

# Texas Legislative Update

2.19.23



## GOVERNOR:

### State of the State Address

On February 16<sup>th</sup>, Governor Greg Abbott delivered his State-of-the-State address in San Marcos at Novem Magnetics Corporation's manufacturing facility. Governor Abbott said, "The state of our state has never been more exceptional. Texans have inherited a legendary pedigree. A state first settled by brave pioneers willing to risk everything for the promise of freedom and opportunity. Texas is fulfilling that promise. I'm speaking to you from the manufacturing floor of Noveon. It is a cutting-edge business in the critical field of rare earth elements. They provide essential materials for things used every day like refrigerators, trucks, MRI machines, oil rigs. Even materials for ballistic missiles for America to defend itself. Most rare earth materials now come from China. If that supply is ever disrupted, many of the things we do every day would come to a halt. The future of Texas and the United States should not depend on China. We must embrace innovation like Noveon to make Texas more self-reliant to create our own products and to secure the Texas of tomorrow. With the help of businesses like Noveon, Texas is:

#1 in the United States for new jobs. Texas has added more than 1.9 million new jobs since I became governor.

#1 for economic development, number one for exports, and number one for Fortune 500 headquarters.

Our \$2 trillion economy makes Texas the ninth-largest economy in the world. All across our state business is booming. From our large metros to rural Texas and everywhere in between, businesses large and small have led Texas to be ranked the number one state for business every year that I've been governor." He designated seven issues as emergency items for the legislature to take early action on including:

- cutting property taxes
- ending COVID restrictions
- education freedom
- school safety
- ending revolving door bail
- doing more to secure the border
- addressing the fentanyl crisis

The governor concluded by saying, "No doubt we have work ahead of us, but we're building on a storied legacy. One hundred and eighty-seven years after Texas was founded, it has never been a better time to be a Texan. Texas is America's economic juggernaut: Where a small family business can aspire to employ hundreds and become

leaders in their local community; where all Texans can chart their own destiny. Texas is the seat of knowledge, where children will have safer schools to master the skills that will prepare them for the workforce of tomorrow. Texas is the energy capital of the world, where we will strengthen our electric grid to power us for generations to come. Texas is the home of justice, where dangerous criminals will stay locked behind bars, and law-abiding Texans will have their liberty protected. This session, we will ensure Texas remains the leader of this nation as an unflinching force in this world. Together, we will build a Texas for the next generation - the Texas of tomorrow.” *Other details from the governor’s speech are in the issue categories below.*

**House Speaker Dade Phelan** commented on Governor Abbott’s speech saying, “Governor Greg Abbott’s State of the State address this evening included many great ideas for achieving the goal we all share at the Texas Legislature: making our state a better place to live, work and raise a family. To that end, the legislature this year must address our state’s border security in a meaningful and innovative way, fight the rapidly-rising number of opioid overdoses and empower parents with the roles they play in the classroom and on social media. The Texas House’s work on these issues and more is already underway, and our chamber looks forward to working with the governor and Texas Senate this session.”

**Democratic Response** - Representative Gina Hinojosa (D-Austin) offered a Democratic response to the governor’s speech saying, “In his ‘State of the State’ address, Governor Abbott announced his emergency priority for the 88<sup>th</sup> Legislative Session to divest our public schools of funding and transfer those resources to private schools. After almost a decade under Governor Abbott’s leadership, he answers the anger and frustration that parents and teachers feel in cash-strapped schools with a gimmick that further undermines the public education that the vast majority of Texas school children and their families rely upon. Private vouchers offer private schools a choice to collect taxpayer dollars by selecting the students they choose to educate. It is the school’s choice to select families and students who are the ‘right fit.’ At a time when our schools are in crisis after a pandemic that upended teaching and learning in schools that have been chronically underfunded, my constituents and all Texas parents deserve a real plan to deliver effective, high-quality education to all Texas school children. No more gimmicks. We must stop diverting property taxes away from public schools and fully fund the public education our children need to succeed, once and for all.”

## **SENATE:**

The Senate convened briefly on Tuesday and Wednesday conducting routine business. On Wednesday, they began referring bills to committees referring SB’s 31-450. The Senate convened briefly on Friday to refer additional bills – SB’s 451-700.

