



# My five cents...

A weekly column from Sen. Robert Nichols  
by Sen. Robert Nichols, Senate District 3

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With session over, there's time to reflect on what happened toward the end of session and the new laws the legislature passed over the past 140 days.

Here are five things happening around your state:

## 1. Legislature adjourns Sine Die

The 87<sup>th</sup> Legislative session has ended and this week both chambers adjourned Sine Die. In total, the House and Senate filed 7,025 bills combined. Of those, the House filed 4,834 bills and the Senate filed 2,191 bills. However, only 1,081 bills from both the House and Senate were sent to the Governor. Of the bills sent to the Governor, I authored or primarily sponsored 29 of them. I'm immensely proud of the work we accomplished this session on behalf of the people of East Texas and I look forward to getting back to the district to discuss this session's accomplishments.

## 2. Potential special sessions on the horizon

Though the legislature passed a lot of good bills this session, anticipate having at least one, but likely two, special sessions this fall. The Governor announced he will call the legislature back to work on election security and bail reform, two emergency items that didn't pass this year. The Governor also discussed a line-item veto of Article X of the budget, which funds the legislative branch. If that happens, funding for the Legislature would run out on September 1 and we would need to reconvene before then to re-appropriate those funds.

The most complicated process we'll undertake this fall is redistricting. The data we need to start the process will arrive by August 16, according to the Census Bureau. The complete data toolkit will arrive sometime before September 30. After that data is received, the process of redrawing district lines for the State House, State Senate, US Congress, and State Board of Education can begin.

## 3. House Bill 19 aims at curbing trucking litigation

During this session, both chambers passed House Bill 19, authored by Representative Jeff Leach and sponsored by Senator Larry Taylor. The bill is aimed at cutting down on frivolous lawsuits in the trucking industry and other commercial vehicles. The bill would create a two-step process for litigation. First, the driver of the commercial vehicle would have to be proven liable in court for the accident. After that, the trial could proceed to a second phase where the injured party could bring a case against the driver's employer. Damages would be assessed at that point. This bill aims to cut down on unjust and excessive lawsuits. I was proud to co-sponsor this bill in the Senate.

#### **4. Multiple bills signed to prevent defunding the police**

Governor Abbott signed four bills in the past week that stop cities from defunding the police and enhance penalties for crimes that interfere with police work. Those four bills include:

- House Bill 9 - authored by Representative Stephanie Klick and sponsored by Senator Donna Campbell. The bill would increase the penalty for knowingly blocking an emergency vehicle or obstructing access to a hospital or health care facility. The penalty would be a state jail felony, which carries up to two years in jail and a fine of up to \$10,000.
- House Bill 1900 – authored by Representative Craig Goldman and sponsored by Senator Joan Huffman. The bill would freeze property tax revenue for larger cities that defund the police while also preventing those cities from annexing new land and allowing areas that had been annexed in the previous 30 years to vote to dis-annex.
- House Bill 2366 – authored by Representative Brad Buckley and sponsored by Senator Bryan Hughes. This bill enhances penalties for using laser pointers against police or using fireworks to harm or obstruct police.
- Senate Bill 23 – authored by Senator Joan Huffman and sponsored by Representative Tom Oliverson. This bill would require that in the state's largest counties, voters would get the opportunity to vote on reductions in law enforcement budgets. If the measure is rejected and the county still reduces funding, the county's property tax revenue would be frozen.

#### **5. Legislature passes bill to ban teaching tenants of Critical Race Theory**

House Bill 3979 was sent to the Governor in the last few weeks of session. This bill requires a diverse list of historical figures and documents for students to study in social studies curriculum. Importantly, this bill also includes a ban on teaching that one race or sex is inherently superior to another or that any individual by virtue of their race or sex is inherently racist, sexist, or oppressive. This important legislation is now heading to the Governor's desk.

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