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Four Indicted by Brooks County Grand Jury for Voter Fraud Committed During 2006 Primary
Duval County residents charged with possessing ballots belonging to others

FALFURRIAS – Four Duval County residents today were indicted by a Brooks County grand jury and charged with illegally handling ballot applications and mail-in ballots that belonged to other voters during the 2006 primary election.

The charge of possessing and handling the ballot of another person is a Class B misdemeanor, a violation of the Texas Election Code. The four San Diego residents indicted in Brooks County today were Lydia Molina, 70; Maria “Kena” Soriano, 71; Elva Lazo, 62; and Maria Trigo, 55. They were taken into custody today in Duval County.

The defendants allegedly delivered mail-in ballot applications to numerous residents in Duval County, many of whom were ineligible to vote by mail. Only those who are disabled, age 65 and above, or expect to be out of the county during an election are eligible to vote by mail. The completed ballot applications mailed to the voter registrar by the defendants typically included a box check-marked to indicate many of the voters were “disabled” when they were not.

The voter registrar’s office then mailed the actual ballots to the residents. Once the ballots were completed by the residents, the defendants allegedly retrieved these and mailed them to the registrar to be counted without identifying themselves on the carrier envelope.

To protect voters who rely on others to help them during elections, Texas law requires that those who provide assistance properly identify themselves on carrier envelopes used to transmit mail-in ballots. The defendants did not provide their names, addresses and signatures on these envelopes as required. A Class B misdemeanor violation of the Election Code can result in up to 180 days jail, a maximum $2,000 fine, or both.

Last June, several Starr and Hidalgo County residents were also indicted in Brooks County on various charges of voter fraud for their conduct during the 2006 election cycle. A grand jury returned felony indictments against the defendants in an investigation that began with a complaint filed by Starr County Elections Administrator. That case is ongoing.

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
March 12, 2012

U.S. Department of Justice Refuses Approval of Photo Identification Law for Texas Voters

AUSTIN, TX – The United States Department of Justice today refused to approve Senate Bill 14, passed by the Texas Legislature and signed into law in 2011 for the purpose of voter fraud prevention. SB 14 requires voters in Texas to provide certain government issued photo identification when voting to help ensure positive identification at the polls.

“The Dept. of Justice’s decision is extremely disappointing, especially since the data they demanded came from matching two separate data sets never designed to be matched, and their agency was warned that matches from these data sets would be misleading,” said Secretary of State Hope Andrade. “My office will continue working with the Texas Attorney General’s Office in seeking to implement the will of the citizens of Texas, as enacted by our duly elected representatives in the Texas Legislature.”

As a result of the Dept. of Justice’s refusal to allow implementation of SB 14, current law pertaining to approved documentation required for voting, meaning a Texas Voter Registration Card, will apply in the May 12, 2012 Uniform Election and the May 29, 2012 Primary Elections.

Approved documentation in addition to, or in lieu of a voter registration card includes at least one of the following:

- A driver’s license or personal identification card issued to you by the Texas Department of Public Safety. You may also bring a similar document issued to you by an agency of another state, even if the license or card has expired;

- A form of identification that contains your photograph and establishes your identity;

- A birth certificate or other document confirming birth that is admissible in a court of law and establishes the person’s identity;

- Your United States citizenship papers;

(more)
• Your United States passport;

• Official mail addressed to you by a governmental entity; or

• A copy of a current utility bill, bank statement, government check, paycheck, or other government document that shows your name and address.

For additional voter information, please visit www.VoteTexas.gov.

# # #
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND LIVESTOCK

1. Monitor the development and implementation of the 2007 Farm Bill and determine the impact of the legislation on Texas agricultural producers.

2. Evaluate preparedness of relevant agriculture-related agencies to respond effectively to animal and plant disease threats.

3. Study and evaluate the feasibility and potential economic impact of biofuel production from alternative feedstocks such as biomass, waste oils, and processed animal fats.