**Lt. Governor Announces His Priorities** – On February 13<sup>th</sup>, Lt. Governor Dan Patrick announced his priorities for the 88<sup>th</sup> Legislative Session. He said, “Each session, the 31 members of the Texas Senate file thousands of bills. Some are duplicates because

members often have similar priorities voiced to them by their constituents. The tradition has been for bill numbers 1 through 20 to indicate the Lt. Governor's and the Senate's priorities. In 2017, I increased the low bill numbers to 30. Senators like to get a low bill number because it shows their bill is also a priority of the Lt. Governor and has a great chance of passing. I believe Texans support our priorities because they largely reflect the policies supported by the conservative majority of Texans. Most will pass with bipartisan support. This session I could have used 50 low bill numbers because there are so many issues that need to be addressed. Just because a bill does not make the priority list does not mean it is not a priority for me or the Senate. We will pass over 600 bills this session. As I like to say, every bill is a priority to someone, otherwise we would not pass it. This year, several of our policy initiatives are already addressed in the budget as opposed to specific bills. One example is Texas border security funding. Since President Biden took office and implemented his open border policies, Texas has stepped into the breach. Texas should not have to use our tax dollars to do the Federal Government's job, but it is vitally important that we maintain our law enforcement and National Guard presence. If we do not, the border crisis will get much worse." Lt. Governor Patrick's Priority Bills:

- SB 1 – State Budget
- SB 2 – Restoring Voter Fraud to a Felony
- SB 3 – Increasing the Homestead Exemption to \$70,000
- SB 4 – Adding Additional Property Tax Relief
- SB 5 – Increasing the Business Personal Property Tax Exemption
- SB 6 – Adding New Natural Gas Plants
- SB 7 – Continuing to Improve the Texas Grid
- SB 8 – Empowering Parental Rights – Including School Choice
- SB 9 – Empowering Teacher Rights – Teacher Pay Raise
- SB 10 – Adding 13<sup>th</sup> Checks for Retired Teachers
- SB 11 – Keeping Our Schools Safe and Secure
- SB 12 – Banning Children's Exposure to Drag Shows
- SB 13 – Protecting Children from Obscene Books in Libraries
- SB 14 – Ending Child Gender Modification
- SB 15 – Protecting Women's College Sports
- SB 16 – Banning Critical Race Theory (CRT) in Higher Education
- SB 17 – Banning Discriminatory "Diversity, Equity and Inclusion" (DEI) Policies in Higher Education
- SB 18 – Eliminating Tenure at General Academic Institutions
- SB 19 – Creating A New Higher Education Endowment Fund
- SB 20 – Removing District Attorneys Who Refuse to Follow Texas Law
- SB 21 – Removing Judges Who Refuse to Follow Texas Law
- SB 22 – Assisting Rural Law Enforcement Funding – Increasing Pay and Needed Equipment
- SB 23 – Creating A Mandatory 10-Year Prison Sentence for Criminals Committing Gun Crime
- SB 24 – Expanding Alternatives to Abortion
- SB 25 – Creating New Scholarships for Registered Nurses

- SB 26 – Expanding Mental Health Care Beds Across Texas – Focus on Rural Counties
- SB 27 – Creating A New Business Specialty Court
- SB 28 – Addressing Texas’ Future Water Needs
- SB 29 – Banning Local COVID-19 Mandates
- SB 30 – Supplemental Budget

*Note: SB 1 has been filed by Senator Joan Huffman (R-Houston). The other bills have not yet been filed.*

**Association of Professional Educators (ATPE)** Executive Director Shannon Holmes commented on Lt. Governor Dan Patrick’s legislative priorities saying, “Nothing surprises us on the list of the lieutenant governor's priorities. We haven't seen the bill text yet, but we know that it's no accident 'school choice' - aka vouchers - and a 'teacher pay raise' are side by side. But public educators are not fooled by political gamesmanship. A voucher is a voucher, and a voucher accompanied by a pay raise will still hurt Texas public schools. We also urge parents not to be fooled by buzzwords, either. Creating a system that allows taxpayer dollars to be spent without accountability doesn't 'empower parental rights.' It just opens up a money-making scheme for private businesses. What will empower parents is ensuring each of them has the option to send their children to a well-resourced neighborhood school - one that is staffed by well-prepared professional educators who can provide for their own families on an educator’s salary. Regarding educators’ retirement benefits, a 13<sup>th</sup> check would be appreciated, but what retired educators really need is a cost-of-living adjustment and a method for receiving automatic COLAs in the future. The State of Texas has the means to provide this for retired educators given the historic level of resources at its disposal. School safety is of top priority to Texas educators, and we look forward to working with lawmakers as they craft solutions to keep our school communities safe.”

