

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

February 13, 2015

Shannon Noble

February 13, 2015, marks the 30th day of the legislative session. While there is a sense that bills are being filed more slowly than last session, it's actually faster, and the Legislative Council, which drafts all bills, is facing a 6-week backlog. The last day to file a bill other than a local bill, without suspending the rules, is March 13, or the 60th day of the session. At this time last session, the House had filed 1292 bills, compared with 1402 as of yesterday. The Senate is up to SB 566, which is about where it was at the same point in 2013.

The list of TACCA tracked bills shows no real surprises since the last report, just more of the same. The Governor has announced he will veto any budget bill that arrives on his desk without a business tax cut, so there will be movement on the franchise tax, but probably not an outright repeal at this point. PLEASE READ any bill that catches your interest, and let Todd know if you have any comments or concerns about that or any other bill you may hear of.

House and Senate committees were appointed a little earlier than in past sessions. Here is the list of members on the House and Senate committees where most legislation affecting TACCA members is heard:

House Licensing/Admin. Procedures

Smith, Wayne (R) - Chair
Gutierrez, Roland (D) - Vice Chair
Geren, Charlie (R)
Goldman, Craig (R)
Guillen, Ryan (D)
Kuempel, John (R)
Miles, Borris (D)
Miller, Doug (R)
Thompson, Senfronia (D)

Senate Business & Commerce

Eltife, Kevin (R) - Chair
Creighton, Brandon (F) (R) - Vice Chair
Ellis, Rodney (D)
Huffines, Donald (F) (R)
Schwertner, Charles (R)
Seliger, Kel (R)
Taylor, Larry (R)
Watson, Kirk (D)
Whitmire, John (D)

Chairman Wayne Smith returns to lead the House Committee on Licensing and Administrative Procedures. Former Vice Chair John Kuempel remains on the committee but chairs another one so there is a new Vice Chair, returning committee member Roland Gutierrez. New members are Craig Goldman and Doug Miller.

The biggest change to the Senate Committee is, of course, the loss of our longtime friend Senator John Carona as Chair. His primary opponent, freshman Senator Donald Huffines, serves on the committee and it is chaired now by Sen. Kevin Eltife of Tyler who represents 16 counties in East Texas. Just as in the House committee, former Business and Commerce Vice Chair Larry Taylor remains on the committee but has his own chairmanship so was replaced by freshman Sen. Brandon Creighton. Other new committee members are Rodney Ellis, Charles Schwertner, and Kel Seliger.

As you know, Todd and I are working with the construction trades group on getting HVAC and/or the apprenticeship program into the high schools. The group met on February 6 and the consultant plans to have his report to us by mid-March. There have been bills filed which would increase the funding for career and technology education and allow for public-private partnerships for programs in the public schools. There is also momentum to increase funding for school counselors, particularly at the middle school level, to begin educating students on career options before high school.