4. Study the impact on the equine industry due to increased competition from other states as it relates to larger purses in equine competitions.

5. Examine the opportunities for increased economic development funding in rural Texas.

6. Monitor the agencies and programs under the committee's jurisdiction.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

1. As an oversight of all state agencies, assess all performance measures, operating budgets, budget transfers, and changes in full-time equivalents, major contracts, litigation, and debt financing, including assessing all rider provisions and evaluating budget structure effectiveness.

2. Examine alternative spending limit methodologies found among the various states as they impact state and local spending and recommend potential changes to the Texas budget process to bring long-term, innovative strategies to control costs of major governmental programs.

3. Evaluate the process by which costs of statutory changes are determined and formalize a process by which contingency appropriations are provided and enhance the communication between standing committees and the appropriations committee.

4. Study state employee compensation and benefit packages and recommend alternatives designed to attract and retain superior management personnel and other areas of potential professional shortages. Review executive director salaries, classification schedules, merit and bonus pay, pay ranges, and agency flexibility.

5. With regard to the state's health-related institutions, research deficiencies with disproportionate share and upper payment limit methodologies; research collaboration with general academic institutions and between health-related institutions; review funding streams for University of Texas Medical Branch (UTMB), focusing on the issue of the need for reimbursement by counties using UTMB for higher levels of indigent care; and study the methodology used to fund the state's two mission specific institutions.

6. Comprehensively review Medicaid provider reimbursement rate methodologies,
including the impact of factors such as infrastructure concerns, federal minimum wage changes, and cost reports. The review should also address health care concerns such as access to care, quality of care, and value. Any recommendations should take into account current rate increases impacting the next fiscal year.

7. Research strategies to ensure that the state will meet more stringent federal work requirements to avoid the loss of critical federal funds. Include a comparison of exemptions from work requirements provided by Texas as opposed to other states.

8. Examine settlement of federal and state lawsuits against Harris County Hospital District for false claims in the state Medicaid program. Recommend any measures needed to ensure compliance of similar entities with rules and regulations of taxpayer-funded programs.

9. Assess the potential for clinical and economic benefits of the use of state funds for current and increased adult stem cell research. Report on the collection and availability of cord blood stem cells for treatments and research in Texas. Review the current state of basic and clinical research using available types of adult stem cells.

10. Review the Existing Debt Allotment and the Instructional Facilities Allotment to determine whether there is an ongoing need for two distinct programs.

11. Study the funding needs for Adult Basic Education and the Texas Education Agency's effectiveness in running this program.

12. Explore the spreading or "smoothing" of state payments to school districts throughout the year to better manage the state's cash flow.

13. Monitor and examine the implementation of funding appropriated during the 80th Legislature to the Texas Youth Commission, Juvenile Probation Commission, Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ), and Correctional Managed Health Care Committee.

14. Examine regulatory agencies and programs to consider aspects such as call center consolidation, strategies to allow access to greater revenue generated, and communication of best practice alternatives across agency lines.

15. Analyze the current financial condition of the Texas Department of Transportation including but not limited to cash in bank, encumbered funds, use of bond capacity and projected needs for various funds allocated to the Texas Department of Transportation and their appropriation for major projects over the last five years. This analysis should include a review of revenues diverted from the State Highway Fund for non-transportation applications. Examine alternative sources of revenue to sustain future transportation needs.