**Senate Administration Committee** – On February 15<sup>th</sup>, the Senate Administration Committee took up **SJR 50** by Senator Bob Hall (R-Edgewood), the constitutional amendment “blocker bill” which was voted out of committee. It will remain at the top of the Senate’s calendar requiring all other proposals to be taken up by suspending the regular order of business.

**Regular Schedule for Senate Committees** – The Senate committee schedule was announced this week:

**Mondays:**

- 8:00 a.m. Water, Agriculture & Rural Affairs Committee – E1.012 capitol extension
- 9:00 a.m. State Affairs Committee – Senate chamber
- 9:00 a.m. Local Government Committee – E1.028 capitol extension
- 9:30 a.m. Nominations Committee – Betty King Room
- 10:00 a.m. Finance Committee - E1.036 capitol extension

**Tuesdays:**

- 8:00 a.m. Business & Commerce Committee – E1.012 capitol extension

8:30 a.m. Health & Human Services Committee – Senate chamber  
9:00 a.m. Education Committee – E1.028 capitol extension  
9:00 a.m. Veterans Affairs Committee – Betty King Room  
9:00 a.m. Local Government Committee – E1.016 capitol extension  
1:30 p.m. Criminal Justice Committee – E1.016 capitol extension

**Wednesdays:**

8:00 a.m. Transportation Committee – E1.018 capitol extension  
8:30 a.m. Health & Human Services Committee – Senate chamber  
9:00 a.m. Natural Resources & Economic Development Committee – E1.012 capitol extension  
9:00 a.m. Subcommittee on Higher Education – E1.028 capitol extension  
9:00 a.m. Finance Committee – E1.036 capitol extension  
9:00 a.m. Jurisprudence Committee – Betty King Room

**Thursdays:**

8:00 a.m. Business & Commerce Committee – E1.012 capitol extension  
9:00 a.m. State Affairs Committee – Senate chamber  
9:00 a.m. Border Security Committee – E1.016 capitol extension  
9:00 a.m. Education Committee – E1.028 capitol extension

**Next Week:** The Senate adjourned until 11:00 a.m. on Tuesday, February 21, 2023.

**HOUSE:**

The House also convened briefly on Tuesday and Wednesday conducting routine business.

**House Administration Committee** – The House Administration Committee met on Tuesday, February 14<sup>th</sup> to take up organizational matters and approve House committee budgets. The committee:

- granted authority to the Chair, Representative Will Metcalf (R-Conroe) to act on the committee's behalf on matters involving the management of the general budget, approval of expenditure requests by House members, management of House facilities, coordination with House support personnel, and general enforcement of House policies and procedures;
- approved committee budgets;
- delegated accreditation of media representatives to the Executive Director of the House Business Office; and
- approved the standard process for electronic submission and posting of public comments and the continued use of the information links on committee meeting notices.

Chairman Metcalf appointed the Subcommittee to Review the House Policies and Procedures Manual:

- Brooks Landgraf (R-Odessa), Chair
- Sheryl Cole (D-Austin)
- Sam Harless (R-Spring)
- Cody Harris (R-Palestine)
- Joe Moody (D-El Paso)

They were charged to work with Steve Adrian in the House Business Office to update the manual and to complete the work expeditiously.

