



Dan Patrick

Lieutenant Governor of Texas

President of the Senate

Interim Charges

Criminal Justice

- **Police Safety and Community Engagement:** Review law enforcement efforts to engage community leaders and increase their involvement in communities. Assess dangers to law enforcement officers and the collection and distribution of threat assessment data. Make recommendations to reduce the number of injuries and deaths to or by law enforcement officers.
- **Jail Safety Standards in Texas:** Evaluate the current guidelines and practices in county and municipal jails relating to the health, welfare, and safety of those in custody. Review law enforcement and correctional officer training, with emphasis on mental health and de-escalation. Study the effectiveness of existing oversight mechanisms to enforce jail standards; making recommendations for policies and procedures if needed. Examine the current mental health and substance use treatment services and medical resources offered in county, municipal, and state correctional facilities.
- **Re-Entry and Continuity of Care:** Review current programs provided by the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) and the Windham School for incarcerated persons to prepare them for re-entry, including inmates in administrative segregation. Examine opportunities for incarcerated persons once they are released and make recommendations to expand successful programs to provide resources and support for released inmates. Assess the success of Certified Peer Support Services. Continue to monitor the Darrington Seminary Program. Study the continuity of care for individuals released from TDCJ, the Windham School, and county and municipal jails and make recommendations if needed.
- **Diversions:** Examine the success of current pretrial diversion and treatment programs in Texas and in other states. Make recommendations on best practices and how to implement and expand these programs in Texas to maximize effective use of resources and reduce populations in jails.
- **Bulk Criminal Records Dissemination:** Study how bulk criminal records are disseminated. Review the list of entities with access to and their current use of criminal records. Make recommendations to streamline the dissemination of records through bulk requests to ensure accuracy and limit inappropriate use of records.

- **Contact with Incarcerated Inmates:** Review costs family members incur to maintain contact with an incarcerated family member. Make recommendations to promote familial contact and relationships for incarcerated individuals. Review visitation practices across the state in determining effective and appropriate methods of maintaining familial contact for incarcerated individuals.
- **Civil Asset Forfeiture:** Conduct a study of civil asset forfeiture laws in Texas and compare them to similar laws in other states. Determine best practices to protect public safety and the private property rights of citizens. Examine the reporting requirements and recommend legislative changes if needed to ensure transparency.
- **Monitoring Charge:** Monitor the implementation of legislation addressed by the Senate Committee on Criminal Justice and make recommendations for any legislation needed to improve, enhance, and/or complete implementation. Specifically, monitor the following: 1) Decriminalization of school truancy and the response of school districts to take steps to address truancy before referring students to court; 2) Progress and success of the Governor's Office grant program for law enforcement body cameras; 3) Changes made to the operation of the Civil Commitment program in Texas; 4) Administration of Veterans Treatment Court Programs; and 5) Progress made by the Texas Juvenile Justice Department to plan for regionalization of the youth population, create specialized programs, and implement established sentencing schemes.

Veteran Affairs and Military Installations

- **Strike Force, VA Health, Mental Health:** Study the state of veteran health and mental health in Texas. Review the progress made by state strike force teams to reduce the claims backlog and decrease wait times at VA hospitals. Evaluate if the passage of the federal Veterans' Access to Care through Choice, Accountability, and Transparency Act of 2014 and other state initiatives have improved access and outcomes. Determine if state strike force teams should continue as established and make recommendations on necessary changes.
- **State Veteran Employment:** Study current veteran hiring policies among state agencies and consider the effectiveness of a percentage-based system. Make recommendations if there are other ways to equitably measure the success of veteran employment within an agency.
- **Veteran Benefits:** Given pending litigation on the subject, study what veteran benefits, if any, are currently only offered to residents of the state of Texas--whether by being born here or by entering the service in Texas--and assess whether any of these additional benefits leave the state liable for lawsuits under the equal protection clause of the 14th amendment to the U.S. Constitution. Make recommendations for legislation that could reduce the state's liability.

