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Lieutenant Governor of Texas
President of the Senate

2024 Interim Legislative Charges:

Border Security Committee
Business and Commerce Committee
Criminal Justice Committee
Education Committee
Finance Committee
Health and Human Services Committee
Higher Education Committee
Local Government Committee
Natural Resources Committee
State Affairs Committee
Transportation Committee
Water, Agriculture, and Rural Affairs
Committee
Veterans Affairs Committee

April 11, 2024

Border Security Committee

- **Securing the Texas-Mexico Border:** Review state and local agencies' participation in border security. Examine the impact of transnational criminal activity on commerce including, but not limited to, organized crime fuel theft to fund criminal operations. Make recommendations to support and strengthen interagency border operations to combat criminal enterprises.
- **Support for Border Security Personnel:** Consider the effect on personnel who have actively served or participated in Operation Lone Star and the impact of their service on their health and well-being, and their regular employment or assignments outside of Operation Lone Star. Study the challenges and barriers that affect the recruitment and retention of personnel engaged in border security efforts.
- **Monitoring:** Monitor the implementation of legislation addressed by the Senate Committee on Border Security passed by the 88th Legislature, as well as relevant agencies and programs under the committee's jurisdiction. Specifically, make recommendations for any legislation needed to improve, enhance, or complete implementation of the following:
 - Senate Bill 602, relating to the law enforcement authority of federal border patrol agents;
 - Senate Bill 1133, relating to a program to compensate landowners for property damage caused by certain criminal activities; and
 - Senate Bill 1484, relating to a border operations training program for peace officers employed by local law enforcement agencies.

Business and Commerce Committee

- **Electricity Market Design:** Assess state efforts to provide incentives for new thermal generation. Review and report on the state of the electricity market in Texas and issues impacting the reliability and resiliency of the Texas electric grid. Consider rulemaking related to wholesale market design, including the impact of these changes on grid reliability, market revenues, costs to consumers, and the efficiency of operations. Examine and report on the direct and indirect impacts that variable resources, such as wind and solar, have on grid resiliency, consumer prices, and market uncertainty. Monitor the implementation of House Bill 1500, 88th Legislature.
- **Texas Energy Fund:** Review and report on the impact of Senate Bill 2627, the Powering Texas Forward Act, as passed by the 88th Legislature, which established the Texas Energy Fund (TEF) to provide grants and loans to finance the construction, maintenance, modernization, and operation of electric facilities in Texas.
- **Innovative Power Generation:** Explore emerging technologies with the potential to add new dispatchable power to our electric grid including, but not limited, to small modular nuclear reactors, advanced batteries, and new developments in hydrogen and geothermal resources. Identify and recommend regulatory and policy actions required to deploy emerging technologies within the state's electric grid.
- **Transmitting Texas Power:** Identify the future electric transmission and distribution system needs of the state and recommend ways to reduce barriers to constructing the necessary electric infrastructure to support the growing demand and changes in technology. Review and make any necessary recommendations to enhance legislation passed during the 88th legislative session, including the status of projects to improve the safety and resiliency of the transmission system, as well as the effect of current and future projects on consumer costs.
- **Managing Texas Sized Growth:** Evaluate the state's ability to keep pace with increasing electricity demand related to population growth and energy intensive technologies such as electric vehicles and data centers. Recommend ways to increase reliability via demand-side response programs. Study ERCOT's forecasting methodology and recommend ways to increase transparency. Monitor ongoing efforts at the Public Utility Commission related to energy efficiency programs and distributed energy resources, including the implementation of Senate Bill 1699, 88th Legislature.
- **Impact of Bitcoin Mining on the Texas Electric Grid:** Study the impact of energy-intensive cryptocurrency mining facilities on the Texas electric grid. Report on whether any changes should be made to ERCOT demand response programs and large flexible load registration requirements to limit the impact of these facilities on system reliability and consumer costs.
- **Addressing the Rising Cost of Insurance:** Assess the impact of rising property and casualty insurance costs on Texas property owners, real estate lenders, and commercial and industrial development. Identify ways to increase consumer transparency to better inform coverage decisions and make recommendations to ensure a competitive and affordable insurance market for consumers.
- **Artificial Intelligence:** Examine the development and utilization of artificial intelligence (AI). Evaluate the implications of AI adoption across the public and private sectors. Make recommendations for a responsible regulatory framework for AI development, including data privacy, industry standards, consumer protections, risk mitigation, and compliance processes. Propose any necessary

changes to state law to protect the Texas radio, television, music, and film industries against unauthorized use by AI. Monitor the findings of the Texas Artificial Intelligence Advisory Council.

