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Interim Committee Charges

Speaker Phelan and Lt. Governor Patrick have assigned 54 pages of interim charges for study by the Committees of the House of Representatives and Senate respectively. The Committees will conduct hearings, prepare reports and draft legislation on these issues. These studies and recommendations will be reflected in many bills in the next legislative session. Notices will be posted on the TAC list serves as hearings are scheduled. Below are some of the most important issues for study by the House of Representatives and Senate.

HOUSE INTERIM CHARGES

Committee on Business & Industry

- Study workers' compensation claims involving public safety employees described by SB 22. This study should include an analysis of medical costs, return-to-work outcomes, utilization of care, satisfaction with care, and health-related functional outcomes.

Committee on Corrections

- For individuals in county jails and TDCJ facilities, or on community supervision or parole, examine:
 - The availability of behavioral health services; and
 - The current treatment and recovery options available for those who are experiencing withdrawal from drug or alcohol use.Make recommendations for best practices to address the needs of individuals requiring treatment. (*Joint charge with Committee on County Affairs*)

Committee on County Affairs

- Conduct active oversight of all associated rulemaking and other governmental actions taken to ensure the intended legislative outcome of all legislation, including the following:
 - HB 1545, relating to the continuation and functions of the Commission on Jail Standards;
 - HB 1906, relating to grants awarded to reimburse counties for the cost of monitoring defendants and victims in cases involving family violence; and

- HB 2073, relating to quarantine leave for fire fighters, peace officers, detention officers, and emergency medical technicians employed by, appointed by, or elected for a political subdivision.
- Study statutorily mandated service provided by sheriffs and constables and determine whether fee schedules are set at sufficient levels to allow for cost recovery without placing undue burdens on recipients of those services.

Committee on Criminal Jurisprudence

- Examine ways to increase the rate of compliance for court-ordered appearances, including new technologies that will facilitate contact with those ordered to appear. Consider the effectiveness of virtual appearances for certain offenses.
- Study the accessibility to counsel in cases involving an indigent defendant and make recommendations to improve access to counsel in these cases. Evaluate methods to improve the effectiveness of court-appointed counsel, caseload processing, caseload distribution, and the state's compliance with applicable appointment of counsel requirements.

Committee on Elections

- Conduct active oversight of all associated rulemaking and other governmental actions taken to ensure the intended legislative outcome of all legislation, including the following:
 - HB 1382, relating to the availability of certain information regarding early voting;
 - HB 1622, relating to reporting of early voting rosters; and
 - HB 3107, relating to election practices and procedures.
- Study the effectiveness of new poll watcher training required by SB 1 (87S2).
- Examine the reporting of election results following an election to determine the reasons for any delays and inaccuracies in the initial reporting of elections results. Make recommendations to ensure that election results are reported in a timely and accurate manner following the closing of the polls.

Committee on Homeland Security & Public Safety

- Conduct active oversight of all associated rulemaking and other governmental actions taken to ensure the intended legislative outcome of all legislation, including the following:
 - HB 3712, relating to the training of and policies for peace officers; and
 - SB 24, relating to the procedures required before a law enforcement agency hires a peace officer.

Committee on Human Services

- Monitor federal decisions that may impact the delivery and financial stability of the state's health programs, including: the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services' rescission of its prior approval of the State's 1115 Waiver, the state and federal negotiations of the Medicaid directed payment programs (including hospital finance methods), federal changes to the Medicaid Disproportionate Share Hospital Program and the exclusion of certain costs from the uncompensated care program authorized through the 1115 Waiver.

Committee on International Relations & Economic Development

- Examine current economic development incentive programs and identify opportunities to enhance job creation in Texas. Make recommendations to promote transparency and enhance effectiveness of such programs.

Committee on Juvenile Justice & Family Issues

- Explore ways to modernize the juvenile justice system for youth on probation and incarcerated youth. Review statewide resource allocation, including available staffing, and identify potential geographic limitations. Analyze the current gaps in county-level services and funding and make recommendations to address those gaps.
- Examine workforce issues at state and local juvenile correctional facilities and consider the state's incentives to recruit quality staff. Consider the geographic areas where specialty providers are concentrated and the viability of opening specialized facilities for the state's youth with the highest therapeutic need to relieve the state's current rural facilities struggling with staffing. Consider consistent investments the state can make in local probation to encourage their facilities to divert youth from the juvenile justice system.

