



**Dan Patrick**

Lieutenant Governor of Texas  
President of the Senate

## 2017 Interim Legislative Charges: 2

Education Committee  
Higher Education Committee  
State Affairs Committee  
Business & Commerce Committee  
Criminal Justice Committee  
Agriculture, Water & Rural Affairs Committee  
Administration Committee  
Select Committee on Election Security

**October 24, 2017**

## Education Committee

- **Teacher Compensation:** Study current local, state, and/or national compensation strategies for classroom teachers and make recommendations to elevate the teaching profession as well as comprehensive policies to attract, retain, and reward teachers.
- **Mandate Relief/Innovation:** Review, modify, or abolish chapters of the education code. Specifically, study cost-drivers, unnecessary mandates, reduction/elimination of inefficiencies, focus on policies or opportunities targeted to improving student outcomes, and better utilization of taxpayer resources.
- **Classroom Conduct and Teacher Support:** Examine current student discipline mandates in code, study best practice models to reduce classroom discipline issues, and provide direct support for students and classroom teachers.
- **Expand High Quality Education Opportunities:** Examine high-quality campus/programs in Texas and other states and make recommendations on incentives to expand high-performing campuses and programs. Review should include but not be limited to: program and course variety, unique public school models, transfer or open-enrollment policies within a district, collaboration between districts or public charters, online learning, and whether children with special educational needs, children of military families, and student populations in chronically high poverty areas should have additional options to meet their unique educational needs.
- **Virtual Education in the 21st Century Classroom:** Review the Texas Virtual School Network (TVSN) and recommend methods of updating and improving the system to boost online virtual education.
- **Dual Credit:** Review dual credit opportunities throughout the state, examining the impact of HB 505 (84th Legislature) on students in particular. Look at the outcomes of statewide studies completed in Texas regarding dual credit, and examine the current rigor of dual credit courses, as well as how to improve advising for students in dual credit. **(JOINT CHARGE with HIGHER EDUCATION)**
- **Monitoring:** Monitor the implementation of legislation addressed by the Senate Committee on Education passed by the 85th Legislature, relevant agencies, and programs under the committee's jurisdiction. Make recommendations for any legislation needed to improve, enhance, or complete implementation including:
  - State matching of the federal E-rate program (SB 1),

- Improper relationships between educators and students and reporting of educator misconduct (SB 7), Establishment of a Pathways in Technology Early College High School (P-TECH) and workforce pathways (SB 22),
- A prohibition of a monitoring system performance indicator based solely on the number or percentage of students receiving special education service (SB 160),
- A school district contracting to partner with an open-enrollment charter school to operate a district campus (SB 1882).

### **Higher Education Committee**

- **Improving Transferability:** Examine and make recommendations regarding policies that will help students make informed decisions regarding transferring credits among institutions and promote efficient completion of degrees and credentials. Study the adequacy of advising for transfer students in secondary and post-secondary settings. Focus on statewide solutions that will address transfer for all Texas students, including Fields of Study curricula, the role of the Core Curriculum and additional tools that will help students transfer credits efficiently toward a degree.
- **System/Campus Expansion:** Consider what role the state should have in overseeing the approval and development of new higher education locations into geographical areas already served by existing institutions. Develop a long-term statewide strategy for authorizing new locations and programs which includes a plan to ensure adequate support for expansion. Explore where there are underserved areas of the state and what type of programs would best serve the population to fill regional workforce needs.
- **60x30 TX Statewide Plan Review:** Examine progress in achieving goals within the 60x30TX plan, and review efforts of higher education institutions to implement innovative and non-traditional models of education delivery to meet the needs of an increasingly diverse student body. Consider whether current state policies and regulations may support or hinder institutions' ability to innovate in educational delivery and access. Make recommendations to accelerate innovation in higher education, to better serve students through expanded access to high quality educational opportunities, improve quality in educational delivery, and achieve goals outlined in the 60x30TX higher education strategic plan.
- **Funding Models:** Examine different models of student-focused funding for general academic institutions, including competency-based and performance funding models, and make recommendations on whether a new funding model would produce greater efficiencies and student performance.