Criminal Justice Committee

- **Stopping Child Predators:** Study how predators use deepfake technology and artificial intelligence (AI) to harm or exploit children. Monitor the implementation of House Bill 2700, 88th Legislature, relating to prosecution of certain criminal offenses prohibiting sexually explicit visual material involving children. Recommend additional legislation to protect children as technology continues to evolve.
- **Bail Reform:** Examine “charitable bail organizations” that pay bail for defendants, thereby relieving them of any financial incentive to appear in court. Study the operations and funding sources of these organizations. Make recommendations to ensure accountability for “charitable bail organizations” that provide free bond for arrested individuals that reoffend while out on bond; further restrict these organizations’ ability to post bail for violent individuals; and promote transparency.
- **Monitoring:** Monitor the implementation of legislation addressed by the Senate Committee on Criminal Justice passed by the 88th Legislature, as well as relevant agencies and programs under the committee's jurisdiction. Specifically, make recommendations for any legislation needed to improve, enhance, or complete implementation of the following:
 - Senate Bill 1004, relating to creating the criminal offense of tampering with an electronic monitoring device and to certain consequences on conviction of that offense.

Education Committee

- **Reading and Math Readiness:** Study current local, state, and national policies and programs that improve student achievement in reading and mathematics, with an emphasis on “early readiness” in grades preK-5. Make recommendations to ensure every student has a strong academic foundation in reading and math.
- **Testing Reform:** Review the state's current development and phase-in of the STAAR test redesign and ongoing innovative assessment reforms, including the Texas Through-Year Assessment Pilot (TTAP). Recommend ways to accelerate current testing improvement efforts and the development of a real-time testing program that meets the educational needs of Texas students.
- **COVID-19 Funding Oversight:** Examine and report on COVID-19 how public schools spent federal funds since the beginning of the pandemic, including funds received under the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), with a dual focus on demonstrated improved student outcomes and efficient use of taxpayer funds.
- **Monitoring:** Monitor the implementation of legislation addressed by the Senate Committee on Education passed by the 88th Legislature, as well as relevant agencies and programs under the committee's jurisdiction. Specifically, make recommendations for any legislation needed to improve, enhance, or complete implementation of the following:
 - measures ensuring public school safety;
 - oversight of public school library procurement and content policies; and
 - high-quality instructional materials and open-educational resources for public schools.

Finance Committee

- **Continue Cutting Property Taxes:** Identify the best combination to further increase the amount of homestead exemption and compression to continue cutting Texans' property taxes.

Additionally, establish and report on the cost of eliminating:

- School maintenance and operation property taxes;
- All school property taxes; and
- All property taxes.

Determine the fiscal consequences of each action, including whether revenue reallocations would be required for public education funding and local government funding, and impacts on the state's ability to respond to disasters and other urgent priorities. For example, determine the effect on other state programs if general revenue were used to fully replace school property taxes, particularly during economic downturns. Evaluate and report on how much state revenue would need to be generated to replace foregone property tax revenue, and from what source.

- **Mental Health Services and Inpatient Facilities:** Monitor the implementation of Senate Bill 30, 88th Legislature, Regular Session, with regard to appropriations made for expanding mental health services and inpatient facilities across the state. Report on the progress of inpatient facility construction projects. Assess and report on the effectiveness of spending on mental health services.
- **Monitor Property Tax Relief and Infrastructure Funds:** Monitor the appropriations supporting, and implementation of, the following legislation passed during the 88th Legislature, Regular or Special Sessions, and approved by voters, amending the Texas Constitution:
 - Property Tax Relief: Senate Bill 2 and House Joint Resolution 2, 88th Legislature, Second Called Special Session;
 - Texas Energy Fund: Senate Bill 2627 and Senate Joint Resolution 93, 88th Legislature, Regular Session;
 - Texas Water Fund: Senate Bill 28 and Senate Joint Resolution 75, 88th Legislature, Regular Session;
 - Centennial Parks Conservation Fund: Senate Bill 1648 and Senate Joint Resolution 74, 88th Legislature, Regular Session; and
 - Broadband Infrastructure Fund: House Bill 9 and House Joint Resolution 125, 88th Legislature, Regular Session.