- **Veterans Courts:** Study successes and challenges of veteran's courts in Texas, including evidence of rehabilitation or recidivism. Consider alternative means of funding, such as voluntary donations at points of contact with state services, and make recommendations.
- **Defense Adjustment Authorities, Compatibility Use, and Encroachment:** Consider best practices for improving the military value at military installations in Texas. Determine cost-effective policies and make recommendations that would strengthen military value.
- **Monitoring Charge:** Monitor the implementation of legislation addressed by the Senate Committee on Veteran Affairs and Military Installations during the 84th Legislature, Regular Session and make recommendations for any legislation needed to improve, enhance, and/or complete implementation. Specifically, monitor the following: 1) Monitor the implementation of legislation relating to the qualifications of veteran county service officers, and make recommendations if further changes should be made.

Subcommittee on Border Security

- **Sanctuary Cities:** Study the various sanctuary city policies statewide, the number and types of crimes committed by previously arrested illegal immigrants within the jurisdiction of a "sanctuary policy," and possible solutions to discourage governmental entities from putting in place policies that conflict with immigration laws. Make recommendations to improve community safety.
- **Local Law Enforcement, PEP:** Study local government efforts to secure their border communities and identify areas where the state could invest to bolster local law enforcement infrastructure and activities. Review the challenges faced by state and local law enforcement when providing border security, including the federal Priority Enforcement Program (PEP).
- **Interstate Compact:** Conduct a cost-benefit analysis of a potential interstate compact on border security, and consider the constitutional and legal questions that underpin the proposal. Consider which other states might be party to an interstate compact on border security. Make recommendations for policies that Texas should adopt pursuant to an interstate compact, if it were authorized by the Legislature and approved by Congress.



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Interim Charges

Education

- **School Choice:** Study school choice programs enacted in states across the nation, examining education savings account and tax credit scholarship programs in particular. Examine the implementation process used in other states and what impact these programs have had on student academics and state and local district budgets. Make recommendations on which choice plan could best serve Texas students.
- **Charter School Approval, Expansion, Revocation:** Study the approval, expansion, and revocation of public charter schools in Texas, including the implementation of SB 2 (83R) and other legislation. In particular, examine the issues surrounding the disposition of state property when charters are revoked, non-renewed, or cease to operate. Make recommendations regarding policies to ensure an efficient and effective transfer and disposal of state property that preserves state interest while ensuring that certain investment capital and the bond market supporting charter construction remains robust. In addition, make recommendations if needed to clarify policies regarding expansion of existing high-quality charter schools in Texas. Additionally, examine facility funding for charter schools in other states and make recommendations on facility funding assistance for charter schools in Texas.
- **Teacher Preparation, Retention, Shortages:** Study teacher shortage and retention issues in Texas and evaluate educator preparation programs to determine if these programs are preparing educators for the rigors of the 21st century classroom. In particular, examine the shortages of ELL, special education, and STEM educators across the state and identify the issues creating a shortage. Make recommendations to improve educator preparation throughout the state and increase certification rates. **(Joint Charge with Senate Higher Education)**
- **Efficiency/Productivity Review:** Conduct a comprehensive performance review of all public schools in Texas, examining ways to improve efficiency, productivity, and student academic outcomes. Study performance-based funding mechanisms that allocate dollars based upon achievement versus attendance. Identify any state mandates which hinder student performance, district and campus innovation, and efficiency and productivity overall.
- **Broadband Access:** Evaluate digital learning opportunities in classrooms and examine existing barriers to schools' ability to provide a digital learning environment. In particular, study the availability of affordable broadband access to

school districts across Texas. Examine different options for improving access to broadband service in all areas of the state, for districts and student homes. Make recommendations on a statewide plan for building the necessary infrastructure to provide a competitive, free-market environment in broadband service.

