



SENATOR PAUL BETTENCOURT

DISTRICT 7

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Senator Bettencourt Insists on Fraud Protection Tools to Stop Statewide Registration and Title System Thefts

Six county Tax Assessor-Collectors arrested in Texas recently for defrauding TxDMV and the public

AUSTIN – Today at the Senate Finance Committee hearing chaired by Senator Jane Nelson (R-Flower Mound), Senator Paul Bettencourt (R-Houston) questioned Texas Department of Motor Vehicles Executive Director Whitney Brewster on the status of actual fraud detection software and systems in the state's Registration and Title System (RTS). At least 10 county tax offices and state regional centers have been affected by these thefts over the last two years per the testimony of TxDMV Executive Director Brewster.

"Having six Tax Assessor-Collectors arrested for registration and title fraud across the state in the last year is appalling to say the least," Senator Bettencourt said.

"Now that the Texas Department of Motor Vehicles has upgraded and modernized the old Registration and Title System (RTS) mainframe to a modern server system, fraud detection tools must be developed to stop elected tax assessors and/or their employees from stealing and defrauding public monies from the state and counties," he added.

In testimony today, Tax Assessor-Collectors in Austin, Cameron, Starr, Milam, Leon, Van Zandt were arrested in the last year and other state and county offices have had employees arrested as well.

"It's an epidemic. There is just too much money changing hands at window counters all across the state on titles and registrations to ignore this problem any longer," Senator Bettencourt added. **"A lot of these are cash transactions that can be cancelled by the lack of RTS fraud tools, and it has to stop."**

As a tax assessor-collector in Harris County for a decade, Senator Bettencourt directed his Harris County tax office executive director and office staff at the time to develop fraud detection software programs to be **"bolted onto"** the RTS system that is still in service 15 years later that prevents similar theft in RTS.

"It is time that the Texas Department of Motor Vehicles adopt similar tools to prevent this epidemic of thefts at tax offices around the state," he requested of the TxDMV executive director during testimony.

In response, Commissioner Brewster said this development of anti-fraud tools is being done in the base budget request of the department. Senator Bettencourt expects to follow this software development closely in the legislative session.

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