

**Texas Senate Interim
Committee Charges for 2010**

Interim Charges to the 81st Legislature

Administration

1. Review the constitutional provision that prohibits the Senate from hearing non-emergency legislation within the first 60 days of the Session. Review options for enhancing the efficiency of Senate operations and reducing the requirement to allow for increased time to consider and debate legislation.
2. Study opportunities to save paper, costs and production times on Session-related printings, interim committee report printings, newsletters, form printings and other heavy paper-use activities within the Senate. Conduct a survey of all Senate offices to determine whether electronic delivery of committee printings, house amendments and conference committee reports would be preferred to manual delivery of printings. Consider other factors as necessary, including accuracy of official documents, budget savings, time sensitivity, ease of distribution, notification of availability and end-user preferences for session printings.
3. Review the Senate budget and identify ways to reduce costs over the next budget cycle.
4. Monitor the implementation of legislation addressed by the Senate Committee on Administration, 81st Legislature, Regular and Called Sessions, and make recommendations for any legislation needed to improve, enhance, and/or complete implementation.

Agriculture & Rural Affairs

1. Study and make recommendations on new and innovative ways to increase investment, employment and production in Texas agriculture.
2. Study current federal, state and local safeguards to protect our food supply. Identify gaps that may exist in Texas statute, agency roles, and authority for ensuring a safe food supply for Texas, including imported fruits and vegetables. Examine the impact of revised federal regulations on the State, and the potential impact of pending federal legislation. Examine the existing capabilities of the public health system on the border to accomplish public health surveillance of food.
3. Study impact of windblown herbicides on grape growing and other agricultural production. Make recommendations for improving the safety and quality of Texas agricultural products.
4. Study and make recommendations on the impact of feral hogs and other predators that hamper development of Texas agriculture.

5. Monitor the implementation of legislation addressed by the Senate Committee on Agriculture & Rural Affairs, 81st Legislature, Regular Session, and make recommendations for any legislation needed to improve, enhance, and/or complete implementation. Specifically, consider the following.

- Monitor the establishment of the Texas Bioenergy Policy Council and the Texas Bioenergy Research Committee.
- Monitor the Texas Department of Agriculture's efforts to reduce or eliminate trans fatty acids in foods provided by Texas schools.

Business & Commerce

1. Study the implementation of H.B. 4409 enacted by the 81st Legislature pertaining to the financing of insured losses in excess of premium and other revenue of the Texas Windstorm Insurance Association (TWIA). Assess the coverage and affordability of TWIA policies. Review the claims and payments processes and make recommendations to improve the stability of TWIA while enhancing services to clients.

2. Study options for reducing demand for electricity, including innovative pricing options relating to the use of smart meters, programmable thermostats, and other demand side management and behavioral response strategies. Review current consumer education programs to reduce demand, decrease energy prices, and improve air quality. Consider benefits and costs of alternative energy sources such as geothermal and solar, and current incentives for electric and plug-in hybrid electric vehicles. The study should include recommendations on improving consumer knowledge and usage of these strategies in lowering overall electric usage, promoting energy efficiency, and improving the reliability of the ERCOT grid.

3. Study and make recommendations relating to the development and implementation of wind energy. Assess the total impact of wind energy, including additional costs to consumers, if any, buy-back provisions and pricing, the need for alternative energy sources at times when wind does not generate electricity, impact on the ERCOT grid, development of battery storage and other storage methods, and economic development impacts.

4. Study the generation costs of municipally owned electric utilities' planned generation portfolios. Consider the impact of planned generation costs on electric rates for residential and commercial customers. Solicit input on the impact of future electric rates on charitable and non-profit organizations, and the impact on such organizations' cash assistance programs to indigent customers. Consider the merits of a justifiable planned generation cost standard, and whether a deviation above the standard should be subject to approval by a vote of all customers of a municipally owned utility's service area.

5. Study and make recommendations relating to the Texas Unemployment Compensation Insurance system, including, but not limited to, the following:

- The capacity and efficiency of the claims filing and benefits delivery system as well as the ability of the agency to meet the needs of the clients it serves given the transition to call centers and web based filing;
- The current financing scheme for the Unemployment Compensation Trust Fund, and any options to improve the long term financial health and stability of the Fund;
- The use of debit cards for delivery of UI benefits, including ways to limit user fees to access payments; and
- Improving public access to local and statewide data on current and historical UI claims.

6. Study and make recommendations regarding career-focused education and workforce training programs in Texas to insure that such programs meet business and worker needs. Specifically, study whether such programs: meet the current and future workforce needs of health care, skilled trades, construction, manufacturing, aerospace, information technology and green jobs; help retain workers in such trades and fields; retrain and update the skills and education of workers in such trades and fields; and foster and encourage collaboration between the State, education, labor and business to provide education and training.

7. Study the effectiveness of Chapter 557 of the Insurance Code, relating to insured property subject to a security interest, in setting forth the obligations of a lender and a residential real property insured resulting from an insurer's payment of a claim for damage to the residential real property caused by a natural disaster. Consider the legislation's requirements for release of the insurance proceeds, lienholder's approval of payment of the insurance proceeds, accrual and payment of interest on such proceeds and penalties provided by the statute. Make recommendations for any needed refinements of the legislation.

8. Monitor the implementation of legislation addressed by the Senate Committee on Business & Commerce, 81st Legislature, Regular and Called Sessions, and make recommendations for any legislation needed to improve, enhance, and/or complete implementation.

Criminal Justice

1. Study the efficiency and fairness of the current sexual offender registry system and make recommendations to improve the system, if necessary. Study the issue of compliance with the Adam Walsh Act, focusing on the associated costs to the state and the punishment of juveniles. Examine the risk assessment tools used to measure the likelihood of recidivism of sexual predators.

2. Review statistics regarding the crime of driving while intoxicated, including accident statistics, alcohol-related deaths and injury, and other impacts on the community. Examine enforcement options used nationwide to deter driving under the influence and

make recommendations to reduce the number of alcohol-related traffic fatalities and accidents in Texas.