Health and Human Services Committee

- **Children’s Mental Health:** Review care and services currently available to the growing population of Texas children with high acuity mental and behavioral health needs. Make recommendations to improve access to care and services for these children that will support family preservation and prevent them from entering the child welfare system.
- **Access to Health Care:** Evaluate current access to primary and mental health care. Examine whether regulatory and licensing flexibilities could improve access to care, particularly in medically underserved areas of Texas. Make recommendations, if any, to improve access to care while maintaining patient safety.
- **Health Insurance:** Examine the Texas health insurance market and alternatives to employer-based insurance. Identify barriers Texans face when navigating a complex health insurance market. Make recommendations that help individuals obtain health care coverage.
- **Cancer Prevention:** Identify and recommend ways to address the growing impact of cancer on Texans by evaluating state investments in cancer prevention and screenings including, but not limited to, “CT,” “MRI,” and “PET” scans. Study and make recommendations on funding adequacy for prevention efforts at the Cancer Prevention and Research Institute of Texas (CPRIT).
- **Monitoring:** Monitor the implementation of legislation addressed by the Senate Committee on Health and Human Services passed by the 88th Legislature, as well as relevant agencies and programs under the committee's jurisdiction. Specifically, make recommendations for any legislation needed to improve, enhance, or complete implementation of the following:
 - Senate Bill 7, Third Called Special Session, relating to prohibiting a private employer from adopting or enforcing certain COVID-19 vaccine mandates; authorizing an administrative penalty;
 - Senate Bill 24, relating to the powers and duties of the Health and Human Services Commission and the transfer to the commission of certain powers and duties from the Department of Family and Protective Services;
 - Senate Bill 25, relating to support for nursing-related postsecondary education, including scholarships to nursing students, loan repayment assistance to nurses and nursing faculty, and grants to nursing education programs;
 - Senate Bill 26, relating to local mental health authority and local behavioral health authority audits and mental and behavioral health reporting, services, and programs;
 - Senate Bill 1849, relating to an interagency reportable conduct search engine, standards for a person's removal from the employee misconduct registry and eligibility for certification as certain Texas Juvenile Justice Department officers and employees, and the use of certain information by certain state agencies to conduct background checks;
 - Initiatives to reduce Medicaid fraud, waste, and abuse, as well as other cost containment strategies; and
 - Medicaid managed care oversight and accountability.

Higher Education Committee

- **Higher Education - “Faculty Senates”:** Review and analyze the structures and governance in higher education, focusing on the role of “faculty senates,” and like groups, in representing faculty interests to higher education institution administrations. Make recommendations to establish guidelines for the role and representation of faculty by “faculty senates,” and like groups, at higher education institutions in Texas.
- **Innovation and Technology in Higher Education:** Investigate the opportunities and challenges of emerging technology on teaching and learning, focusing on artificial intelligence (AI), online education, and digital resources. Examine aspects of intellectual property as they relate to the development of AI programs and platforms by institutions of higher education and explore the ethical issues institutions of higher education should contemplate when developing AI programs and platforms. Make recommendations to responsibly and ethically utilize emerging technology to enhance learning in higher education
- **Monitor the Ban on Discriminatory DEI Policies:** Examine the implementation of Senate Bill 17, 88th Legislature, which bans discriminatory “DEI” initiatives at institutions of public higher education. Review and report on the progress each institution has made in aligning university policies and procedures with the provisions of Senate Bill 17, ensuring Texas college campuses foster equal opportunity and reward individual merit and achievement.
- **Faculty Tenure Revisions:** Monitor the implementation of Senate Bill 18, 88th Legislature, relating to the tenure and employment of faculty members at certain public institutions of higher education. Review and report on each institution’s progress toward policies and procedures aligned with the provisions set forth in Senate Bill 18.
- **Combating Antisemitism on Texas College Campuses:** Review campus policies to prevent antisemitism. Study the oversight Texas institutions of higher education have over the formation and operations of student organizations, including access to campus facilities and use of campus property. Make recommendations to prevent antisemitism on college campuses, while protecting First Amendment rights.
- **Public Junior College State Finance Program:** Monitor the implementation of the new community college funding model as recommended by the Texas Commission on Community College Finance. Report on whether the rulemaking process is being successfully completed to focus on student outcomes and enhancing the role of public junior colleges in workforce training and preparation.
- **Campus Free Speech:** Examine the procedures of Texas public institutions of higher education designed to protect the First Amendment free speech rights of faculty, staff, and students. Monitor and report on compliance Senate Bill 18, 86th Legislature, and make recommendations for any needed reforms.