Committee on Land & Resource Management

- Study the effect of governmental land-use regulations and controls on the availability and affordability of residential housing in Texas, including land use and zoning restrictions and related factors that slow or hinder housing development and improvement. Identify viable, free market solutions in lieu of governmental regulation to help Texas meet the current and future housing demands of a growing statewide population.

Committee on Licensing & Administrative Procedures

- Explore opportunities to strengthen and enforce laws to reduce illegal gaming and the proliferation of unlawful game rooms. Identify how cash-paying game rooms utilizing machines commonly known as "8-liners" have been allowed to proliferate and how the comptroller or other state agencies can assist law enforcement with ongoing investigations.

Committee on Pensions, Investments & Financial Services

- Conduct active oversight of all associated rulemaking and other governmental actions taken to ensure the intended legislative outcome of all legislation, including the following:
 - HJR 99, proposing a constitutional amendment authorizing a county to finance the development or redevelopment of transportation or infrastructure in unproductive, underdeveloped, or blighted areas in the county; authorizing the issuance of bonds and notes.

Committee on Public Health

- Conduct active oversight of all associated rulemaking and other governmental actions taken to ensure the intended legislative outcome of all legislation, including the following:
 - HB 4, relating to the provision and delivery of telemedicine and telehealth services.
- Assess ongoing challenges in the rural health care system and the impact of legislation and funding from the 87th regular and special sessions on strengthening rural health care and the sustainability of rural hospitals and health care providers. Evaluate federal regulations authorizing the creation of a Rural Emergency Hospital provider type and determine if promoting this type of facility could increase local access to care in rural areas of the state.

Committee on State Affairs

- Conduct active oversight of all associated rulemaking and other governmental actions taken to ensure the intended legislative outcome of all legislation, including the following:
 - HB 5, relating to the expansion of broadband services to rural areas.

Committee on Transportation

- Study current and future transportation needs and consider improvements to ensure that Texas is adequately planning for the state's population growth forecasts. Evaluate the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on transportation projects and investment decisions.
- Study the impacts that increased federal funding, formula changes, and new programs authorized in the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act will have on state transportation projects. Evaluate strategies to ensure Texas communities can maximize receipt of federal grant funds.
- Study policies impacting truck transportation, a key link in the supply-chain, including utilizing state property and right-of-way for natural gas fueling stations and truck parking, the potential shortage of drivers and sellers of commercial trucks, the shortage of truck parking options to accommodate hours of service regulations, and ways to reduce border crossing wait times. Examine regulatory and statutory impediments to connected vehicle and autonomous technologies aimed at improving the safety and efficiency of trucking in Texas.

Committee on Ways & Means

- Actively oversee associated rulemaking and agency actions to ensure the intended legislative outcome of all legislation, including the following:
 - HR 2404, relating to creating and maintaining a database of information regarding certain local economic development agreements;
 - SB 2 (86R – the Texas Property Tax Reform and Transparency Act of 2019) and related property tax reform legislation passed by the 87th Legislature, including HB 1869, HB 2429, HB 2723 and SB 1438; and
 - Legislation relating to reform of the property tax appraisal system, including HB 988, HB 2941, HB 3971, SB 63, SB 916, and SB 1919.
- Study and consider methods of providing additional property tax relief, including the use of \$3 billion in available American Rescue Plan Act funds that were held for future tax relief by the 87th Legislature, and other sources of revenue. Explore options to reduce business property tax burdens and options for limiting the growth of property tax bills.
- Study Texas' property tax appraisal system and make appropriate recommendations to improve the appraisal system. The study should include:
 - Assessing the accuracy of appraised values and operational effectiveness of appraisal districts;
 - Evaluating methods of selecting chief appraisers, appraisal review boards, and appraisal district directors; and
 - Evaluating existing appraisal protections for taxpayers and ease of taxpayer participation in the appraisal process.
- Conduct a comprehensive review of the impact of not renewing Chapter 313, Tax Code. Evaluate tax incentives offered by other states and make recommendations for incentivizing manufacturers and other capital-intensive businesses to locate to Texas.
- Evaluate the impact of shifting to destination sourcing for local sales and use tax purposes, including the benefits of reduced taxpayer confusion. Monitor the implementation of the Comptroller's amendments to 34 Tx. Admin. Code §3.334, relating to local sales and use taxes, and the Comptroller's Sales Tax Rate Locator. Make recommendations for legislation to improve Texas' local sales and use tax sourcing.