3. Review the performance of the Fair Defense Act and the Task Force on Indigent Defense. Study key outcomes of the law, including: appointment rates in felony and misdemeanor cases; state and county indigent defense expenditures; attorney caseloads; attorney compensation; access to investigators and experts; and overall quality of counsel for the indigent. Examine the Task Force on Indigent Defense's effectiveness in monitoring and enforcing standards and design strategies to improve the delivery of services for indigent defense, including timing of the appointment of counsel, the use of the appointment wheel and the monitoring of workloads and performance of attorneys.

4. Study and make recommendations related to municipal jails and other detention facilities that operate without state agency oversight. Identify the number of such facilities and the population detained, as well as best practices for municipal jails. Make recommendations to improve services and consider options for oversight of facilities by the Texas Commission on Jail Standards.

5. Review the detention of juvenile offenders in local jails, state jails, and Texas Department of Criminal Justice prison units by examining conditions of confinement, including quality of education, mental health treatment and medical services, rehabilitative treatment, and equality of access to services for young female inmates. Review access to administrative and inspector general grievances in TDCJ facilities. Make recommendations for improving the system and reduce recidivism of juvenile offenders.

6. Study and make recommendations to ensure the accuracy and timeliness of testing done in Texas forensic laboratories, including DNA and blood/alcohol testing. Assess and make recommendations for improving the capacity of Texas criminal laboratories to process evidence, identify ways to reduce the backlog of DNA evidence processing, identify ways to encourage qualified applicants for crime lab jobs, ensure adequate training for new crime lab technicians, ensure the availability of efficient crime lab processing to all regions of the state, and determine the impact of additional collection requirements on the capacity of Texas crime labs to process evidence. Consider the costs and benefits of creating a statewide crime lab.

7. Assess how the Commission on Jail Standards, the Department of Public Safety, the Department of Criminal Justice, and Department of State Health Services are working together to identify defendants with mental health issues, notify magistrates when defendants have been identified and, where appropriate, provide crisis stabilization services to defendants. Monitor legislation passed by the 81st Legislature for mental illness and make recommendations for any needed improvements to improve mental health services and reduce recidivism.

8. Study and evaluate the success of juvenile probation pilot programs aimed at community-based diversion of youth from Texas Youth Commission facilities. Make

recommendations for needed legislative action and additional programs to increase the number of delinquent youth successfully rehabilitated in their home communities.

9. Consider the impact that secondary education school disciplinary laws and policies have on the juvenile justice system and the adult prison system. Recommend changes, if needed, to current law.

10. Evaluate the usage of current Texas practices for facilitating the fair and accurate courtroom testimony of children and reducing the trauma associated with testifying, particularly for children who are victims of sexual abuse. Specifically consider recent efforts and trends across the nation to develop best practices, including "court orientation" programs, and ensure that courtrooms are more child friendly and accommodating for young victims to reduce the trauma associated with testifying in court while ensuring that fair and accurate information is solicited from the child as a witness.

11. Monitor the implementation of legislation addressed by the Senate Committee on Criminal Justice, 81st Legislature, Regular and Called Sessions, and make recommendations for any legislation needed to improve, enhance, and/or complete implementation.

- Study the impact of certain provisions in the 2009 DPS Sunset bill on the timely processing of concealed handgun license applications and the issuance of licenses.
- Monitor and make recommendations, if needed, on actions by TDCJ to improve security and reduce contraband.

Economic Development

1. Assess the effectiveness of major economic development programs in Texas. The review should include but not be limited to such programs as the Enterprise Fund, Emerging Technology Fund, Skills Development, and Enterprise Zones. Review major tax policy issues that encourage or hinder business development, including options for reinstating a margins tax research and development tax credit. Examine economic development programs in other states that have been successful and recommend changes to existing state programs, new programs, or changes in tax policy incentives that could increase job creation in Texas.

2. Review the effectiveness of state programs aimed at assisting small business growth and development, including whether the development of a Small Business Commission could lead to a more efficient use of state resources. Include an assessment of all state policies aimed to assist small business and minority-owned business persons with procurement of state contracts.

3. Review the impact of workforce development programs on economic development across the state. Focus on the impact of Texas Workforce Commission initiatives, the JET (Jobs and Education for Texas) program administered by the Comptroller's office, and federally funded stimulus programs. Make recommendations for legislation to improve and enhance workforce development in Texas.

4. Monitor the implementation of legislation addressed by the Senate Committee on Economic Development, 81st Legislature, Regular and Called Sessions, and make recommendations for any legislation needed to improve, enhance, and/or complete implementation.

Education

1. Review the performance and accountability of the state's charter schools. Specifically, study the following:

- Options for increasing the number of outstanding charter schools;
- Best practices employed by high performing charter schools and make recommendations for ways to implement these strategies in other charter and public schools;
- Feasibility of operating charter schools focused on providing high quality education for students with disabilities, such as autism;
- Charter school initiatives in other states, specifically including incentives for public education campuses to become charter schools;
- Options for development and funding of a charter schools facilities program.

2. Review the state's education policy and initiatives regarding middle grades. Make recommendations to ensure a comprehensive state strategy for preparing students at the middle grades for high school retention and success. This review should include an examination of school-based strategies and best practices that encourage at-risk youth to finish school and that deter delinquency, drug abuse and violence.

3. Review teacher compensation, evaluations, professional development, certification and training programs. Specifically, review the following:

- Teacher compensation including the Minimum Salary Schedule, incentive pay, merit pay, and stipends;
- How teacher evaluations can be effective mechanisms for increasing student achievement and improving instructional practices by including multiple measures, particularly student achievement data based on growth. Evaluate how teacher evaluations can direct district decisions on providing professional development, mentoring, intervention, and possible dismissal in response to underperforming teachers;
- State sponsored professional development initiatives including the alignment of professional development with curriculum and real work experiences and the value of professional development for bilingual, ESL and special education teachers in increasing student achievement.
- Need to adopt statewide standards for teacher certification and in-service training programs for regular and special education teachers at both the pre-service and in-service levels to ensure all teachers are highly qualified to teach students with disabilities.