Local Government Committee

- **Additional Property Tax Relief and Reform:** Report on the effects of prior property tax relief and reform, including the \$18 billion tax cut with the \$100,000 homestead exemption authorized by the 88th Legislature. Focus particularly on the interaction between Senate Bill 2, 88th Legislature, 2nd Called Session, and Senate Bill 2, 86th Legislature. Make recommendations for further property tax relief and reform, including methods to improve voter control over tax rate setting and debt authorization, and mechanisms to dissolve taxing entities such as municipal management districts (MMDs) and tax increment reinvestment zones (TIRZs) when they have outlived their purpose.
- **Extra-Territorial Jurisdictions:** Study issues related to the implementation of Senate Bill 2038 and House Bill 3053, 88th Legislature, and make recommendations to secure and enhance the protection of landowners' property rights.
- **Local Government Spending of Directly Distributed Federal Funds:** Examine how local governments spend funds directly distributed to them by the federal government, such as Harris County's use of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds to set up a guaranteed-income pilot program. Make recommendations to ensure that the spending of such funds is transparent, accountable, and within the legitimate purposes for local governments under Texas law.
- **Housing Affordability:** Study issues related to housing, including housing supply, homelessness, and methods of providing and financing affordable housing. Make recommendations to reduce regulatory barriers, strengthen property rights, and improve transparency and accountability in public programs for housing.
- **Secure Texas Against "Squatters":** Review current laws relating to "squatters" or those claiming adverse possession of property. Make recommendations to streamline the process for the immediate removal of "squatters" and to strengthen the rights of property owners'.

Natural Resources and Economic Development Committee

- **Enhancing Workforce Productivity:** Study ways to increase the state's workforce productivity, including access to childcare. Make recommendations, within existing resources, to maintain childcare availability to support a growing workforce.
- **Overcoming Federal Incompetence:** Consider the impact to the Texas economy from federal interference including, but not limited to, restricting liquified natural gas exports, supply chain limitations, a net-zero carbon agenda, and other air emission provisions. Report on what impact these federal interferences will have on the Texas economy and workforce, and make recommendations to minimize the damage to Texas.
- **Protecting Local Taxpayers:** Examine current use and imposition of local option hotel occupancy taxes. Makes recommendations to enhance accountability and increase transparency in the use of these funds.
- **Preserving Texas History:** Review the historical site district designation and how such designations contribute to cultural preservation, tourism, and community identity. Report on what impact this historical designation would have on property values, site preservation, and educational opportunities within certain districts including, but not limited to, the San Jacinto Battlefield, the Alamo complex, Washington-on-the-Brazos, and Goliad.
- **Cement Production Plants:** Examine the impacts of permanent cement production plants on local communities. Make recommendations to ensure they are strategically situated and uphold community standards while also fostering economic development.