**Regular Schedule for House Committees** – The House Committee Coordinator announced the regular schedule for House Committees:

**Mondays:**

8:30 a.m. Appropriations Committee – E1.030 capitol extension  
10:00 a.m. Business & Industry Committee – E2.012 capitol extension  
10:00 a.m. Higher Education Committee – E1.010 capitol extension  
10:00 a.m. Public Health Committee – Room 120 John H. Reagan State Office Building  
10:00 a.m. Ways & Means Committee – Room 140 John H. Reagan State Office Building  
2:00 p.m. Energy Resources Committee – E1.014 capitol extension  
2:00 p.m. Select Committee on Youth Health & Safety – E2.026 capitol extension

**Tuesdays:**

8:00 a.m. Human Services Committee – E2.030 capitol extension  
8:00 a.m. House Insurance Committee – E2.014 capitol extension  
8:00 a.m. International Relations & Economic Development Committee – E1.036 capitol extension  
8:00 a.m. Natural Resources Committee – E2.010 capitol extension  
8:00 a.m. Public Education Committee – E2.036 capitol extension  
10:30 a.m. Criminal Jurisprudence Committee – E2.016 capitol extension  
2:00 p.m. Homeland Security & Public Safety Committee – E2.012 capitol extension  
2:00 p.m. Urban Affairs Committee – E2.028 capitol extension

**Wednesdays:**

8:00 a.m. Agriculture & Livestock Committee - E1.026 capitol extension  
8:00 a.m. Judiciary & Civil Jurisprudence Committee – E2.016 capitol extension  
8:00 a.m. Land & Resource Management Committee – E2.028 capitol extension  
8:00 a.m. Licensing & Administrative Procedures Committee – E2.010 capitol extension  
8:00 a.m. Pensions, Investments & Financial Services Committee – E2.014 capitol extension  
10:30 a.m. County Affairs Committee – E2.012 capitol extension  
10:30 a.m. Juvenile Justice & Family Issues Committee – E2.030 capitol extension  
10:30 a.m. State Affairs Committee – Room 140 John H. Reagan State Office Building  
10:30 a.m. Transportation Committee – E2.036 capitol extension

**Thursdays:**

8:00 a.m. Corrections Committee – E2.014 capitol extension  
8:00 a.m. Culture, Recreation & Tourism Committee – E2.012 capitol extension  
8:00 a.m. Select Committee on Health Care Reform – E2.028 capitol extension  
8:00 a.m. Redistricting Committee – Room 140 John H. Reagan State Office Building  
10:30 a.m. Defense & Veterans' Affairs Committee – E2.026 capitol extension  
10:30 a.m. Elections Committee – E2.016 capitol extension  
10:30 a.m. Environmental Regulation Committee – E2.030 capitol extension

**Next Week:** The House adjourned until 2:00 p.m. on Tuesday, February 21, 2023.

**TRACKED LEGISLATION:**

**HB 59** - Goodwin, Vikki (D) - Relating to child water safety requirements for certain organizations.

**HB 1391** - Schaefer, Matt (R) - Relating to the regulation of electricians, including the requirements to obtain a residential wireman license.

**HB 1568** - Allison, Steve (R) - Relating to the licensing and regulation of child swim instruction operators. **(Oppose)**

**HB 2255** - Turner, Chris (D) - Relating to the regulation and operation of an interactive water feature or fountain.

**HB 2424** - Romero, Ramon (D) - Relating to training and certification requirements for public swimming pool and spa inspectors

**SB 591** - Zaffirini, Judith (D) - Relating to child water safety requirements for certain organizations.

**SB 765** - Zaffirini, Judith (D) - Relating to the licensing and regulation of child swim instruction operators. **(Oppose)**

**KEY DATES – 88<sup>TH</sup> LEGISLATIVE SESSION:**

- 88<sup>th</sup> Legislative Session Begins: January 10, 2023
- Inauguration of Governor and Lt. Governor – January 17, 2023
- Bill Filing Deadline: March 10, 2023
- 88<sup>th</sup> Legislative Session Ends: May 29, 2023
- Governor's Veto Deadline: June 18, 2023

## **KEEP TRACK OF THE TEXAS LEGISLATURE:**

To keep track of bills or access legislative information for this or previous sessions, visit [Texas Legislature Online \(TLO\)](#).

To learn more about the Texas State Senate and its activities, visit the [Texas State Senate](#) website.

To learn more about the Texas House of Representatives and its activities, visit the [Texas House of Representatives](#) website.

Thank you for taking the time to read our Texas Legislative newsletter. We look forward to providing weekly news and information important to each of you while working to make the 88th Legislative Session a very successful one for the PHTA!

Sincerely,

Jake Posey and Steve Koebele