4. Examine cost drivers in education including state requirements that impact school district budgets. Recommend opportunities for achieving cost efficiencies.
5. Study the efficacy of immersion versus dual-language instruction of English as a second language students. Make recommendations for improving programs and instituting best practices.
6. Study the effectiveness of Texas school districts' special education programs. Review the range of needs of special education students, districts' ability to provide an appropriate education for these students, and assess the effectiveness of programs currently funded for special education. Make recommendations for improvement.
7. Review dual credit courses including the cost of delivery, funding mechanisms, and possibility of a statewide dual credit system. This review should also include an examination of the rigor, quality and consistency of dual credit courses. (Joint charge with Senate Higher Education Committee)
8. Monitor the implementation of legislation addressed by the Senate Committee on Education, 81st Legislature, Regular and Called Sessions, and make recommendations for any legislation needed to improve, enhance, and/or complete implementation. Review the implementation of legislation related to the state's accountability system including the revised dropout rate calculation, textbooks, and the virtual school network. Specifically, monitor the following:
 - HB 3, relating to public school accountability;
 - HB 2488, relating to open-source textbooks, and HB 4294, relating to textbooks and the use of technology;
 - HB 3646, relating to public school finance and programs; and
 - SB 174, relating to an accountability system for educator preparation programs.

Finance

1. Review and make recommendations regarding existing and future public debt at all levels of government in Texas, including independent school districts, cities, other local governments and the Texas Guaranteed Tuition Plan.
2. Study the impact of recent hurricanes for which a federal disaster declaration was issued on local economies. Examine the basis for the distribution of federal dollars for hurricane cleanup across the state. Review past methods of distribution, including those involving the Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs and the Office of Rural Community Affairs. Develop policy and statutory recommendations to ensure that the system of distribution is effective to address needs of the various regions of the state in the event of future disasters. Provide effective budget oversight of state agencies that received appropriations as a result of hurricane damage. Examine the rebuilding of University of Texas Medical Branch at Galveston and the collection and proper deposit of federal reimbursements.

3. Review the effect that Texas Business Tax credits, such as a research and development credit, have on economic development in Texas. Determine whether the costs of various tax credits would be adequately offset by the net increase in state sales tax and other revenues and jobs produced by each credit. Focus on businesses relocating to or from the State of Texas, the impact on the tax base, employment, and the overall economic condition of the state.

4. Identify and evaluate potential improvements to the property tax system. Consider and make recommendations relating to the following:

- Methods to increase public participation in the tax rate-setting process and ensure fairness in appraisal protests and appeals;
- Requirement that property appraisal values may not increase by more than inflation and/or population growth, or another amount to be determined by local taxing authorities, with a maximum cap of 10 percent;
- Exemptions provided to community housing development organizations to determine if changes are needed to ensure that the public benefits outweigh the revenue loss;
- Methods and procedures for determining a real property interest in oil or gas in place, as contained in Texas Tax Code Sec. 23.175, including how market-based data and market-based methodology could possibly be used to ensure fair, reliable, and equitable price forecasts of oil and gas interests. Analyze the need for the creation of an Oil and Gas Valuation Advisory Committee to assist in forecasting current calendar year statewide average prices for oil and gas; and
- the constitutional constraints and fiscal implications of exempting real property, leased to a school, as defined by Section 11.21 of the Tax Code, from ad valorem taxation.

5. Examine the Texas Tomorrow Fund and its impact on institutions of higher education. Assess current and future costs, the ability of institutions to absorb the costs, and make recommendations for ensuring a sound fiscal approach to managing the fund for the future.

6. Study the impact of changing the constitutional and statutory spending limit based on the sum of the rate of population growth and the rate of inflation. Examine what past biennial spending limits would have been, and what the next biennium's limit might be, under a new definition. Consider the impact of exempting growth from federally mandated programs.

7. Study and make recommendations regarding formula funding and its impact on the cost of attendance and methods of financing higher education institutions, including funding differences for pharmacy and nursing programs; research funding; performance funding; and funding for institutions that face capacity student enrollment. Specifically address the following:

- Methods of financing capital projects at higher education institutions, including the levels of deferred maintenance, the impact of deferred maintenance on the ability to offer basic instructional services, and the methods used to finance

deferred maintenance projects. Recommend alternatives for providing a structured and recurring funding mechanism more suited to the state's fiscal capacity and institutional needs

- Supplemental funding for structured programs that are essential for student success and for meeting the goals of Closing the Gaps, including those that provide concentrated student academic and personal support services for universities that enroll a high proportion of non-traditional or at-risk students. Study and make recommendations regarding the quality and effectiveness of academic advising, focusing on resources, staff development, and impact on time-to-degree.

8. Review the capacity of rural hospitals, rural hospital infrastructure, and the statewide impact of services provided by rural hospitals. Make recommendations for funding options to help communities that do not have adequate resources to replace aging infrastructure and consider the creation of a rural hospital infrastructure support program similar to the courthouse preservations fund.

9. Examine transportation funding concepts contained in legislation considered during the 81st Legislature, Regular and Special Sessions. Analyze options and make recommendations relating to historical funding strategies, including prioritization of existing revenues, as well as alternative state and local transportation funding concepts. (Joint charge with Senate Transportation and Homeland Security Committee)

10. Monitor the implementation of legislation addressed by the Senate Committee on Finance, 81st Legislature, Regular and Called Sessions, and make recommendations for any legislation needed to improve, enhance, and/or complete implementation.

Specifically, monitor the following:

- The Legislative Budget Board effectiveness and efficiency review of Chapter 313, Tax Code. Consider whether tax provisions provide a net benefit to the state.
- Monitor ongoing faculty recruitment and retention for Texas nursing schools, and assess the impact of increased state funds to nursing schools to increase faculty salaries and add new teaching schools.
- Monitor the use of Byrne Grant Border security funds, including whether additional funds need to be spent on communications interoperability.
- Monitor the Department of Aging and Disability Services (DADS) implementation of SB 643, emergency legislation relating to Texas' state supported living centers (SSLCs), implementation of Special Provisions relating to All Health and Human Services Agencies, Section 48, Contingency Appropriation for the Reshaping of the System for Providing Services to Individuals with Developmental Disabilities, and implementation of the United States Department of Justice (DOJ) Settlement Agreement terms.
- Provide effective budget oversight of Texas Department of Transportation's implementation of Riders 55 and 56, appropriations from State Highway Fund No. 006 and Proposition 12 General Obligation Bonds for reducing congested road segments.
- Monitor the revenue receipts associated with the weight-based tobacco tax.

