

★ TEXAS IMPACT ACTION ALERT

Week of March 20, 2023

Green=Support • **Red**=Oppose • **Tan**=Monitor Closely

Committees take center stage for the next several weeks as decisions are made about which fraction of the hundreds of bills referred to them will see the light of day on the floors of their respective chambers. We are at full speed now.

As has become the norm over the last decade, the Senate will focus on the controversial: vouchers are up in committee and discriminatory legislation against trans Texans will likely be brought up on the floor by the Lt. Gov. and passed this week. By contrast, the House is digging into incremental, but substantial, legislation responding to violence prevention and a smattering of other bills.

Since we are at full speed, be on the lookout for supplemental action alerts in the middle of the week. Normally, under the Senate rules, a committee only needs to post notice 48 hours in advance. Conversely, when the Senate provides notice a week in advance, there is usually a reason. In this case, Governor Abbott is organizing buses of people to support vouchers on Wednesday.

Senate Education Committee: **Oppose Vouchers**

Oppose SB 8 by Creighton would combine a voucher program with Florida-like “don’t say gay” provisions. All of it is harmful and it’s a trap. Focus on the vouchers.

Oppose SB 176 by Middleton would create the broadest voucher program.

Oppose SB 960 by Campbell would create a voucher program through a taxpayer savings grant program.

Oppose SB 2354 by Bettencourt would create a voucher program through an education savings account program.

Oppose SJR 29 by Paxton would create a new state constitutional right, which would lead to lawsuits. “[Impact litigation](#)” lawsuits invite judicial activism that could create new rights outside the legislative process, including school vouchers.

Bottom line: any voucher program violates religious freedom by using the coercive power of the state to take money from one person of faith and gives it to another to educate their child in a different faith. Additionally, any diversion of public funds to private schools takes money from the public school system – and disproportionately from rural and low-income districts. For more background on vouchers, [read our issue brief](#). For more on the various schemes that vouchers employ to divert money to unaccountable private schools, [read the Coalition for Public Schools legislation tracker](#).

Call the Senate Committee on Education
Chair: Sen. Creighton – (866) 730-1355
Vice Chair: Sen. Campbell – (866) 772-1951
Sen. Paxton – (866) 730-1371
Sen. LaMantia – (866) 821-0518
Sen. West – (866) 770-7385
Sen. Parker – (866) 730-1397
Sen. Springer – (866) 821-0530
Sen. Bettencourt – (866) 730-1365
Sen. Menendez – (866) 772-1954
Sen. Middleton – (866) 730-1396
Sen. Birdwell – (866) 770-7384
Sen. Flores – (866) 770-7401
Sen. King – (866) 730-1395

House Select Committee on Community Safety

According to [the Hobby School at the University of Houston](#), 90 percent of Texans support banning possession of a gun by an individual with a restraining order for stalking or domestic violence, and 86 percent of Texans support requiring a criminal background check on all gun buyers, including those buying at gun shows and private sales. The bills being considered this week are incremental proposals very similar to these survey questions. For more background on violence prevention, [read our issue brief](#).

Support HB 544 by Julie Johnson would prohibit possession of a firearm if a person has been convicted or the subject of a protective order for family violence.

Support HB 2076 by Goodwin would expand the definition of family violence to include dating violence.

Support HB 902 by Moody would close a loophole to include magazines into the list of items a person already prohibited from possessing a weapon cannot possess.

Support HB 2242 by Howard would provide for a public education effort by the Department of Public Safety for its safe storage program.

Support HB 2454 by Guillen would close a loophole by prohibiting a person knowingly purchasing for or providing a gun to a person prohibited from possessing one.

Support HB 2780 by Leach would improve background checks by creating a central repository for juvenile mental health records. The Senate companion — **SB 728** by Huffman — has already passed the Senate.

Oppose HB 636 by Patterson would allow election judges to carry firearms at polling locations. The United States has a long and sad history of voter intimidation. Even Justice Thomas — the author of the *N.Y. State Rifle & Pistol Association v. Bruen* opinion — specifically named polling places as a location where government retains the ability to restrict gun possession. This is [not a second amendment issue, but a voting rights issue](#).

Call the House Select Committee on Community Safety

Chair: Rep. Ryan Guillen - (855) 737-9013

Vice Chair: Rep. Jarvis Johnson - (855) 738-4981

Rep. Rhetta Andrews Bowers - (855) 739-2182

Rep. Terry Canales - (855) 768-3031

Rep. Mark Dorazio - (855) 769-0800

Rep. Vikki Goodwin - (855) 772-2323

Rep. Sam Harless - (855) 685-2930

Rep. Justin Holland - (855) 774-9591

Rep. Ellen Troxclair - (855) 918-1293

Rep. Dustin Burrows - (855) 767-5441

Rep. Tracy O. King - (855) 796-6983

Rep. Brooks Landgraf - (855) 799-2437

Rep. Joe Moody - (855) 893-7425

House Public Health

Oppose HB 81 by Harrison would prevent religious organizations from requiring their employees be vaccinated against COVID-19. Many faith communities have

daycares and clergy routinely visit places like hospitals and retirement communities where those most at-risk to COVID 19 reside - like seniors and the immunocompromised. The preservation of human life is a sincerely held religious belief, and HB 81 may violate Texas RFRA. There is no right to a job, and HB 81 violates the First Amendment doctrine known as the ministerial exception.

Additionally, HB 81 [expands existing causes of action](#) that exposes faith communities to litigation.