- **Mandate Reduction:** Examine all current state and federal regulations on public higher education institutions and consider whether reductions of regulations could reduce fees, produce efficiencies and greater student academic performance. Make recommendations to reduce certain regulations for increased flexibility to provide better student outcomes.
- **Dual Credit:** Review dual credit opportunities throughout the state, examining the impact of HB 505 (84th Legislature) on students in particular. Look at the outcomes of statewide studies completed in Texas regarding dual credit, and examine the current rigor of dual credit courses, as well as how to improve advising for students in dual credit. **(JOINT CHARGE with EDUCATION)**
- **Monitoring:** Monitor the implementation of legislation addressed by the Senate Higher Education Committee and make recommendations for any legislation needed to improve, enhance and/or complete implementation. Specifically, receive updates on construction of facilities as a result of tuition revenue bonds authorized during the 84th Legislative Session, as well as the development and implementation of the Texas OnCourse program, authorized during the 84th Legislative Session and monitor the following:
  - SB 2118 (85th) relating to authorization by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board for certain public junior colleges to offer baccalaureate degree programs.
  - HB 2205 (84th) relating to the State Board for Educator Certification, educator preparation programs, educator certification, issuance of certain teaching permits, and certain procedures for investigating educator misconduct.
  - SB 887 (85th) relating to a requirement that certain participating institutions under the student loan program administered by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board provide loan debt information to certain students.
  - SB 802 (85th) relating to a study and report regarding best practices in the transfer of course credit between public institutions of higher education.
  - SB 810 (85th) relating to open educational resources.
  - HB 2223 (85th) relating to developmental coursework offered by public institutions of higher education under the Texas Success Initiative.

### **State Affairs Committee**

- **Second Amendment:** Review local ordinances imposed on sellers and venues that affect a person's rights under the Second Amendment of the United States Constitution. Examine state and local regulations and restrictions regarding the carrying of weapons during a natural disaster.

Make recommendations on whether any legislation is needed to address the regulatory barriers to the full exercise of the Second Amendment rights of citizens.

- **Pensions:** Examine and assess public pension systems in Texas. Specifically, review and assess (1) the different types of retirement plans; (2) the actuarial assumptions used by retirement systems to value their liabilities and the consequences of amending those assumptions; (3) retirement systems' investment practices and performance; and (4) the adequacy of financial disclosures including asset returns and fees. Make recommendations to ensure public pension system retirees' benefits are preserved and protected.
- **Attorney General Jurisdiction:** Examine the Attorney General's jurisdiction on issues of alleged violations of state laws regarding abortion and multi-jurisdictional human trafficking cases. Make recommendations to ensure uniform enforcement across the state.
- **Court Fees:** Examine the structure of court fees and make recommendations to ensure statutory filing fees and court costs are appropriate and justified. Provide recommendations for proper agency oversight of fee collection.
- **Campus Free Speech:** Ascertain any restrictions on Freedom of Speech rights that Texas students face in expressing their views on campus along with freedoms of the press, religion, and assembly. Recommend policy changes that protect First Amendment rights and enhance the free speech environment on campus.
- **Religious Liberty:** Monitor the implementation of legislation that protects citizens' religious freedoms, including Senate Bill 24 (sermon safeguard) and House Bill 555 (religious liberty of county clerks), and make recommendations for any legislation needed to ensure that citizens' religious freedoms are not eroded by local ordinances or state or federal law.
- **Monitoring:** Monitor the implementation of legislation addressed by the Senate Committee on State Affairs, 85th Legislature, Regular Session, and make recommendations for any legislation needed to improve, enhance, and/or complete implementation. Specifically, monitor the following:
  - Implementation of Senate Bill 2190, relating to the public retirement systems of certain municipalities;
  - Implementation of House Bill 3158, relating to the retirement systems for and the provision of other benefits to police and firefighters in certain municipalities;

- Implementation of House Bill 3976, relating to the administration of and benefits payable under the Texas Public School Retired Employees Group Benefits Act; and
- Implementation of Senate Bill 16, relating to decreasing the fee for the issuance of a license to carry a handgun.

### **Business and Commerce Committee**

- **Free Market Electricity:** Examine the competitive nature of the Texas retail electric system and what government competitive intrusions in the free energy markets may have in distorting those markets. Review the impact of competitive versus noncompetitive retail electricity markets across the state in terms of price and reliability. Consider the projected impact of establishing competitive electric retail markets statewide.
- **Health Insurance Market Stability:** Study the factors affecting health insurance markets in Texas, particularly the individual market, including federal and state law. Make recommendations that would result in increased stability in the markets and enhance value and affordability for individual consumers and businesses. Examine what steps the state needs to take to allow out-of-state health insurance sales. In developing its recommendations, the committee should consider the flexibility afforded to states by 1332 "state innovation" waivers, which allow states to modify or eliminate tax penalties associated with individual and employer coverage mandates; modify requirements for benefits and subsidies; and find alternative ways to provide benefit plan choices, determine eligibility for subsidies, and enroll consumers.
- **Licensing and Fees:** Review licensing requirements and fees imposed on entities within the committee's jurisdiction. Make recommendations for state licenses and fees that should be reduced, repealed or transitioned to private-sector enforcement.
- **Social Media Access:** Study access issues regarding digital assets of decedents. Study social media privacy laws and whether job applicants and students' privacy is jeopardized under current law.
- **Monitoring Charge:** Monitor the implementation of legislation addressed by the Senate Committee on Business and Commerce during the 85th Legislature, Regular Session, including:
  - The implementation of legislation to deregulate occupational licensing;
  - The settlement of out-of-network health benefit claims involving balance billing and patient's explanation of benefits statements; and
  - Make recommendations regarding any additional legislation needed

to improve, enhance, and/or complete implementation.