- Monitor the Cancer Prevention and Research Institute of Texas grant making process to ensure that funds are spent efficiently and effectively.
- Monitor the expenditure of federal American Resource and Recovery Act funds. Review the extent to which federal stimulus funds affected each agency's ability to meet or surpass its Performance Measure Targets. Consider the effect that delays in federal approvals have had on funding for public education and weatherization programs.

Government Organization

1. Review all committees, councils and task forces with overlapping charges in an effort to streamline and eliminate overlapping workgroups across state government agencies and programs.
2. Study the online services provided by the state and compare those services to the services provided by other states. In coordination with the Department of Information Resources, determine how online services provided by the state can be improved.
3. Review opportunities for increasing the transparency of government operations and make recommendations for enhancing public access to government.
4. Monitor the implementation of legislation addressed by the Senate Committee on Government Organization, 81st Legislature, Regular and Called Sessions, and make recommendations for any legislation needed to improve, enhance, and/or complete implementation.

Health & Human Services

1. Upon passage of federal legislation relating to reform of the health care industry and health insurance industry that the Texas Health and Human Services Commission estimates will cost the State of Texas \$2 to 2.5 billion per year in General Revenue beginning as early as 2013, study the implications of such legislation on Texas, the health care industry, and public and private insurance. Study and monitor the implementation of the insurance regulatory changes, changes to high risk pool, and any other insurance mandates. Study the health care policy changes and the impact to the Medicaid and CHIP programs and the state budget. Assess the impact to all state uninsured and uncompensated care programs and county programs for the uninsured, including county property tax programs to pay for the uninsured. Make recommendations for the efficient implementation of programs. (Joint charge with Senate State Affairs Committee)
2. Study the benefits, efficiencies and costs, and effectiveness of the social service related prevention and early intervention programs at the health and human services agencies, the juvenile and adult criminal justice agencies and other government agencies that have programs that address mental illness, substance abuse, child abuse and neglect, domestic violence, single-parent families, absentee fathers, early pregnancy, and unemployment. Study other states' prevention programs and efforts to administer these programs through

a merged prevention department. Make recommendations to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of these programs.

3. Review the timeliness and efficiency of the Health and Human Service Commission's eligibility system. Include a review of staffing levels and staffing distribution; implementation of Rider 61; and the increased demand on the system. Make recommendations to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the system, focusing on policy changes that will not create a large financial burden for the state.

4. Study and make recommendations on the state's role for facilitating the exchange of health care information in the future, including using the Medicaid exchange as a framework for the statewide exchange of health information between health care providers to improve quality of care; what information the state should provide; how to use this information to improve care management, prevent medical errors, and reduce unnecessary services; and policies and statutory changes needed to ensure that privacy is protected. Study the feasibility of developing multiple regional health information technology exchanges in Texas.

5. Study the state's current and long-range need for physicians, nurses, dentists and other allied health and long-term care professionals. Provide recommendations for ensuring sufficient numbers of health care professionals, focusing on medically underserved and rural areas of the state as well as the Border region. Consider health care delivered by Advanced Practice Nurses in terms of access, cost and patient safety and include an assessment of independent prescriptive authority with those states in which prescriptive authority is delegated by a physician. Make recommendations to enhance the efficient use of Advanced Practice Nurses in Texas.

6. Explore strategies to support the needs of aging Texans, including best practices in nursing home diversion, expediting access to community services, and programs to assist seniors and their families in navigating the long-term care system with the goal of helping seniors remain in the community. Study the guardianship program implemented by the Department of Aging and Disabilities and the Department of Adult Protective Services, including the efficiency and effectiveness of the program, the relationship between the two agencies, the appropriate rights for parents, and whether clients and their assets are adequately protected to ensure the state is appropriately indentifying seniors in need of protection.

7. Examine how the state could enact policies to improve the overall health of Texans, focusing on programs that compliment individually-based prevention with community-based prevention to reduce obesity rates by increasing physical activity, improving nutrition, and improving self-management of chronic diseases such as diabetes. Examine obesity-related health disparities between different ethnic groups and ways to narrow these gaps. Consider the fiscal and health impact of second-hand smoke on businesses and service sector employees. Study state-level initiatives to incorporate these individual and community-based prevention strategies, including initiatives pursued in other states.

8. Study the state's ability to appropriately respond to the H1N1 influenza pandemic by examining issues related to vaccine distribution and capacity. Consider the benefit of providing the state's independent school districts and various health authorities with standardized protocols for issues including, but not limited to, vaccine administration, absenteeism and the cancellation of school and other school-related events. Assess the state's ability to track and record H1N1 vaccinations through the ImmTrac registry, and review statutes governing ImmTrac to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of immunization information systems.

9. Study current state health care quality improvement initiatives in Texas, including statewide health care-associated infection and adverse event reporting, reimbursement reductions in the Texas Medicaid program for preventable adverse events, potentially preventable readmissions identification, health information technology implementation, pay-for-performance programs, and other initiatives aimed at improving the efficiency, safety, and quality of health care in Texas. Identify statutory changes that may build upon efforts to improve quality of care and contain health care costs in Texas. Study policies that encourage and facilitate the use of best practices by health care providers including the best way to report and distribute information on quality of care and the use of best practices to the public and to promote health care provider and payment incentives that will encourage the use of best practices. The study/recommendations could also include assessing the best way to bring provider groups together to increase quality of care, the use of best practices, and reduce unnecessary services.