- **Teacher-Student Relationships/Student Safety:** Study the recent rise of inappropriate teacher-student relationships, the impact of social media interaction between teachers and students, and examine the current efforts by the Texas Education Agency, schools, law enforcement, and the courts to investigate and prosecute any educator engaged in inappropriate relationships. Determine what recommendations, if any, are needed to improve student safety, including increasing agency staff, adjusting penalties, and strengthening efforts to sanction educators' certificates for misconduct. Study and address the issue of prevention through training and education of school employees.
- **County School Systems:** Examine the structure and performance of the two remaining county-based school systems, Harris County Department of Education and Dallas County Schools. In particular, study the efficiency of these entities and determine whether those services are duplicative with education service centers or could be absorbed by education service centers.
- **School Board Governance, Low-Performing Schools:** Examine current school board governance policies and practices and make recommendations that could improve the focus, attitudes, and outcomes of Texas school boards, districts, and students. Study existing board training requirements for public schools and make suggestions to educate school board trustees of policies that could achieve better student outcomes, particularly within the framework set for low-performing schools in House Bill 1842 (HB1842)(84R).
- **Monitoring Charge:** Monitor the implementation of legislation addressed by the Senate Committee on Education and make recommendations for any legislation needed to improve, enhance, and/or complete implementation. Specifically, monitor the following: **1)** Legislation establishing state intervention procedures for public schools with academically unsuccessful ratings of at least two consecutive school years; and providing school districts the ability to be designated as a district of innovation; **2)** Initiatives to build a high-quality pre-kindergarten grant program; **3)** Legislation to raise standards of teacher preparation programs and establish a more consistent, high-quality accountability system; **4)** Program to require the placement and use of video cameras in self-contained classrooms or other settings providing special education services to students; **5)** Legislation to address training support for counselors, and advising courses for middle school students; and **6)** Legislation to establish criteria for alternative measures of assessments to meet high school graduation requirements.

Higher Education

- **HB 5 Implementation, 60x30TX/Higher Education Alignment:** Monitor the ongoing implementation of HB 5 (83R), and examine current projections for preparation of Texas high school students for postsecondary education and workforce training. Examine best practices and recommend strategies to align the implementation with the 60x30TX higher education plan, including, but not limited to, dual credit, credit transferability, and fields of study. **(Joint Charge with Senate Education)**
- **Performance Funding for GAIs and Community Colleges:** Study current funding methods for both general academic institutions and community colleges, examining current performance-based methods of funding for community colleges. Review funding methods used in other states and make recommendations on how to incorporate and/or change student outcome measures in institutional funding to benefit students and promote the education needs of a rapidly growing and changing workforce.
- **Tuition Deregulation and Student Debt:** Examine and make recommendations regarding tuition and student debt at public institutions of higher education in Texas. Specifically, study how Texas compares to peer states, variance between institutions, how accountability measures can be used to impact tuition, and increases in tuition since 2003.
- **Tuition/Fee Waivers, Tuition Set-Asides, Financial Aid:** Conduct a review of all tuition and fee waivers and exemptions, as well as tuition set-asides currently in law, and examine how students who do not receive the benefits of either bear these resulting costs. Study how other states treat similar populations, whether federal benefits are available, and make recommendations to ensure the efficacy of waivers and exemptions, and tuition set-asides. Examine current financial aid programs, studying their efficacy, and make recommendations on how to provide programs to meet the needs of all students in light of the recent repeal of the state's Top 10% Scholarship program and B-On-Time program.
- **General Academic Institution(GAI)/Health Related Institution(HRI) Funding:** Conduct a comprehensive review of funding for GAIs and HRIs, examining whether the methodology for funding the same courses is equitable and productive. Make recommendations on how to update and streamline the current funding methods, to provide a consistent methodology that focuses on student success and innovative strategies. Include in the review a focus on tuition-revenue generating special items and formula and research funding for new medical schools.
- **Baccalaureate Degrees at Community Colleges:** Study regional workforce needs in the state and make recommendations on whether metrics should be applied to authorize public community colleges to offer certain baccalaureate degrees in order to meet the regional workforce needs.

