

Interim Charges

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

- **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

- **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.