10. Study current practices of the Texas Medical Board relating to disclosure of complaints.

11. Review the types of human stem cell and human cloning research being conducted, funded, or supported by state agencies, including institutions of higher education. Make recommendations for appropriate data collection and funding protocols.

12. Review the Medicaid HCBS waivers (CBA, STAR Plus, CLASS, MDCP, DBMT, TxHmL) and develop recommendations to assure that people with significant disabilities, regardless of disability label or age, receive needed services to remain in or transition to the community. Review should look at the delivery system, eligibility, service packages, rate structures, workforce issues and funding caps. Examine options for the provision of services for children aging out of the Medicaid system. Make recommendations for streamlining/combining these waivers, ensuring that these waivers are cost effective or create cost savings, and developing policies that contain costs in an effort to increase access to these services. The review should examine other states' community care waivers and provide recommendations relating to efforts that have been successful in other states.

13. Study the type, duration, frequency and effectiveness of mental health services available to and accessed by abused and neglected Texas children. Recommend strategies to address the impact of the trauma, and enhance therapeutic services available to this population in an effort to eliminate the cycle of abuse and neglect.

14. Monitor the implementation of legislation addressed by the Senate Committee on Health & Human Services, 81st Legislature, Regular and Called Sessions, and make recommendations for any legislation needed to improve, enhance, and/or complete implementation.

- Monitor Department of Family and Protective Services' implementation of the U.S. Fostering Connections Act, including the new Kinship Care program. Include recommendations on how to optimize the use of monetary assistance to qualified relative caregivers.
- Monitor the Department of Aging and Disability Services (DADS) implementation of SB 643, relating to Texas' state-supported living centers (SSLCs), implementation of Special Provisions relating to All Health and Human Services Agencies, Section 48. Contingency Appropriation for the Reshaping of the System for Providing Services to Individuals with Developmental Disabilities, and implementation of the United States Department of Justice (DOJ) Settlement Agreement terms.

Higher Education

1. Study and make recommendations regarding more cost-effective funding of financial aid, including ways to restructure financial aid programs to promote student success and the efficacy of the current \$365 million in current exemptions and waivers offered to students at institutions of higher education. Examine the new Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and determine the impact on eligibility for existing Texas financial aid programs and on data availability resulting from the simplification. Include recommendations on how to expand the TEXAS Grant and B-on-Time programs.

2. Review community college service areas to ensure that student needs are being met in the most effective and efficient manner. Study and make recommendations to improve the productivity and cost-effectiveness of the community college/university model for producing baccalaureate degrees, including identifying proven best practices; analyzing success rates of similar cohorts of students by comparing those who begin at community colleges with those who begin at four-year institutions; and analyzing transfer issues including dual admissions programs and academic advising services to facilitate a seamless transfer from two-year to four-year institutions. Include an assessment of the role of technical and vocational training programs and their impact on jobs.

3. Study and make recommendations regarding improving developmental education, which costs the state over \$100 million per year, with a focus on enhancing student success in these courses.

4. Study and make recommendations regarding the current accountability system and ways to measure student progress, faculty workload, and student advising; and to improve time-to-degree. Examine the quality of academic advising services to ensure that students are taking courses relevant to their degree program and are on path for graduation. Study and make recommendations to eliminate unnecessary or duplicative reporting requirements.

5. Examine cost drivers in higher education. Recommend opportunities for achieving cost efficiencies including reporting requirements, three-year degree programs, and community college baccalaureate degree programs. Study and make recommendations regarding more effective means of using technology, including digital textbooks and online degree programs, to improve access, enhance quality, and reduce the cost of higher education while preserving excellence.

6. Review the structure and operation of the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board. Evaluate the board's data collection systems, including costs to higher education institutions, and make recommendations for improvements. Include an assessment of higher education reporting requirements and make recommendations to eliminate duplicate requirements and streamline reporting.

7. Review endowed funds at institutions of higher education to ensure compliance with all state laws and, in particular, the Uniform Prudent Management of Institutional Funds Act. Study and make recommendations for requiring all institutions of higher education to report annually to donors on the use of gifts and endowed funds. Review state laws to determine if they provide adequate oversight of these funds. Study the manner in which scholarship and other funds are given and bequeathed to institutions of higher education and make recommendations for ensuring that donors' wishes are honored while institutions are allowed appropriate flexibility with the use of the funds.

8. Review dual credit courses, including the cost of delivery, funding mechanisms, and possibility of a statewide dual credit system. This review should also include an examination of the rigor, quality and consistency of dual credit courses. (Joint charge with Senate Education Committee)

9. Monitor the implementation of legislation addressed by the Senate Committee on Higher Education, 81st Legislature, Regular and Called Sessions, and make recommendations for any legislation needed to improve, enhance and/or complete implementation. Specifically, focus the following, as well as tuition legislation:

- HB 51 relating to emerging research Tier 1 universities;
- SB 175 relating to top ten percent.

Intergovernmental Relations

1. Study current law governing homeowners associations with respect to ensuring that homeowners are given adequate protections against unfair foreclosures and are given proper channels for redress in case of foreclosure.

2. Monitor the proliferation of municipal utility districts (MUDs) outside the corporate limits or extraterritorial jurisdiction of municipalities and whether increased oversight of these districts by other political subdivisions is needed. Review the process for the creation of municipal utility districts (MUDs) through the template developed during the 81st Legislative Session, including any changes needed to increase the efficiency and oversight over the creation of proposed districts. Review the process for creating special

districts, including whether the creation of a template, similar to the one created for municipal utility districts (MUDs), is feasible and would enable the legislature to more effectively evaluate other proposed special districts during future Sessions.

3. Review the process and costs for local governments to make government information available online. Consider ways to encourage local governments to provide more transparency, including the Comptroller's experience with transparency and her offer to assist local governments, and consider penalties for entities that fail to comply with the online requirement.

4. Assess ways to facilitate property ownership registration to better enable individuals to participate in federal programs and make recommendations to improve processing times to provide improved access to funds.

5. Study the reasons for and the impacts of hospitals directly hiring physicians. Examine practices in other states. Make recommendations, if needed, to permit hospitals to directly hire physicians.