- **Monitoring Charge:** Monitor the implementation of legislation addressed by the Senate Committee on Higher Education and make recommendations for any legislation needed to improve, enhance, and/or complete implementation. Specifically, monitor the following: **1)** Initiatives designed to create effective, clear transfer pathways for students, including the newly enacted multidisciplinary studies associate degree; **2)** Implementation and progress of the Math and Science Scholars Loan Repayment Program; and **3)** The progress of the pilot program enacted by the 83rd legislature relating to improving student loan default rates and financial aid literacy among postsecondary students.
- **Teacher Preparation, Retention, Shortages:** Study teacher shortage and retention issues in Texas and evaluate educator preparation programs to determine if these programs are preparing educators for the rigors of the 21st century classroom. In particular, examine the shortages of ELL, special education, and STEM educators across the state and identify the issues creating a shortage. Make recommendations to improve educator preparation throughout the state and increase certification rates. **(Joint Charge with Senate Education)**

Inter-Governmental Relations

- **Annexation:** Identify areas of concern in regards to statutory extraterritorial jurisdiction expansion and the processes used by municipalities for annexation, specifically reviewing whether existing statute strikes the appropriate balance between safeguarding private property rights and encouraging orderly growth and economic development. Make recommendations for legislative action, if necessary.
- **Local Ordinance Integrity:** Examine the processes used by home rule municipalities to adopt ordinances, rules, and regulations, including those initiated by petition and voter referendum. Determine if additional statutory safeguards are necessary to ensure that ballot language accurately describes proposed initiatives. Identify ways to improve transparency and make recommendations, if needed, to ensure that local propositions and the means by which they are put forth to voters, conform with existing state law.
- **Disaster Preparedness Planning and Coordination:** Review natural disaster preparedness planning and coordination in the wake of a growing range of threats. Evaluate whether existing processes maximize regional cooperation to rebuild housing and infrastructure, and allow for the timely dissemination of funds to units of local governments for reconstruction following a federal declaration. Develop recommendations, if necessary, to improve the efficiency of disaster recovery efforts, incorporating best practices identified from other states, as well as lessons-learned from past reconstruction efforts in Texas.
- **Municipal Management Districts:** Study the means by which the Texas Legislature reviews the creation of municipal management districts (MMDs) by special law to determine if different processes should be used to evaluate new MMDs created within populated or developed areas from those created over undeveloped areas. Identify ways to better assess how the services and improvements of a proposed

MMD within populated or developed areas will supplement and enhance those provided by other local governments, as well as if the territory of the proposed MMD encompasses or overlaps area that is already within other assessment or taxing entities. Make recommendations, if necessary, to improve the notice provided to individuals and businesses within populated or developed areas proposed for inclusion in an MMD.

- **Supreme Court ICP Ruling:** Review existing statute and rules that govern the Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs in light of the recent Supreme Court decision in *Inclusive Communities Project, Inc. vs. TDHCA, et al.* and recommend if any modifications are necessary to conform to the decision.
- **Debt Transparency in the Voting Booth:** Examine ways to improve government accountability in elections regarding the issuance of public debt. Include a review of the information that is currently provided to individuals in the voting booth and provide statutory recommendations, if necessary, to improve transparency.



