Texas Home and Business Finally To Catch a Break on Property Tax Bills!
On "Tax Day" 2019, Senate Bill 2 By Bettencourt Roars Out of Texas Senate
Property Tax Reform and Relief Passed Out of Senate 18-12-1

Austin, Texas - The Texas Senate, under the leadership of Lt. Governor Dan Patrick (R-Texas), took a strong stand for Texas taxpayers by passing Senate Bill 2 (authored by Senator Bettencourt (R-Houston)), the Texas Property Tax Reform and Relief Bill of 2019. All 19 Republicans voted to bring the bill to the floor, after Lt. Governor Patrick inclined he would use existing rules to move blocker bills for SB2 to be heard. This bill passed to the House with a vote of 18-12-1 with Senator Eddie Lucio (D-McAllen) present not voting.

"While I highly value and respect my local officials and the work that they do, I will ultimately vote for the taxpayers, so that they, our true bosses, <u>get to keep a little piece of the Texas sky</u>," said Senator Flores. **"They worked hard for it,"** he added. Senator Bettencourt agreed, **"SB2 helps all taxpayers in Texas do this."**

Several amendments were offered during the floor debate, such as an amendment added by Senator Flores (R-Pleasanton) which would give taxing jurisdictions credit for indigent defense costs. In one notable exchange, Senator Beverly Powell (D-Burleson) read a letter from the Mayor of Fort Worth noting that if SB2 were passed, the City would face a $4 million shortfall. Senator Bettencourt highlighted that Fort Worth has raised their levy by over $113 million in just the last four years. **"This is where my teddy bear becomes a grizzly bear…not at you, but at the information you have been provided, because it is just false,"** he added. **"Four million dollars is 0.2% of the budget and a miniscule fraction of the City of Fort Worth property tax increases."**

"This doesn't have to be a partisan issue, because this is a everybody pays issue! I don't want people to pay 55% more money in 5 years. Its just unsustainable," said Senator Bettencourt . **"People just want to stay in their homes and they just want to have a business,"** he continued.

As passed, Senate Bill 2 will establish a new rollback rate for Cities, Counties, and Special Districts of 3.5% and school districts will have a 2.5% rollback rate. A taxing jurisdiction would be required to get voter approval in an automatic November election to go over this rollback rate. The current roll back rate stands at 8% and has remained unchanged since 1981, despite dramatic changes to the inflation rate. In debate on the floor, Senator Kelly Hancock (R-North Richland Hills) noted that the original Senator who authored the bill that raised the rollback rate to 8% in 1981 noted this *"triggering mechanism"* should be revisited as inflation rates changed. Another amendment by Senator Watson (D-Austin) which sought to remove schools from the bill was defeated. **"School property tax relief <u>must </u>be part of any reform,"** said Senator Bettencourt.

In a weekend statement showing his resolve on the issue, Lt. Governor Patrick stated, **"I respect our Senate rules, but I do not intend to let a procedural motion stop the Senate from passing this important bill. The public doesn't care about our procedural rules. They want tax relief and they deserve it. Time is running out on our session."** After 19 Republicans voted to allow the bill to be heard, one joined 11 Democrats in voting no on SB2 with one present voting.

"We've had this rollback rate at 8% for 38 years and because of that we have put home and business owners at risk, it's well past time." said Senator Bettencourt on his closing remarks before SB2 was sent to the House.

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