6. Review state and local policies related to development and growth in rural and unincorporated regions of the state with regard to annexation and zoning authority. Focus on impacts to private property rights. Determine the appropriateness of existing extraterritorial jurisdiction authority. Make recommendations regarding possible changes to this authority.

7. Review the types of support state government can provide to assist local government consolidations with county governments. Evaluate budget implications for city and county government consolidations. Research the appropriateness and cost savings of eliminating duplicity between city and county governments in different regions of the state.

8. Review the statutory authority granted to municipal management districts (MMDs) and to emergency service districts (ESDs), the authority of municipalities and counties to create public improvement districts (PIDs). Determine whether the authority granted for each entity is adequate to accomplish the goals of local governments. Assess whether the consolidation of ESDs under one statute would improve uniformity and provision of fire and emergency services through these districts.

9. Monitor the implementation of legislation addressed by the Senate Committee on Intergovernmental Relations, 81st Legislature, Regular and Called Sessions, and make recommendations for any legislation needed to improve, enhance, and/or complete implementation.

- Monitor the use of the expanded funds provided by the 81st Legislature to the Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs.

Subcommittee on Flooding & Evacuations

1. Study the benefit of legislation that would require coastal regions, when making routine improvements to drainage systems and other infrastructure, to take into account probability of future flooding and any upgrades necessary to prevent future flooding.
2. Study and make recommendations on methods of emergency notification during a natural disaster. Look into alternative systems and new technologies for rerouting 911-type calls to become more efficient and effective. Study and make recommendations to streamline the process of informing citizens impacted by an emergency or disaster prior to the event about re-entry and aid.
3. Study and make recommendations relating to cost effective options to either retrofit or require new building structures to be built as shelters for use during future evacuations.
4. Monitor the implementation of legislation addressed by the Senate Subcommittee on Flooding & Evacuations, 81st Legislature, Regular and Called Sessions, and make recommendations for any legislation needed to improve, enhance, and/or complete implementation.

International Relations and Trade

1. Review the effectiveness of the Coordination of Colonia Initiatives and related measures addressed by the Committee and develop recommendations to better address substandard communities across the state where no potable water or sewage services are provided. Review state and local laws and policies relating to development and growth in unincorporated regions of the state and develop recommendations aimed at providing local units of government the necessary local control tools to curtail the spread of colonia-like developments in their jurisdictions.
2. Examine effectiveness of state homeownership programs serving colonia residents. Study the need for contract for deed conversions in the colonias within 150 miles of the Texas/Mexico border. Examine existing statute regarding statewide distribution of the Texas Bootstrap Loan Program and recommend changes to increase the state's ability to expedite allocation of funds. Develop recommendations to address abusive lending practices in distressed areas and fair housing violations in the colonias.
3. Study and make recommendations for state actions to increase efficiencies and reduce wait times in crossing the Texas-Mexico border, while ensuring proper security. Review initiatives to maximize bridge-crossing revenue.
4. Assess Texas' trade-related programs and work with the appropriate state and federal agencies to develop initiatives that will increase NAFTA-related commerce in Texas. Make recommendations to encourage communities currently unable to participate in international trade, due to their lack of resources and capacity, to engage in such trade.

5. Review the state's efforts aimed at helping distressed areas, coastal regions and rural communities to compete in the international marketplace. Work with the appropriate state and federal agencies to develop recommendations to create initiatives that will build regional development and capacity with the goal of better facilitating trade and commerce, as well as tourism, in these communities.
6. Review the state's efforts and policies aimed at addressing the workforce training needs of trade-displaced citizens. Report on the effectiveness of these programs and develop recommendations to better assist hard to reach populations in distressed areas, including Spanish-predominant speaking displaced citizens along the Texas-Mexico border region.
7. Monitor the implementation of legislation addressed by the Senate Committee on International Relations and Trade, 81st Legislature, Regular and Called Sessions, and make recommendations for any legislation needed to improve, enhance, and/or complete implementation.
 - Review the housing initiatives addressed by the Committee and work with the appropriate housing officials to develop recommendations to better address the housing needs of smaller and distressed communities in Texas. Develop recommendations for the cost-effective use of existing housing monies, leveraging of funds and initiatives for new funding sources.

Jurisprudence

1. Study the effectiveness of current regulation and practices of debt management providers in Texas, including credit service organizations, and assess the extent to which individuals' estates are protected in transactions with debt management providers. Make recommendations to enhance protections.
2. Study the guardianship program implemented by the Department of Aging and Disabilities and the Department of Adult Protective Services, including the efficiency and effectiveness of the program, the relationship between the two agencies, the appropriate rights for parents, and whether clients and their assets are adequately protected.
3. Study and make recommendations to promote and enable confidential information sharing among state agencies and courts serving at-risk children and youth to ensure that comprehensive and appropriate services are being provided. The study should focus on the technological, legal, and fiscal barriers that prevent information sharing among these entities regarding affected children and youth.
4. Evaluate the voluntary relative placement process in issues of guardianship and the ability of nonparent relatives to make decisions for children under their care. Monitor the progress and implementation of SB 1598 relating to an agreement authorizing a nonparent relative of a child to make certain decisions regarding the child.

5. Monitor the implementation of legislation addressed by the Senate Committee on Jurisprudence, 81st Legislature, Regular and Called Sessions, and make recommendations for any legislation needed to improve, enhance, and/or complete implementation.

Natural Resources

1. Analyze and compare the differences in cost between immediate implementation of the State Water Plan compared to staged development over time. When calculating the costs attributable to staged implementation, consider rising material costs, meeting the needs of a growing population with temporary solutions, and the costs related to potential failure of existing, aging infrastructure. Review the development of State Water Plan infrastructure projects that have been funded during the FY 08-09 and FY 10-11 biennia. Consider short-term and long-term dedicated sources of funding.

2. Review the joint planning process for management of groundwater resources and monitor the progress of groundwater conservation districts' efforts to establish, before the statutory deadline, desired future conditions for aquifers. Identify any additional resources or statutory changes necessary to promote sound groundwater management, including promotion of desalination of brackish groundwater, elimination of any exemptions, and coordination between groundwater conservation districts and activities regulated by the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality, the Railroad Commission of Texas, and the state and regional water planning processes administered by the Texas Water Development Board.