### **Criminal Justice Committee**

- **Identify Successful Re-Entry Programs:** Study current reentry programs and procedures across Texas' adult criminal justice system and identify which are most effective. Review best practices and make recommendations to ensure that incarcerated individuals who are released from a county or city jail, state jail, or the Texas Department of Criminal Justice have adequate supervision and access to employment, housing, treatment, and other support programs to allow for successful reentry and integration into the community and to prevent recidivism.
- **State Jail Review to Improve Outcomes:** Perform a comprehensive analysis and study of the Texas state jail system. Examine the access to and use of rehabilitation, vocation, and education programs. Determine whether current programs are effective and if there are efficiencies that can be found to reduce recidivism and improve outcomes.
- **Telemedicine in Correctional Facilities:** Review current availability and best practices in the state regarding the use of telemedicine for inmates in city or county jail, state jail, or the Texas Department of Criminal Justice. Examine and make recommendations on whether access to care and outcomes can be improved through the expanded use of telemedicine for medical and mental health services, and whether expansion would create efficiencies. Examine barriers to implementation and expansion of telemedicine in correctional facilities.
- **Human Trafficking Awareness and Prevention:** Study opportunities to increase awareness of human trafficking through public awareness campaigns, among local officials, and within public school districts including the identification of potential human trafficking and stash houses as well as how and where to report. Examine the Human Trafficking Prevention Business Partnership Program at the Office of the Secretary of State and provide recommendations for increasing participation of Texas businesses in the fight against human trafficking.
- **Monitoring:** Monitor the implementation of legislation addressed by the Senate Criminal Justice Committee during the 85th Legislature and make recommendations for any legislation needed to improve, enhance, and/or complete implementation of the following:
  - Senate Bill 12, Relating to the creation of a grant program to assist law enforcement agencies with the purchase of bulletproof vests and body armor;

- Senate Bill 30, Relating to the inclusion of instruction regarding interaction with peace officers in the required curriculum for certain public school students and in driver education courses and to civilian interaction training for peace officers; and
- Senate Bill 1326, Relating to procedures regarding criminal defendants who are or may be persons with a mental illness or an intellectual disability and to certain duties of the Office of Court Administration of the Texas Judicial System related to persons with mental illness.

### **Agriculture, Water and Rural Affairs Committee**

- **Streamlining Water Permitting:** Study and recommend changes that promote streamlining of water right permit issuance and the amendment process by the TCEQ for surface water, and that promote uniform and streamline permitting by groundwater conservation districts for groundwater. Evaluate more transparent process needs and proper valuation of water.
- **Regulatory Framework of Groundwater Conservation Districts and River Authorities:** Study and make recommendations on the regulatory framework for managing groundwater in Texas to ensure that private property rights are being sufficiently protected. Study the role of river authorities and groundwater conservation districts including the state's oversight role of their operations and fees imposed.
- **Agricultural Fees:** Review licensing, permitting, or registration requirements and fees imposed on the agriculture industry by licensing agencies within the committee's jurisdiction. Make recommendations for state licenses and fees that should be reduced, repealed or transitioned to private-sector enforcement.
- **Monitoring:** Monitor the implementation of legislation addressed by the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Water & Rural Affairs during the 85th Legislature, Regular Session, including, but not limited to:
  - SB 1511 (prioritization in the regional water plan);
  - SB 1538 (Floodplain Management Account uses);
  - SB 864 (GCD application of state water);
  - HB 2004 (Texas economic development fund for TDA); and
  - HB 3433 (adoption of rules affecting rural communities. Make recommendations for any legislative improvements needed to improve, enhance, or complete implementation including regional water planning, flood planning, and groundwater production.)

### **Administration Committee**



- **Programmatic Budget Structure:** Develop detailed programmatic budget structure for all legislative agencies for use in the General Appropriations Act.
- **Legislative Agency Report Review:** Review and evaluate the fiscal note and government efficiency report process and make recommendations on potential improvements in timeliness and accuracy.

**Senate Select Committee on Election Security:**

- In light of recent election irregularities in Texas, review voting security protocols as well as the responsibilities and duties of members of the Electoral College. Specifically, examine the use of electronic voting machines and paper ballots, voting fraud and disenfranchisement occurring inside nursing homes and assisted living facilities, outside interference and manipulation of elections, and the voting requirements of presidential electors. Make recommendations to safeguard the integrity of elections, ensure the confidentiality and security of voting records, and ensure the will of the people is reflected through their ballot and carried out through their presidential electors.