Call the House Public Health Committee
Chair: Rep. Stephanie Klick - (855) 701-2295
Vice Chair: Rep. Elizabeth "Liz" Campos - (866) 695-0632
Rep. Nicole Collier - (866) 573-1657
Rep. Jacey Jetton - (855) 942-3074
Rep. Ann Johnson - (866) 721-0892
Rep. Jolanda "Jo" Jones - (866) 730-0849
Rep. Venton Jones - (866) 631-6167
Rep. Tom Oliverson - (855) 702-6654
Rep. Four Price - (855) 704-0109
Rep. Reggie Smith - (855) 918-1295
Rep. Tony Tinderholt - (866) 573-1656

Senate Natural Resources

Support SB 667 by West would create a historical marker program to honor the Reconstruction era African Americans that served in the Texas Legislature. [The stories that we know](#) of these individuals are fascinating. Many are unknown and a program would encourage recovery of this lost history.

Oppose SB 1114 by Hancock would prevent local governments from requiring city departments or contractors to use electric power tools. Urban local governments have [a number of considerations](#) such as air quality attainment goals. Bottom line: this is an issue for local voters to decide at the ballot box.

Call the Senate Natural Resources Committee
Chair: Sen. Birdwell - (866) 770-7384
Vice Chair: Sen. Zaffirini - (866) 770-7383
Sen. Alvarado - (866) 730-1362
Sen. Sparks - (866) 821-0531
Sen. Blanco - (866) 821-0526
Sen. Miles - (866) 740-0825
Sen. Hancock - (866) 730-1386

Sen. Kolkhorst - (866) 770-7366
Sen. Hughes - (866) 730-0869

House Elections

Support HB 386 by Jessica Gonzalez would protect the voting rights of seniors and those with disabilities by ensuring that each polling location has a designated parking spot for curbside voting.

Call the House Elections Committee
Chair: Rep. Reggie Smith - (855) 918-1295
Vice Chair: Rep. John H. Bucy III - (855) 692-0019
Rep. Dustin Burrows - (855) 767-5441
Rep. Giovanni Capriglione - (855) 918-1296
Rep. Mano DeAyala - (855) 918-1299
Rep. Christian Manuel - (855) 918-1301
Rep. Eddie Morales - (855) 701-2722
Rep. Valoree Swanson - (855) 918-1302
Rep. Hubert Vo - (855) 921-0651

House Human Services

Support HB 1287 by Guillen would adjust the vehicle asset test for inflation so that families are not disqualified from SNAP due to the current high value of used vehicles. The current limits on vehicle value have not been updated since 2001 for a primary vehicle and 1974 for additional vehicles.

Call the House Human Services Committee
Chair: Rep. James Frank - (855) 693-3927
Vice Chair: Rep. Toni Rose - (855) 704-0851
Rep. Elizabeth "Liz" Campos - (866) 695-0632
Rep. Lacey Hull - (866) 721-0897
Rep. Stephanie Klick - (855) 701-2295
Rep. Christian Manuel - (855) 918-1301
Rep. Candy Noble - (855) 706-1703
Rep. Ana-Maria Ramos - (866) 631-6168
Rep. Matt Shaheen - (866) 533-8228

House Corrections

Support HB 168 by Moody would reverse a bad decision by the Attorney General that makes the drugs used by the state in lethal injections not subject to the Public Information Act. The public deserves to know how the state is carrying out executions in our name.

Support HB 1446 by Cortez would require the Texas Department of Criminal Justice to have a plan in case of natural disasters in order to protect human life.

Call the House Corrections Committee
Chair: Rep. Abel Herrero - (866) 432-9360
Vice Chair: Kyle Kacal - (855) 921-1370
Rep. Alma A. Allen - (866) 218-2506
Rep. Venton Jones - (866) 631-6167
Rep. Ray Lopez - (866) 695-0822
Rep. Andrew S. Murr - (866) 515-0377
Rep. Carl O. Sherman Sr. - (866) 631-6173
Rep. Valoree Swanson - (855) 918-1302
Rep. Steve Toth - (855) 921-1373

TAKE ACTION!

NOTE: We have set up toll-free numbers for all members of the Texas House and Senate. We ask that you use those numbers and save them in your phones. Dialing this number allows us to track the volume of calls to each office. If the number stops working, please let us know so we can set up a new number.

If you do not have time to make all of the calls on the weekly Action Alert, unless stated otherwise, please prioritize them based on:

1. Your representative if they are on any of the committees listed
2. The Chair and Vice-Chair of the committees listed
3. Any issues you have particular interest or expertise

Find your elected officials via the “Who Represents Me” page at

<http://www.fyi.legis.state.tx.us/Home.aspx>

Please email scott@texasimpact.org if you learn anything from your calls.

Rapid Response Action Alert Sample Script

Sample Script

Hello, my name is _____ and I live in _____. I am calling to thank Representative/Senator _____ for his/her service this Legislative Session.

As a person of faith (or clergy) I want to be constructive in working with Representative/Senator _____ and hope they will support/oppose Bill number.

Feel free to use any of the bullet points in the Action Alert above. If your congregation has a special connection to the issue area you are referencing, feel free to briefly reference that connection. Don't forget to thank the staff member you are talking to at the end of the call, even if you disagree with their boss on the issue or bill—they are working hard and appreciate being appreciated!

In the past, legislative offices occasionally have blocked our toll free number because of high call volume from people of faith. If you call twice and receive busy signals, email engagement@texasimpact.org and we will update the number.

For updated information, visit www.texasimpact.org, follow us on [Facebook](#) or [Twitter](#) or contact engagement@texasimpact.org To join the Texas Impact Rapid Response Team and receive updated Texas Impact Action Alerts or a Legislative Engagement Group to be connected with other members in your district, visit: <https://texasimpact.org/take-action-2/>

Texas Impact is a membership organization. Join Texas Impact and be part of Texas' oldest and largest interfaith action network! For more information, visit:

<https://texasimpact.org/join-2022-2023/>