

Interim Committee Charges
Texas House of Representatives
84th Legislature



Speaker Joe Straus
November 2015

House Committee on Environmental Regulation

1. Review the varied regulatory schemes for household hazardous waste disposal and recommend if more uniform guidelines could improve legal disposal habits. Determine any opportunities or incentives for consumers and retailers that would promote proper hazardous waste disposal in a cost-effective manner.
2. Review the compliance practices of surface water management entities with state rules regarding the aesthetic condition of waterways and the prevention or removal of human-made floating trash and debris. Provide recommendations on how state and local authorities could coordinate to better achieve these goals.
3. Monitor initiatives at the local level to regulate environmental issues. Consider if legislative changes are needed to resolve ambiguous regulations regarding the priority of state or local authority.
4. Study the effectiveness of current state programs to address scrap tire management and disposal methods, including the incidence of scrap tires and rubber debris on roadways and in watercourses. Include analysis of disposal fee collection and management as well as local funding allocations. Provide incentive or enforcement recommendations for ongoing clean-up efforts, abatement of identified tire dump sites, and means of ensuring accurate record keeping and reporting.
5. Conduct legislative oversight and monitoring of the agencies and programs under the committee's jurisdiction and the implementation of relevant legislation passed by the 84th Legislature. In conducting this oversight, the committee should:
 - a. consider any reforms to state agencies to make them more responsive to Texas taxpayers and citizens;
 - b. identify issues regarding the agency or its governance that may be appropriate to investigate, improve, remedy, or eliminate;
 - c. determine whether an agency is operating in a transparent and efficient manner;
 - d. identify opportunities to streamline programs and services while maintaining the mission of the agency and its programs; and
 - e. monitor implementation of major environmental regulation legislation passed by the 84th Legislature, including recent reforms that provide for streamlined environmental permitting.

House Committee on Natural Resources

1. Examine the regional and state water planning processes, with emphasis on the following:
 - a. the integration of HB 4 (83R);
 - b. the appropriate role of the state in ensuring that the process both supports regional goals and priorities and the water needs of the state as a whole, and how the state might encourage strategies to benefit multiple regions;
 - c. the structure and operation of the regional planning groups;
 - d. the interaction between the planning process and groundwater management;
 - e. whether the "drought of record" remains the appropriate benchmark for planning; and
 - f. any impediments to meeting the conservation, agricultural, and rural project goals set by HB 4 (83R), and possible new approaches to help meet these goals.
2. Evaluate the status of water markets in Texas and the potential benefits and challenges of expanded markets for water. Include an evaluation of greater interconnections between water systems through both engineered and natural infrastructure. Examine opportunities for incentives from areas receiving water supplies to areas providing those supplies that could benefit each area and the state as a whole.
3. Analyze the factors contributing to freshwater loss in the state, including evaporation, excess flows into the Gulf of Mexico, and infrastructure inefficiencies, and examine techniques to prevent such losses, including aquifer storage and recovery, off-channel storage, and infrastructure enhancements.
4. Evaluate the progress of seawater desalination projects near the Texas coast as a means of increasing water supplies and reducing strain on existing supplies, building on the work of the Joint Interim Committee to Study Water Desalination (83rd session). Examine the viability of the use of public-private partnerships and of methods by which the state might facilitate such a project.
5. Monitor the use of funds made available to Texas in relation to the 2010 Deepwater Horizon oil spill. Consider approaches to maximize the benefit of these funds for the long-term stability of the coastal economy and ecosystems.

6. Evaluate the status of legislation to encourage joint groundwater planning, including HB 200 (84R), and monitor ongoing legal developments concerning ownership and access to groundwater and the impact of these developments on property rights and groundwater management.
7. Determine the sources of water used by Texans in the production of food and fiber, and examine current water delivery methods and water conservation goals for agricultural use. Evaluate whether there are more efficient and effective water-usage management practices that could be employed in the agricultural industry, and determine the impact of crop insurance requirements on producers. *(Joint charge with the House Committee on Agriculture & Livestock)*
8. Determine if sufficient safety standards exist to protect groundwater contamination from disposal and injection wells. *(Joint charge with the House Committee on Energy Resources)*
9. Conduct legislative oversight and monitoring of the agencies and programs under the committee's jurisdiction and the implementation of relevant legislation passed by the 84th Legislature. In conducting this oversight, the committee should:
 - a. consider any reforms to state agencies to make them more responsive to Texas taxpayers and citizens;
 - b. identify issues regarding the agency or its governance that may be appropriate to investigate, improve, remedy, or eliminate;
 - c. determine whether an agency is operating in a transparent and efficient manner;
 - d. identify opportunities to streamline programs and services while maintaining the mission of the agency and its programs; and
 - e. review the surface water permitting process in Texas, including previous legislative attempts to modify the process, and assess the potential effects of these and other changes.