State Affairs Committee

- **Maintaining Election Security:** Identify threats to Texas’s election integrity, including those from “Big Tech” and foreign entities. Recommend ways to neutralize such threats. Additionally, evaluate the countywide polling place program in Texas. Make recommendations to address countywide polling issues, such as increased wait times, longer travel distances, supply shortages, and reporting irregularities. Evaluate current laws that prohibit political subdivisions and public school districts from using government resources for illegal electioneering. Make recommendations to strengthen these laws and put a stop to illegal electioneering.
- **Social Media & Protecting Children:** Study the impact of social media use on children. Review current mechanisms in place to protect minors online. Monitor the implementation of House Bill 18, 88th Legislature, relating to the protection of minors from harmful, deceptive, or unfair trade practices in connection with the use of certain digital services and electronic devices, including the use and transfer of electronic devices to students by a public school. Make policy recommendations to further protect Texas children online.
- **Protecting Texas Land and Assets:** Evaluate strategic land and asset acquisitions in Texas by foreign entities that threaten the safety and security of the United States. Further, evaluate large-scale purchases of single-family homes by domestic entities and its impact on housing affordability for Texas families. Make recommendations to ensure Texans are secure from foreign threats and homes are affordable in our state.
- **Responsible Investing:** Study the impact of environmental, social, and governance (ESG) factors on our state’s public pensions, with a focus on proxy voting services. Make recommendations to ensure our state’s pension systems vote and invest in accordance with their fiduciary responsibility to maximize profit. Additionally, monitor the implementation of Senate Bill 13, 87th Legislature, relating to state contracts with and investments in certain companies that boycott energy companies. Specifically, examine how a company is removed from the list of companies that boycott energy companies when the company ceases to boycott energy companies. Report on how frequently the list maintained by the comptroller is updated and make recommendations to ensure an ongoing accurate list.
- **Banning Delta 8 and 9:** Examine the sale of intoxicating hemp products in Texas. Make recommendations to further regulate the sale of these products, and suggest legislation to stop retailers who market these products to children.

Transportation Committee

- **Transportation Funding:** Assess the implementation of funding appropriated by the 88th Legislature for aviation, maritime ports, international points of entry, existing rail line operations, and public transportation from non-dedicated state funds and federal funds and make recommendations to ensure these sectors meet current demands and are prepared for future growth.
- **Autonomous Vehicle Safety:** Evaluate autonomous vehicle operations, implementation, incident reporting, and accountability to law enforcement. Make recommendations to ensure public safety and transparency.
- **Reviewing Historic Accomplishments in Transportation:** Review the implementations and outcomes of key transportation funding and policy initiatives since the 84th Legislature. Report on trends or patterns to guide future planning and governance.
- **The Future of Our Economy:** Evaluate President Biden's plan to transition to all-electric vehicles, and the impact on Texans and the state economy. Assess and report on the viability of the charging infrastructure, including the need for more charging stations and upgrades to the power grid, loss of gas tax revenue for transportation and public education, barriers to widespread adoption such as consumer costs for purchasing new vehicles and installing residential charging infrastructure, and the impacts to the oil and gas economy in Texas.

Veteran Affairs Committee

- **Veteran Mental Health:** Review current programs that provide direct and indirect mental health services to veterans in Texas. Identify barriers to accessing mental health resources for rural veterans. Make recommendations to improve access to mental health support for all veterans.
- **Support Service Database for Texas Veterans:** Review and report on the progress toward the creation of a single database to facilitate the seamless provision of veteran benefits by state agencies. Make recommendations to improve coordination among state, federal, and local agencies and others that provide benefits to veterans.
- **Strengthen Support for Veteran Housing:** Study the accessibility and affordability of veteran housing. Identify factors that contribute to veteran homelessness. Determine whether the Veterans Land Board has the tools necessary to maximize their assistance to eligible borrowers in home lending. Make recommendations to update state standards related to veteran home loans and housing.

Water, Agriculture, and Rural Affairs Committee

- **Water System Reliability:** Evaluate water systems in Texas and identify opportunities to better equip those systems to serve the public. Review the coordination of relevant state agencies dealing with Texas water issues and identify opportunities for improved coordination and effectiveness.
- **Monitoring:** Monitor the implementation of legislation addressed by the Senate Committee on Water, Agriculture, and Rural Affairs passed by the 88th Legislature, as well as relevant agencies and programs under the committee's jurisdiction. Specifically, make recommendations for any legislation needed to improve, enhance, or complete implementation of the following:
 - Senate Bill 28, relating to financial assistance provided and programs administered by the Texas Water Development Board;
 - Senate Bill 1289, relating to the disposal of reclaimed wastewater;
 - Senate Bill 1414, relating to the temporary regulation of the practice of veterinary medicine by the Texas Department of Licensing and Regulation; and
 - Senate Bill 1648, relating to the Centennial Parks Conservation Fund.