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Health and Human Services

- **Protecting the Unborn:**
 - **Part I:** Examine and make recommendations on the use of fetal tissue provided for research purposes and how related laws governing abortion procedures are interpreted and enforced.
 - **Part II:** Examine the cause of action known as “wrongful birth.” The study should examine **(1)** its history in Texas, **(2)** its effect on the practice of medicine, and **(3)** its effect on children with disabilities and their families. Examine related measures proposed or passed in other states.
- **Protection of Children**
 - **Part I: Reducing Recurrence of Child Abuse and Neglect:** Examine the current process that Child Protective Services uses to track recurrence of child abuse and neglect, and make recommendations to improve data tracking and the use of that data to assist in preventing recurrence. The study should examine the differences in recurrence among families who received services, families who received no services and had their cases closed, and families who had their children removed from the home.
 - **Part II: Addressing High-Acuity Needs of Foster Care Children:** Study the increase in higher acuity children with trauma and mental illness in the state foster care system, and recommend ways to ensure children have timely access to appropriate treatment and placement options.
 - **Part III: Strengthening Adoptions:** Examine the frequency, causes, and effects of disrupted foster care adoptions and make recommendations to improve the long-term success of adoptive placements. Study and make recommendations on ways to ensure a smooth transition for foster care children who are exiting the system.
- **Healthy Aging:**
 - **Part I:** Study and make recommendations on innovative methods and best practices to promote healthy aging for the state’s population and reduce chronic medical and behavioral health conditions. Identify opportunities for improved collaboration to promote healthy aging in the health and human services system at the state, regional and local levels.
 - **Part II:** Examine and recommend ways to improve quality and oversight in long-term care settings, including nursing homes and ICF/HCS programs. Monitor the implementation of legislation addressed by the Senate Committee on Health and Human Services during the 84th Regular Session

related to the revocation of nursing home licenses for repeated serious violations.

- **Medicaid Reform and State Innovation:** Study the impact of the Section 1115 Texas Healthcare Transformation and Quality Improvement Program Waiver on improving health outcomes, reducing costs, and providing access to health care for the uninsured, and monitor the renewal process of the waiver. Explore other mechanisms and make recommendations to control costs and increase quality and efficiency in the Medicaid program, including the pursuit of a block grant or a Section 1332 Medicaid State Innovation Waiver for the existing Medicaid program.
- **Inpatient Mental Health System Reform:** Study and make recommendations on establishing collaborative partnerships between state-owned mental health hospitals and university health science centers to improve inpatient state mental health services, maximize the state mental health workforce, and reduce healthcare costs.
- **Mental Health Diversion and Forensic Capacity:** Study the impact of recent efforts by the legislature to divert individuals with serious mental illness from criminal justice settings and prevent recidivism. Study and make recommendations to address the state's ongoing need for inpatient forensic capacity, including the impact of expanding community inpatient psychiatric beds.
- **Improving Access to Care through TeleHealth:** Study and make recommendations on the appropriate use, scope and application of tele-monitoring and telemedicine services to improve management and outcomes for adults and children with complex medical needs and for persons confined in correctional facilities. Examine barriers to implementation of these services and any impact on access to health care services in rural areas of the state.
- **Review of Refugee Resettlement Program:** Study the impact to the state of the increasing number of refugees relocating to Texas, including the range of health and human services provided. Examine the authority of the state to reduce its burden under the Refugee Resettlement Program, and any state-funded services.
- **Monitoring Charge:** Monitor the implementation of legislation and riders related to health and human services that were considered by the 84th Legislature, Regular Session and make recommendations for any legislation needed to improve, enhance, and/or complete implementation, including but not limited to:
 - The impact of changes made by the Department of Family and Protective Services, Child Protective Services on child safety, workforce retention, prevention, and permanency;
 - Initiatives to reduce Medicaid fraud, waste and abuse, and other cost containment strategies, including examining the processes and procedures used by managed care organizations to address Medicaid fraud, waste and abuse; and

- The consolidation and expansion of women's health programs at the Health and Human Services Commission.

