

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE – MARCH 1, 2021

COMING UP THIS WEEK

- Both the House and Senate will resume full-floor sessions beginning on Tues., March 2.
- The House Public Education Committee will meet on [Tues., March 2 at 8:00am](#) for an organizational meeting and to hear invited testimony (Commissioner Mike Morath).
- View the calendar for **House** [COMMITTEE HEARINGS here](#).
- **Senate** committee hearings can be found [here](#).

IN THE NEWS

The House began referring bills to committees on Thurs., Feb. 25; the Senate has NOT yet referred any bills to a committee (although the Senate Finance committee is meeting several times a week to work on the budget – SB 1). As a legislator, if your bill is referred to a committee, it is the first [step to becoming law](#). It means a bill is eligible to be heard/debated in the committee to which it is assigned. Bills are not heard in any specific order, and just because a bill was referred to a committee does not mean it will be scheduled for a hearing – that is up to the chairman of the committee.

On Feb. 25, the [Texas Tribune interviewed Public Education Chairman Harold Dutton](#) who, regarding extending the **hold harmless*** provision, said, “We are going to get that done.” He indicated that the hold harmless funding for the remainder of the school year would come via legislation but that it will likely tie hold harmless funding to finding kids in schools in some way.

***Hold harmless** guarantees each **school** district receives no fewer state **education** dollars than it received the previous year—regardless of changes in district enrollment.

Commissioner Mike Morath, who spoke at the Richardson Chamber Legislative Day on Feb. 24, said that information would be coming very soon about extending the hold harmless provision. He also indicated that the state had enough money to extend the provision, giving hope to educators listening to his presentation.

Also on Feb. 24, Chairman Burrows (R-Lubbock) filed HB 3 – not to be confused with last session’s (86th) HB 3. [Burrows’s HB 3](#) is related “to state and local government responses to a pandemic disaster.” **What is especially notable about this is the language that calls for school districts to send money to private providers “if the district or charter school does not offer full-time in-person education for the student” during a pandemic.**

On Tues., Feb. 23, **Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick announced his top 31 priorities** for the 2021 Legislative Session. Of the 31 priorities, three relate to specifically to education. The **top 10** priorities are listed below along with other education-related priorities. As of this date, only five bills to meet these priorities have been filed: SB 1, 11, 16, 18 and 31.

- Senate Bill 1 – The State Budget
- Senate Bill 2 – ERCOT Reform
- Senate Bill 3 – Power Grid Stability
- Senate Bill 4 – Star Spangled Banner Protection Act
- Senate Bill 5 – Statewide Broadband Access**
- Senate Bill 6 – Pandemic Liability Protection Act
- Senate Bill 7 – Election & Ballot Security

Senate Bill 8 – The Heartbeat Bill

Senate Bill 9 – Abortion Ban Trigger

Senate Bill 10 – Stop Taxpayer Funded Lobbying

Senate Bill 27 – Expanding Virtual Learning Options

Senate Bill 28 – Charter School Equity Act

Both the Senate Finance Committee and the House Appropriations Committee heard testimony last week from the Legislative Budget Board and Education Commissioner Mike Morath regarding Article III, Public Education/TEA. A video of the hearings can be found [here](#) (Senate) and [here](#) (House).

INCREASING PROPERTY VALUES ARE HELPING THE STATE'S BOTTOM LINE:

*Both the House and Senate budget proposals fully fund House Bill 3. In addition, the committees heard an explanation from the LBB regarding the **\$5.4 billion in savings** realized by the State in the 20-21 biennium. Of that \$5.4 billion, **\$1.3 billion** comes from higher than expected **recapture** payments, **\$1.5 billion** comes from **higher than anticipated property values**/property tax collections, and **\$1.2 billion** comes from the supplanting state funds with federal **CARES Act** dollars.*