16. Study the state's current and long-range need for physicians, dentists, nurses, allied health and long-term care professionals. Make recommendations regarding strategies related to both geographic distribution and barriers to recruitment of high-need professions, especially for primary care providers and long-term care professionals. (Joint Interim Charge with the House Committees on Border and International Affairs and Public Health)

17. Examine activities at the Texas Medical Board as they relate to the protection of
public health and the practice of medicine, and the status of implementation requirements established by HB 1973, 80th Legislature, Regular Session. The committees should consider any findings by the Texas Sunset Commission. (Joint Interim Charge with the House Committee on Public Health)

18. Assess the relationship between mental illness and criminal behavior and offer reforms needed to address the proliferation of mental illness in the adult and juvenile criminal justice systems. This review should include an examination of data sharing between criminal justice and health and human services agencies, proper screening, assessments, treatment, discharge planning, post-release supervision, and community services. (Joint Interim Charge with the House Committee on Corrections)

19. Review and research the availability, coordination, efficiency, and allocation of substance abuse treatment resources for probationers, pretrial defendants, people in the custody of the TDCJ, and parolees. This review should include methods to reduce and improve current assessments, training, and referring protocols and the identification of any barriers that may be impeding all of the above. (Joint Interim Charge with the House Committee on Corrections)

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON BORDER AND INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

1. Study the establishment of a citizen trade policy commission and an office of trade development.

2. Review changes in border security and immigration on the state and federal level. (Joint Interim Charge with the House Committee on State Affairs)

3. Study the state's current and long-range need for physicians, dentists, nurses, and other allied health and long-term care professionals. Make recommendations regarding strategies related to both geographic distribution and barriers to recruitment of high-need professions, especially for primary care providers and long-term care professionals. (Joint Interim Charge with the House Committees on Appropriations and Public Health)

4. Monitor the agencies and programs under the committee's jurisdiction.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY

1. Study the problem of identity theft and the impact of identity theft legislation enacted in recent legislative sessions. Examine the problem of electronic data breaches, as well as the feasibility of requiring periodic destruction of records for businesses and state entities to limit exposure to identity theft. Examine the issue of personal information contained in publicly available government records. Recommend any legislative changes needed to combat the problem.

2. Study Articles 2 and 2A of the Uniform Commercial Code (UCC) and consider amending Chapters 2 and 2A of the Business and Commerce Code to conform with recent amendments to the UCC.

3. Study the original purposes, development, and current need for the Subsequent Injury Fund and determine whether this fund should be continued or altered.

4. Study the problem of digital piracy and make recommendations for legislative
changes to address the problem facing movie producers and distributors, retailers, book publishers, the music industry, universities, and other copyright holders of creative content. This review should include an examination of the impact on state and local government sales tax revenues.

5. Monitor the Texas workers' compensation system, and the continued implementation of the reforms of HB 7, 79th Legislature, Regular Session, by the Texas Department of Insurance and other state agencies. Specifically evaluate the recent decision by the Texas Supreme Court in Entergy v. Summers in terms of its impact on the system. (Joint Interim Charge with the House Committee on Insurance)

6. Monitor the agencies and programs under the committee's jurisdiction.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON CIVIL PRACTICES

1. Study the cumulative effects of Texas civil justice reforms enacted since 2003, with particular attention toward effects on Texas job creation, judicial efficiency, medical access, and medical malpractice insurance rates.

2. Examine the effect on our tort system of meritless litigation filed in Texas, especially meritless litigation designed to harass Texans or intimidate Texans from exercising their rights. Consider the law in other states and consider whether Texas law should be amended to allow greater recourse, such as recovery of costs and other financial penalties, to reduce such litigation.

3. Monitor the effect of multiple plaintiff trials in tort cases, other than those concerning asbestos and silica, and recommend any statutory changes needed to increase judicial efficiency and ensure access to the courts for all plaintiffs.

4. Examine whether health care professionals are adequately protected from liability when rendering charitable care either in emergency situations or as part of a charitable preventive care program.

5. Monitor the agencies and programs under the committee's jurisdiction.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON CORRECTIONS

1. Explore the use of technology practices that improve efficiency, safety, and coordination of criminal justice activities on the state, local, and county levels.

2. Consider new strategies for meeting prisoner reentry challenges in Texas, including the evaluation of programs with documented success. This review should include the availability of housing and occupational barriers.