Transportation

- **TxDOT Funding:** Monitor any new and anticipated revenue appropriated to the Texas Department of Transportation and make recommendations that address project prioritization and selection, effectiveness of staffing levels and project delivery methods.
- **Vehicle Inspection System:** Evaluate the efficiency and effectiveness of the state's Vehicle Inspection Program. Make recommendations on how to compress or otherwise reduce the number of required inspections.
- **Regional Mobility Authorities:** Review State Highway Fund grants and loans to Regional Mobility Authorities (RMA) and make recommendations if additional oversight procedures are needed to ensure the RMA's expenditures are a valid and accountable use of State Highway Funds.
- **Panama Canal:** Study the demand placed on the state's ports, roadways and railways resulting from the Panama Canal expansion and make recommendations to ensure transportation infrastructure is adequate to accommodate increases in imports and exports.
- **Driver Responsibility Program:** Evaluate the necessity of the Driver Responsibility Program and make recommendations for alternative methods of achieving the programs objectives.
- **Oversize/Overweight Vehicle Regulations, Penalties and Fines:** Review current state and federal regulations, penalties and fines related to oversize and overweight vehicles and make recommendations to minimize impacts on the state's roadways and bridges.
- **Monitoring Charge:** Monitor the implementation of legislation addressed by the Senate Committee on Transportation during the 84th Legislature, Regular Session and make recommendations for any legislation needed to improve, enhance, and/or complete implementation. Specifically, monitor the following: **1)** Progress of the Texas Department of Transportation's efforts to propose a plan to eliminate toll roads; **2)** Removing eminent domain authority from private toll corporations; **3)** Ending the issuing of any new debt from the Texas Mobility Fund (TMF) and prohibiting future use of the TMF on toll projects; and **4)** The Sunset Advisory Commission's review of the Texas Department of Transportation.



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Finance

- **Property Tax Process:** Study the property tax process, including the appraisal system, and recommend ways to promote transparency, simplicity, and accountability by all taxing entities. **(Charge to a select subcommittee on Property Tax Reform and Relief)**
- **Reduce Tax Burden:** Examine and develop options to further reduce the tax burden on property owners. **(Charge to a select subcommittee on Property Tax Reform and Relief)**
- **Franchise Tax:** Study the benefits, including the dynamic effects, of continuing to phase out the franchise tax. Consider alternate approaches to funding the Property Tax Relief Fund.
- **Spending Limit:** Examine options and make recommendations for strengthening restriction on appropriations established in Article VIII Section 22 of the state constitution, including related procedures defined in statute. Consider options for ensuring available revenues above spending limit are reserved for tax relief.
- **Fiscal Responsibility:** Review the budgeting format of other states, such as whether they use strategy-based budgeting, program-based budgeting, or some other approach and discuss the level of transparency with each approach. Review and make recommendations to reduce state debt liabilities, including state pension liability. Consider how to incentivize state agencies, boards, and commissions to identify and realize savings to taxpayers.
- **Coordinating Behavioral Health Services and Expenditures:** Monitor the state's progress in coordinating behavioral health services and expenditures across state government, pursuant to Article IX Sec. 10.04. Identify ways state agencies that provide mental health services are collaborating and taking steps to eliminate redundancy, create efficiency, utilize best practices, ensure optimal service delivery, and demonstrate expenditures are coordinated and in furtherance of a behavioral health statewide strategic plan. Identify barriers that prevent the coordination of behavioral health services. Make recommendations to maximize use of state funding for mental health.
- **Sales Tax Holiday:** Review the state's current sales tax holiday structure and determine its economic benefit to the state. Evaluate and consider the merits of any

potential expansion of the tax holiday either in the application of the sales tax exemption or the timing of the holiday.

- **Monitoring Charge:** Monitor the implementation of legislation addressed by the Senate Finance Committee during the 84th Legislature, Regular Session and make recommendations for any legislation needed to improve, enhance, and/or complete implementation. Specifically, monitor the following: **1)** Tax relief provided to property owners; **2)** The gradual phase out of the franchise tax; **3)** Support for and the enhancement of graduate medical education; **4)** Efforts of the Department of Information Resources (DIR) to modernize the technology of state agencies; **5)** The implementation of required changes to state agency contracting, purchasing, and accounting procedures; and **6)** Monitor the implementation of Health and Human Services Commission Rider 50.