3. Monitor and review the implementation of the Environmental Protection Agency's rules on carbon dioxide and federal legislation on greenhouse gases. Review the participation of the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality, the Railroad Commission of Texas, the Department of Agriculture, and the Public Utility Commission in working collaboratively to comply with the federal mandates and in meeting federal clean air standards.

4. Study the need for the state to regulate the drilling of new wells within proscribed depths and distances of Texas rivers, in order to prevent the draining of surface water from alluvial plains of river basins. Make recommendations for any needed legislation.

5. Determine whether the TCEQ should identify and evaluate cumulative effects on public health and the environment due to air toxics and ozone precursor emissions proposed in applications for new air permits, air permit amendments, and air permit renewals. Make recommendations, if needed.

6. Monitor the implementation of legislation addressed by the Senate Committee on Natural Resources, 81st Legislature, Regular and Called Sessions, and make recommendations for any legislation needed to improve, enhance, and/or complete implementation.

- Monitor implementation of SB 16, relating to air quality;

- Monitor the implementation of the New Technology Implementation Grant program and assess the program's effectiveness. Receive progress reports regarding the collaborative review of grant applications by the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ), the Comptroller of Public Accounts, the Railroad Commission of Texas, and the Public Utility Commission as established by H.B. 1796;
- Monitor the use of Texas Emissions Reduction Plan funds for the development of new strategies to reduce emissions; and
- Monitor the environmental impacts, including water usage, and role of the TCEQ and other agencies in oil and natural gas development in areas of the state such as the Barnett Shale.

State Affairs

1. Upon passage of federal legislation relating to reform of the health care industry and health insurance industry, study the implications of such legislation on Texas, the health care industry, and public and private insurance. Study and monitor the implementation of the insurance regulatory changes, changes to high risk pool, and any other insurance mandates. Study the health care policy changes and the impact to the Medicaid and CHIP programs and the state budget. Assess the impact to all state uninsured and uncompensated care programs and county programs for the uninsured, including county property tax programs to pay for the uninsured. Make recommendations for the efficient implementation of programs. (Joint charge with Senate Health and Human Services Committee)

2. Monitor the actuarial and financial conditions of the pension and health care programs administered by the Teacher Retirement System and the Employees Retirement System. Assess the effectiveness of pilot programs designed to encourage the use of clinical integration, payments for good outcomes, use of best practices, focus on wellness and prevention, and bundling of costs for episodes of care, and other health care savings initiatives. Make recommendations for expanding the pilot programs for use across all private and state sponsored health care, including the Medicaid program, as a means to improve Texans' health and provide more effective care that allows for assistance for the uninsured. (SB 7, SB 8 and SB 10, 81st Legislature)

3. Study the implementation of the Healthy Texas program enacted by the 81st Legislature and the ongoing implementation of SB 1731, 80th Legislature, to determine if this program is effectively lowering health insurance costs and increasing access to health insurance for small business. Study and make recommendations about using this program to increase access to health insurance for sole proprietors. Review other states efforts to lower health care costs to small business owners and sole proprietors and incentivize small business owners and sole proprietors to purchase insurance.

4. Examine best practices for increasing the affordability and availability of health insurance in the individual and small group market, including medical underwriting

practices, rescission of coverage, cancellation of coverage, rate regulation, and reporting of medical loss ratios.

5. Study how increased out-of-pocket costs for medications and treatment impact consumers' compliance with health care recommendations and how that response impacts overall health care costs. Review available research into value design programs.

6. Study ways to improve the efficiency and accuracy of voter registration rolls, including the feasibility and security of online registration and automatic registration and the accuracy of verification and purging of voters. Recommend ways to ensure that deceased or otherwise ineligible voters are not included on rolls while also ensuring that all eligible applicants are efficiently registered.

7. Study the transparency of organizational structures, policies and coverage associated with health insurance underwriters/agents and the relationship between underwriters/agents and policyholders.

8. Study the sale of annuities in Texas, particularly to seniors. Evaluate the requirements relating to rescission of an annuity contract, payment of surrender fees, return of money, contract forms, including a standard contract form, buyer's guide, agent's commission and disclosure of an agent's commission. Make recommendations for legislation, if needed, and consider whether the insurance commissioner by rule may limit an agent's commission.

9. Study the effect Texas hospital billing and collection practices have on the uninsured's and under-insured's access to hospital health care services, on the uninsured's and under-insured's economic circumstances, and on medical debt recorded as bad debt on hospital books and records. Assess whether hospital billing disparities involving pricing discounts between the uninsured and insured exist and make recommendations for any changes necessary.

10. Study the adequacy of workers' compensation benefits in the following categories: lifetime income benefits, wage benefits for the high wage earner, and workers whose wage benefits stop before Social Security benefits begin. In order to determine the impact of increased benefits in one or more of these categories, work with the Texas Department of Insurance to develop a publicly accessible model to predict the costs related to those enhanced benefits, the effect of those costs on workers' compensation premiums, and whether enrollment in the workers' compensation system will be adversely impacted by increasing the benefits in one or more of the stated categories.

11. Study whether subrogation claims by writers of workers' compensation policies should be limited or prohibited. Study the effect on workers' compensation premiums, if any, if subrogation claims by writers of workers' compensation policies are limited or prohibited. Consider the feasibility of developing a publicly accessible model to predict the impact on workers' compensation premiums, if any, if subrogation claims by writers of workers' compensation policies are limited or prohibited, while protecting

confidentiality as required by law and study whether the impact on workers' compensation premiums, if any, would adversely impact enrollment in the workers' compensation system.

12. Study and make recommendations regarding access to voting by members of the military serving in the United States and abroad, including the feasibility of electronic delivery of ballots.

13. Study the Public Information Act and the Open Meetings Act to ensure that government continues to operate in a way that is open and transparent. The study should consider how advances in technology and the emergence of various forms of social media (e.g. Facebook, MySpace, Twitter) have affected communications by and within governmental bodies.