3. Provide a comprehensive analysis and study of the Texas state jail system, including original intent for use, sentencing guidelines, and effectiveness. Develop suggestions for changes and improvements in the state jail system.

4. Study the organizational structure of the Texas Youth Commission and the Texas Juvenile Probation Commission to determine if the current system is effectively and efficiently addressing the needs of the juvenile justice system in conjunction with the sunset review of these agencies. (Joint Interim Charge with the House Committee on Juvenile Justice and Family Issues)
5. Study Disciplinary Alternative Education Programs and Juvenile Justice
Alternative Education Programs, including referral rates, age of students, whether
parents have sufficient recourse to challenge a placement, funding, and course
requirements. (Joint Interim Charge with the House Committee on Juvenile
Justice and Family Issues)

6. Review and research the availability, coordination, efficiency, and allocation of
substance abuse treatment resources for probationers, pretrial defendants, people
in the custody of the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ), and parolees.
This review should include methods to reduce and improve current assessments,
training, and referring protocols and the identification of any barriers that may be
impeding all of the above. (Joint Interim Charge with the House Committee on
Appropriations)

7. Study policies and procedures related to illegal immigration and border security
of the TDCJ, county probation departments, and local and county jail facilities,
and make recommendations to improve coordination with international, federal,
state, and local authorities. (Joint Interim Charge with the House Committee on
County Affairs)

8. Assess the relationship between mental illness and criminal behavior and offer
reforms needed to address the proliferation of mental illness in the adult and
juvenile criminal justice systems. This review should include an examination of
data sharing between criminal justice and health and human services agencies,
proper screening, assessments, treatment, discharge planning, post-release
supervision, and community services. (Joint Interim Charge with the House
Committee on Appropriations)

9. Monitor the agencies and programs under the committee's jurisdiction.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON COUNTY AFFAIRS

1. Study the issues surrounding the sale, use, and regulation of fireworks in
urbanized, unincorporated parts of the county.

2. Examine county procurement statutes to identify areas for increasing efficiency
without sacrificing internal controls.

3. Study policies and procedures related to illegal immigration and border security
of the Texas Department of Criminal Justice, county probation departments, and
local and county jail facilities, and make recommendations to improve
coordination with international, federal, state, and local authorities. (Joint Interim
Charge with the House Committee on Corrections)

4. Examine recent attempts by municipalities to exert regulatory authority beyond
city limits and extraterritorial jurisdiction. Evaluate the current relationship
between and possible conflicts related to regulatory authority expressly given to
state agencies by the legislature and regulatory authority delegated to home-rule
municipalities. (Joint Interim Charge with the House Committee on Land and
Resource Management)

5. Monitor the agencies and programs under the committee's jurisdiction.
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON CRIMINAL JURISPRUDENCE

1. Examine problems associated with the current system of deferred adjudication in Texas.

2. Study the need to add salvia divinorum to the list of controlled substances regulated under the Texas Controlled Substance Act.

3. Examine the criminal trespass statute in the Penal Code and propose needed amendments or reorganization.

4. Study the prosecution and effectiveness of current drunk driving laws in Texas and recommend any legislative changes needed to further combat the problem.

5. Research the problems associated with human trafficking and determine the need for additional penalties.

6. Examine the current Texas law allowing dual trials for capital murder defendants.

7. Monitor the agencies and programs under the committee's jurisdiction.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON CULTURE, RECREATION, AND TOURISM

1. Review the rules, regulations, operations, programs, management, and statutes that govern the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, the Texas Commission on the Arts, and the Texas State Library and Archives Commission.

2. Review the transfer of historical sites to the Texas Historical Commission from the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department.

3. Examine the process and procedures for directional signs as they relate to tourism.

4. Review the process and procedures related to use of open space land owned by the state as they relate to hunting, fishing, and outdoor recreation.