Business and Commerce

- **Occupational Licensing:** Review all occupations licensed under Texas law to determine the extent to which continued state regulation and licensure is required to protect public health and safety. Examine methods to ensure greater legislative oversight of new regulations, scope, and necessity of certain licenses and make recommendations for state licenses that should be repealed or transitioned to private-sector enforcement.
- **Hail Storm:** Monitor the number of lawsuits related to property claims filed as a result of multiple hail storms and weather related events across Texas. Examine negative consumer trends that may result in market disruption such as higher premiums and deductibles, less coverage, non-renewals, and inability to secure coverage due to insurance carrier withdrawal from the state and make recommendations on legislative action needed.
- **Texas Prompt Pay Law:** Study the impact of the penalty calculations under the current prompt payment of health care claim laws and regulations, including comparing penalties in other states and late payment penalties in Texas for other lines of insurance. Evaluate whether unregulated billed charges is the appropriate basis for determining penalty amounts and make recommendations for statutory changes, if needed.
- **Cyber-security/Storage:** Examine cyber-security efforts undertaken by state entities and study the legal, policy, and privacy implications of the trend toward storage of personal, private, and business confidential information in network attached storage, cloud storage, and other developing data storage options rather than on local devices. Make recommendations on how to best protect Texans' financial and personal information.
- **Elder Financial Abuse:** Study elder financial abuse and determine what steps the State of Texas should take to help protect older Texans from financial exploitation.

- **Property Tax Liens:** Examine and make recommendations for necessary changes regarding the collection process of delinquent ad valorem property taxes, including an inquiry into the role that tax lien transfers play in forestalling foreclosure.
- **Monitoring Charge:** Monitor the implementation of legislation addressed by the Senate Committee on Business and Commerce during the 84th Legislature, Regular Session and make recommendations for any legislation needed to improve, enhance, and/or complete implementation. Specifically, monitor the following: **1)** State agency participation in the federal electronic verification of employment authorization program; **2)** Implementation of legislation intended to further protect consumers from the balance billing process; **3)** Changes made to the operation of the Texas Windstorm Insurance Association; **4)** The regulation of public insurance adjusters; and **5)** The current consent policy for state disclosure of personal data.

State Affairs

- **Religious Liberty:** Examine measures to affirm 1st Amendment religious liberty protections in Texas, along with the relationship between local ordinances and state and federal law. Make recommendations to ensure that the government does not force individuals, organizations or businesses to violate their sincerely held religious beliefs.
- **Union Dues:** Examine the practice of using public funds and employees for the payment processing of union dues. Make recommendations on whether Texas should end this practice.
- **Chief Law Enforcement Officers:** Examine whether there are chief law enforcement officers within the state who deny NFA applications without any cause. Examine the application and certification process and recommend ways to eliminate no-cause denials.
- **Judicial Matters:** Examine the need to adjust Texas judicial salaries to attract, maintain, and support a qualified judiciary capable of meeting the current and future needs of Texas and its citizens. Study and recommend whether Texas should delink legislators' standard service retirement annuities from district judge salaries. Examine the effect of eliminating straight-party voting for candidates for judicial office and make recommendations to ensure candidates are given individual consideration by voters.
- **Eminent Domain:** Gather and review data on the compensation provided to private property owners for property purchased or taken by entities with eminent domain authority. Examine the variance, if any, between the offers and the fair market values of properties taken through eminent domain. Make recommendations to ensure property owners are fairly compensated.
- **Ethics:** Review current ethics laws governing public officials and employees and recommend changes necessary to inspire the public's confidence in a transparent and ethically principled government. Review public officials' reporting requirements to the Texas Ethics Commission. Examine the categorization of ethics reporting violations and make recommendations to encourage accurate reporting and timely correction to inadvertent clerical errors.
- **Monitoring Charge:** Monitor the implementation of legislation addressed by the Senate Committee on State Affairs during the 84th Legislature, Regular Session and make recommendations for any legislation needed to improve, enhance, and/or complete implementation. Specifically, monitor the following: 1) Implementation of open and campus carry legislation and determine if the current laws regulating the places that handguns can be carried are easily understood or if clarification is needed to ensure the average citizen understands when, where, and under what circumstances it is lawful to carry a weapon, versus when it is a criminal offense for which there may be a defense; 2) Requirements for guardianships; 3) The electronic voting program for certain military members serving overseas; 4) Changes made to the Employment Retirement System regarding member contributions and proposed reforms to the Teacher Retirement System of Texas; and 5) The establishment of a public integrity unit under the authority of Texas Rangers.

