25.8%
· Epilepsy	166	295	408	517	· Epilepsy	77.7%	38.3%	26.7%
· Seizure Disorders	14	95	383	478	· Seizure Disorders	578.6%	303.2%	24.8%
Multiple Sclerosis	46	353	586	573	Multiple Sclerosis	667.4%	66.0%	-2.2%
Neurodegenerative Disease	12	566	2,683	5,358	Neurodegenerative Disease	4616.7%	374.0%	99.7%
PTSD		424	4,230	12,507	PTSD	-%	-	195.7%
Seizure Disorders	14	95	383	478	Seizure Disorders	578.6%	303.2%	24.8%
Spasticity	59	191	1,853	2,068	Spasticity	223.7%	870.2%	11.6%
Total**	492	2,564	12,521	25,584		421.1%	388.3%	26.8%

Data Note: The total number of patients receiving new prescriptions by condition deviates slightly from the total unique patients receiving a prescription overall. This is due to a few patients who receive new prescriptions for multiple conditions each year. The variance is negligible.

Source: [Compassionate Use Program Evaluation Report 2024](#)

January 20, and rules [finalized](#) by the Department of State Health Services banning all smokable hemp products and the hemp flower, as well as raising licensing fees, took effect on March 31. The ban has been temporarily lifted and reinstated by various courts while a legal challenge from the hemp industry [continues](#) to be litigated through a series of appeals.

— Michelle Kuroda De La Cruz

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