



# Texas Short Line & Regional Railroad Association

TSLRRRA Legislative Update

February 24, 2021

Jeff Van Schaick, Chair

## **Election Update**

Republican unsurprisingly retained the trifecta in the state legislature holding both chambers, as well as continuing to hold the Governor's office. It's been that way since 2003.

Governor Greg Abbott – Up for reelection in 2022. No Gubernatorial Term Limits so he is running for a 3<sup>rd</sup> term. A few notable names who may challenge: Alan West, Dan Crenshaw, Ken Paxton, Joe Straus (former speaker).

Senate Leader – Lt. Gov continues to hold the reins in the Senate. 18 R and 13 D

House Speaker – Dade Phalen – New speaker replacing Dennis Bonnen. District is east of Houston surrounding Beaumont with parts of Orange and Port Arthur. 82 R and 67 D.

## **Legislative Timeline:**

**November 3, 2020:** General election for federal, state, and county officers

**November 9, 2020:** Bill prefilings begins

**January 12, 2021:** 87th Legislature convenes at noon

**March 12, 2021:** 60-day bill filing deadline

**May 31, 2021:** Adjournment sine die

**June 20, 2021:** Post-session 20-day deadline for Governor to sign or veto

**August 30, 2021:** Effective date (91st day after adjournment)

## **Abbott's State of the State – 5 emergency items**

1. Expanding Broadband Access
2. Reallocation of police funding
3. Damon Allen Act dealing with the flawed bail system
4. Election integrity
5. COVID business relief

## **Redistricting**

The Texas Legislature has a fixed number of seats in both houses — 31 in the Senate and 150 in the House. Texas' legislative districts change every 10 years, but the total number of lawmakers doesn't. Congress reapportions to states based on population movement.



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If Texas senate or house districts are not enacted during the first regular session following the publication of the decennial census, the Texas Constitution requires that the Legislative Redistricting Board (LRB), a five-member body of state officials including the lieutenant governor and speaker of the house, meet and adopt its own plan. The LRB has jurisdiction only in the months immediately following that regular session. If the legislature and LRB fail to adopt a state senate or state house plan, a court will likely issue a plan to fill the void.

## **Budget**

Texas lawmakers will enter the legislative session this week with an estimated \$112.5 billion available to allocate for general-purpose spending in the next two-year state budget, a number that's down slightly from the current budget but is significantly higher than what was estimated this summer when the coronavirus began to devastate the economy. Hegar also announced a nearly \$1 billion deficit for the current state budget that lawmakers must make up, a significantly smaller shortfall than the \$4.6 billion one.

## **TSLRRA Agenda**

Working with TRA on educational campaign to legislature.

- Fact sheets

TSLRRA Goal in the Future: We haven't given up on finding a funding source for short lines. Between the folks on the phone and around the country we have been successful in finding or creating new sources of funding in a half dozen states in the last 2 years including KS, OK, OR, CA, GA, AL, etc. Will continue to work to find and create sources of funding.

## **Crew Size**

Yvonne Davis bill filed once again. We aren't likely to see it go anywhere.