SENATE INTERIM CHARGES

Business and Commerce Committee

- **Cybersecurity:** Review current state and federal laws regarding cybersecurity protections and requirements for local governments, state agencies, and critical industries of our state. Make recommendations for legislation to improve resilience and protection against cybersecurity attacks and ensure the privacy protection of the citizens of Texas.

Criminal Justice Committee

- **Re-entry Programs for Inmates:** Review current offender re-entry programs provided by the Texas Department of Criminal Justice and county jails, and identify barriers to their success. Make recommendations to enhance successful programs to ensure adequate resources and support for released offenders.
- **Criminal Case Backlogs:** Evaluate the current backlog of criminal cases. Consider and recommend ways to reduce delays and ensure timely resolution of cases, including an examination of methods developed by district attorneys, judges, and court administrators.
- **Public Safety:** Examine the recent Harris County release from custody of hundreds of criminal defendants onto the streets without bond or review by a magistrate. Identify what caused this threat to public safety in Harris County and determine if it has occurred in any other counties in Texas. Make recommendations to ensure criminal defendants are timely brought before a magistrate for probable cause hearings and bond hearings, and that appropriate bond is set.

Education Committee

- **Local Government Exclusion:** Investigate how some cities and counties are prohibiting the expansion of charter schools through local ordinances. Make recommendations to ensure the fair and equitable treatment of charter schools and independent school districts.

Finance Committee

- **Federal Funds:** Report on the state use of federal COVID-19 relief funds provided under the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act, Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act, the American Rescue Plan Act, Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Acts, and similar federal legislation. Examine local use of federal relief funding.
- **Property Tax Relief:** Examine and recommend ways to reduce Texans' property tax burden. Review and report on proposals to use or dedicate state revenues in excess of the state spending limit to eliminate the school district maintenance and operations property tax.
- **Inflation:** Review and report on the impact of inflation on units of local governments' revenue collections and property taxpayers' tax bills, including the homestead exemption.
- **Bail Bond Reform:** Monitor the implementation of recent bail bond reform legislation along with its economic impact on the judicial and correctional system. Assess any barriers to implementation, the law's effect on pretrial release and jail populations, and ways to further promote public safety and efficiency.

- **Mental Health Delivery:** Examine the state mental health service delivery system. Study the state's Comprehensive Plan for State-Funded Inpatient Mental Health Services and the Statewide Behavioral Health Strategic Plan and evaluate the existing state investments in mental health services and state hospital capacity. Review current forensic and civil mental health service waitlists, and recommend ways to improve coordination and outcomes to reduce waitlists. Explore and report on options for additional mental health service capacity, including building state hospitals in the Panhandle and Rio Grande Valley areas.

Local Government Committee

- **Property Tax Reform:** Review the effect of Senate Bill 2 (86th Legislature), the Texas Property Tax Reform and Transparency Act of 2019, and related legislation passed by the 87th Legislature. Make recommendations for further property tax reform and relief.
- **Appraisal Reform:** Review the implementation of Senate Bill 63, House Bill 988, and other related legislation passed by the 87th Legislature. Make recommendations to ensure appraisal guidelines are effective and taxpayers have enforcement mechanisms.
- **Bond Elections:** Review and report on voter participation and bond election result differences between November and May elections. Make recommendations for improved voter turnout, increased election efficiencies, and better accountability of local debt.
- **Taxpayer Funded Lobbying:** Study how governmental entities use public funds for political lobbying purposes. Examine what types of governmental entities use public funds for lobbying purposes and what level of transparency is available to the public. Make recommendations to protect taxpayers from paying for lobbyists who may not represent the taxpayers' interests.
- **Efficiency Audits:** Study the concept of efficiency audits for cities, counties and special purpose districts and under what circumstances they should be performed. Evaluate whether efficiency audits provide Texans tools to combat wasteful government spending and report whether they are needed before local government tax ratification elections.
- **Ballot Language:** Study the development of the language used for constitutional amendment and local ballot propositions. Recommend changes to make ballot propositions more easily understood by voters.

Natural Resources and Economic Development Committee

- **Economic Development Programs:** Review the programs in Chapters 380 and 381 of the Local Government Code. Consider the benefits of each program in generating economic development. Make recommendations for improvements to Chapters 380 and 381 to increase transparency and accountability and the effectiveness of the programs.

State Affairs Committee

- **Public Safety:** Monitor the impact of Senate Bill 23 (87th Legislature), the Stop Local Police Defunding bill, to ensure that counties are not reducing the budgets of law enforcement divisions and that effective and efficient enforcement mechanisms are in place. Make recommendations to further close any loopholes in the law.