5. Research and explore new ways to promote and improve economic development related tourism in the state.

6. Monitor the agencies and programs under the committee's jurisdiction.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON DEFENSE AFFAIRS AND STATE-FEDERAL RELATIONS

1. Study and make recommendations to address the need to identify essential personnel necessary to enter a disaster area to restore critical infrastructure.

2. Monitor the United States Congress for the enactment and rules regarding the Veteran's Mental Health Outreach and Access Act of 2007. Explore coordination with the community based clinics in Texas that would be able to provide the prescribed services to veterans.

3. Review and monitor the Veterans Disability Benefits Commission's Inspector General Disability ratings report. Make recommendations for what the state can do to implement the findings of the report and to assist our veterans.
4. Examine Chapter 431, Government Code, Chapter 431, to determine the feasibility of the Texas State Guard and Texas National Guard, while designated on state active duty, to assist in interagency planning and operational coordination under the Governor's Division of Emergency Management and the Texas Secretary of State.

5. Examine the State of Texas' preparedness level to handle a public health emergency. (Joint Interim Charge with the House Committee on Public Health)

6. Review the current requirements for driver's license and identification card holders in Texas in order to recommend legislative measures to prevent these documents from being used to further criminal activities and recommend ways to enhance homeland security. (Joint Interim Charge with the House Committee on Transportation)

7. Monitor the agencies and programs under the committee's jurisdiction.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

1. Study the performance of the Texas Enterprise Fund, the Texas Emerging Technology Fund, the Texas Economic Development Act, the Texas Enterprise Zone Program, and other economic development tools in promoting economic development in Texas, and recommend any needed statutory changes.

2. Review the overall history, goals, and implementation of the various funds established by Article 5190.14, Vernon's Texas Civil Statutes. Identify and recommend any changes necessary to clarify or improve the statute.

3. Study the use of the Texas Economic Development Act since its enactment as HB 1200, 77th Legislature, Regular Session. Determine how the act may be enhanced to better attract significant capital investments by science and technology industries developing alternative energy sources. (Joint Interim Charge with the House Committee on Energy Resources)

4. Monitor the agencies and programs under the committee's jurisdiction.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON ELECTIONS

1. Study the general issue of electronic voting technology, including the issues of general benefits and risks, security and accuracy, paper trails, etc.

2. Examine the prevalence of fraud in Texas elections, considering prosecution rates and measures for prevention. Study new laws in other states regarding voter identification, and recommend statutory changes necessary to ensure that only eligible voters can vote in Texas elections. Specifically study the Texas mail-in ballot system, the provisional voting system, and the various processes for purging voter lists of ineligible voters.

3. Monitor the continued implementation of the federal Help America Vote Act of 2002 by the Office of the Secretary of State, specifically including the implementation of the Texas Election Administration Management system to maintain voter registration records, administer elections, and execute and report election results.
4. Study poll worker recruitment and training in Texas, and suggest possible statutory improvements.

5. Monitor which counties are chosen by the Office of the Secretary of State for the new super precinct pilot program, and observe their progress.

6. Study the exemption in the Texas lobby contingent fee ban, which currently permits contingent fees and does not require lobby registration, for influencing the purchasing of goods or services by a state agency. Consider whether this exemption should be amended or repealed.

7. Research the current Texas law prohibiting the use of public resources for political advertising, and determine whether the law needs to be amended to clarify that publicly funded e-mail systems may not be used for political communications.

8. Monitor the agencies and programs under the committee's jurisdiction.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON ENERGY RESOURCES

1. Examine issues related to electrical lines and abandoned equipment on oil and gas leases.

2. Examine whether the Railroad Commission of Texas should regulate carbon capture.

3. Discuss further the issue of financial assurance in relation to oil and gas wells, and evaluate the current bonding structure.

4. Discuss alternative energy sources and how best to incorporate them into our traditional energy sector. Also study the potential benefits of biofuels in Texas, including Texas feedstocks best suited for biofuel production and synergies between that industry and traditional energy sectors. Develop recommendations for facilitating the growth of the biofuel industry in a manner that best positions Texas in the national market.