Natural Resources and Economic Development

- **Implementation of Federal Regulations:** Study the impact and identify challenges Texas faces implementing proposed federal Environmental Protection Agency regulations, including, but not limited to the Clean Power Plan, Reduction of Methane & Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs) from oil and gas facilities, Ozone standards, Regional Haze, and Waters of the U.S. Make recommendations for legislative or constitutional action the committee considers necessary.
- **Texas Emission Reduction Plan (TERP):** Study and make recommendations regarding the use of Texas Emission Reduction Plan (TERP) funds, including reducing air emissions from mobile sources in response to changes in ozone standards.
- **Economic Development:** Evaluate the effectiveness and necessity of programs and resources currently used to support economic development in Texas. Make recommendations regarding continuation of effective strategies, modification of existing administrative or regulatory barriers, and the reduction or elimination of ineffective programs.
- **Expedited Permitting:** Evaluate the permitting process in Texas and neighboring states and make recommendations for eliminating unnecessary barriers and expediting the process to ensure that the regulatory process is consistent and predictable.
- **ERCOT/PUC Electricity Issues:** Conduct legislative oversight and monitoring of agencies and programs under the committee's jurisdiction. In this oversight and monitoring, the committee should: 1) identify and recommend opportunities to streamline programs or services and enhance grid safety while maintaining the mission of ERCOT and PUC and their programs; and 2) identify barriers ERCOT or PUC may have in their governance that may be appropriate to improve or eliminate.
- **Oil Field Theft:** Study and make recommendations for solving the oil field theft problems facing Texas, including identifying the proper mechanisms for increasing enforcement effectiveness.
- **Monitoring Charge:** Monitor the implementation of legislation addressed by the Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Economic Development during the 84th Legislature, Regular Session and make recommendations for any legislation needed to improve, enhance, and/or complete implementation. Specifically, monitor the following: 1) Legislation relating to Texas aerospace incentives; 2) Expedited permitting; and 3) Electric utility rate adjustments.

Ag. Water and Rural Affairs

- **Water Litter:** Study and make recommendations on the effects of windblown and waterborne litter. The study should include an analysis of the economic effects of litter, any necessary methods to prevent and remediate litter, and an assessment of state and local programs to reduce litter.
- **Game & Ag. Product Safety:** Study and make recommendations on improving the laws regarding the management of game animals, production of domestic fowl, and development of agricultural products in the State to reduce the occurrence and spread of disease and harmful pests.
- **Promotion of Texas Agriculture:** Study the economic benefits the Texas Department of Agriculture's Market Development Services provide to the state through promoting Texas Agricultural products. Review the current marketing services and strategies available to Texas producers and determine additional resources necessary to increase the Market Development Services capabilities. Make recommendations for legislative action, if needed.
- **Monitoring Charge:** Monitor the implementation of legislation addressed by the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Water & Rural Affairs during the 84th Legislature, Regular Session, and make recommendations for any legislation needed to improve, enhance, and/or complete implementation. Specifically monitor the Texas Water Development Board's process in the identification and designation of brackish groundwater zones.
- **Surface Water/Groundwater:** Study and make recommendations regarding the ownership, production, and transfer of surface water and groundwater in the state of Texas.
- **State Water Plan:** Study and make recommendations on improving the process of developing and executing the State Water Plan.
- **Agricultural Liens:** Study and make recommendations on improving the law in this state regarding agricultural liens under Chapter 70, Agricultural Code. The study should include whether sufficient safeguards exist to protect the financial interest agricultural producers have in their product