14. Monitor the implementation of legislation addressed by the Senate Committee on State Affairs, 81st Legislature, Regular and Called Sessions, and make recommendations for any legislation needed to improve, enhance, and/or complete implementation.

Transportation & Homeland Security

1. Recommend ways to maximize the contribution of alternative transportation modes and evaluate what impacts they have on congestion and air quality. Identify statutory barriers to reducing transportation's impact on air quality and preventing any restrictions on or loss of federal funds due to air quality. Study the incidence of fraudulent automotive emissions certifications in the state and recommend changes in enforcement which will increase the effectiveness of state emissions regulation and assist in attainment of federal air quality standards.

2. Review and make recommendations relating to the Texas Department of Transportation's organizational structure and working relationship with local governments, Metropolitan Planning Organizations, Regional Tolling Authorities and Regional Mobility Authorities.

3. Recommend improvements to homeland security, including the state's infrastructure and housing recovery operations. Make recommendations for incorporating best practices and addressing any gaps in existing procedures, and disaster preparation and response, including volunteer involvement, evacuation and sheltering and trauma care, and communications interoperability.

4. Examine the public policy implications of Comprehensive Development Agreements (CDAs) and recommend whether they should be reauthorized to construct specific roadways.

5. Explore the policy implications of transportation reinvestment zones funded by state sales and use taxes as an alternative to public financing of transportation projects.

6. Examine transportation funding concepts contained in legislation considered during the 81st Legislature, Regular and Special Sessions. Analyze options and make recommendations relating to historical funding strategies including prioritization of existing revenues, as well as alternative state and local transportation funding concepts. (Joint charge with Senate Finance Committee)
7. Study and make recommendations to expedite the environmental review process for transportation projects.
8. Evaluate the Texas Department of Transportation's policy for permitting overweight vehicles and recommend ways to ensure overweight vehicles do not cause significant damage to the State's roadways and bridges. Examine the limited operation hours and staffing of highway weight stations across the state and consider whether expanded operations or other alternatives would improve compliance with weight restrictions.
9. Review the 100 most congested roadway segments and determine if alternative congestion relief modes have been identified to relieve segments in areas where the addition of lanes is not possible. For example, review whether TxDOT and MPOs consider instituting park & rides and encouraging employee flex times to relieve congested roadway segments.
10. Evaluate outsourcing at the Texas Department of Transportation, including, but not limited to, engineering services and aerial mapping.
11. Review the possible increase in number of unlicensed and uninsured drivers resulting from license suspensions or indigence resulting drivers' inability to pay Driver Responsibility surcharges in light of new Department of Public Safety rules.
12. Study and make recommendations for legislation to inform Texans about best practices for hurricane preparation, response, and recovery, including information about basic state operations and pre-designated locations for PODs (Points of Distribution) across the state. Establish procedures and penalties for noncompliance by local jurisdictions that hinder response and recovery efforts.
13. Monitor the implementation of legislation addressed by the Senate Committee on Transportation & Homeland Security, 81st Legislature, Regular and Called Sessions, and make recommendations for any legislation needed to improve, enhance, and/or complete implementation.
 - Monitor the implementation of gang-related legislation passed during the 81st Legislature and its impact on drug cartel-related transnational gangs and crime in Texas.

Veteran Affairs & Military Installations

1. Study veteran employment and veteran-owned small business issues, including the usefulness of creating a veteran-specific employment database to target job openings

tailored to the skill sets of Texas' returning veterans. Include an assessment and recommendations to best implement the veteran employment database.

2. Examine the potential risk factors for returning service members, which may contribute to an increase in domestic violence and child abuse cases. Additionally, determine best practices, including funding options, to ensure that specific counseling related to these risk factors is available to and provided for returning service members and their family members during the initial reunion phase.
3. Examine the use of the new GI Bill by veterans and their families in conjunction with the changes made to the Hazlewood Act during the 81st Legislature, Regular Session, as the number of service members returning from Iraq and Afghanistan continues to rise. Include an assessment and recommendations on how the programs can be maximized to better serve veterans and their families.
4. Study the specific needs of female veterans and service members and whether they are met. Make recommendations for improving services.
5. Study the value of enhancing training requirements for Veterans County Service Officers (VCSO) to improve veterans service at the local level, especially in rural areas. Make recommendations on how to best use technology for training purposes and expanding accreditation of VCSO.
6. Study the advantages of centralizing call center activities for referral to benefits providers (e.g., TVC, TVLB, VA, DSHS, Suicide Prevention Call Centers, etc.), including the costs associated with maintaining multiple call centers, the potential savings of consolidating reporting systems, and any options for obtaining federal funds. Make suggestions to streamline the process for veterans to obtain resources and benefits.
7. Inventory and assess veteran workforce programs offered by state agencies (i.e., TVC, TWC, TAG), and include the usefulness of creating a veteran-specific employment database, which would target job openings tailored to the skill set of Texas' returning veterans as well as job training for spouses. Make recommendations to allow agencies to work more effectively and for efficient implementation of a veteran employment database.
8. Consider the mission of the State Guard and the numbers of volunteers within the State Guard. Make recommendations to incentivize recruitment and retention of volunteers to the State Guard.
9. Monitor the implementation of legislation addressed by the Senate Committee on Veteran Affairs & Military Installations, 81st Legislature, Regular and Called Sessions, and make recommendations for any legislation needed to improve, enhance, and/or complete implementation. Specifically, review the following:
 - Monitor implementation of constitutional amendments relating to veterans issues;

- Monitor the implementation of \$5 million for mental health services programs for veterans, the military and their dependents, following the Ft. Hood tragedy;
- Monitor and analyze the closure process for the following installations and communicate with district Senators and communities: Naval Station Ingleside; Brooks City-Base, San Antonio; and Lone Star Army Ammunition Plant.
- Monitor and analyze the realignment of the various installations across the state, including but not limited to, Fort Sam Houston in San Antonio, Fort Bliss in El Paso, and Red River Army Depot in Texarkana.