5. Research ways to maintain groundwater quality in relation to oil and gas exploration through economic incentives for innovative technology solutions.

6. Study the use of the Texas Economic Development Act since its enactment as HB 1200, 77th Legislature, Regular Session. Determine how the act may be enhanced to better attract significant capital investments by science and technology industries developing alternative energy sources. (Joint Interim Charge with the House Committee on Economic Development)

7. Monitor the agencies and programs under the committee's jurisdiction.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENTAL REGULATION

1. Work to create and maintain a market-based approach to the application and implementation of Green Chemistry initiatives for the State of Texas.

2. Evaluate capabilities at public and private universities relating to the potential
formation of dedicated Green Chemistry programs.

3. Collaborate with businesses to identify current Green Chemistry efforts that are already taking place, as well as what the incentives and disincentives are for businesses to make this shift. Examine and identify the environmental and economic benefits of promoting Green Chemistry initiatives.

4. Examine funding options for a statewide Green Chemistry initiative.

5. Work with the various state agencies such as the General Land Office, the Railroad Commission of Texas, and the Department of Agriculture in order to facilitate the promotion of Green Chemistry practices.

6. Examine the obstacles that must be overcome for Green Chemistry to be effective; identify solutions to such obstacles.

7. Study the Clean Air Act State Implementation Plan (SIP) to determine if:
   • Data is being collected adequately;
   • Recent changes to the SIP are bringing Texas closer to federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) requirements; and
   • There are any midcourse corrections necessary to achieve EPA requirements.
   As background, examine and document the trend in levels of air quality in Texas since 1980.

8. Examine the progress of the Texas Emissions Reduction Plan, the Low-Income Vehicle Repair Assistance, Retrofit, and Accelerated Vehicle Retirement Program and the Texas Environmental Research Consortium.

9. Study the air permitting process to examine, define, or interpret the following:
   • The role of public input in the standard air permitting process;
   • The requirements and interpretation of what constitutes Best Available Control Technology;
   • The requirements for monitoring ambient air in the beginning stages of the permitting process;
   • The requirements for modeling future air pollution in the event that the proposed plant is constructed;
   • The issue of the cumulative impact of different air pollution sources;
   • The use of permits-by-rule and flexible permits in some cases; and
   • The requirements for permit renewals and the process for granting or denying permit renewals.

10. Examine the penalties and sanctions imposed on vehicle inspection and emissions testing facilities.

11. Monitor the agencies and programs under the committee's jurisdiction.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS

1. Monitor federal rules and regulations on lending and determine the state's role in regulating issues that relate to the mortgage foreclosure process, disclosures for loan terms, home equity, mortgage brokers, mortgage bankers, consumer protections, and counseling for mortgage products.

2. Monitor the implementation of HB 716, 80th Legislature, Regular Session, to
determine if there is a need to further legislate the protection of homebuyers in mortgage fraud schemes, emphasizing the impact in the foreclosure process.

3. Study the adequacy and effectiveness of existing regulation of prepaid funeral benefits that are funded by insurance or annuity products and make recommendations for statutory changes necessary to further strengthen the regulatory system for protecting consumers.

4. Study practices involved in the sale and financing of a motor vehicle, including conditional delivery, negative equity, and retirement of existing debt on vehicle trade-in.

5. Study whether the state financial regulatory agencies should assist consumers in the investigation and correction of credit card billing errors.

6. Assess the extent of consumer protections in state regulations of short-selling of commodities, with a particular emphasis on the state’s enforcement authority and ways to ensure reliability in the short-selling market.

7. Examine the practice of marketing variable annuities and determine whether certain sales practices constitute fraud.

8. Monitor the agencies and programs under the committee’s jurisdiction.

**HOUSE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REFORM**

1. Research, investigate, and make recommendations on how electronic documents can be created, maintained, exchanged, and preserved by the state in a manner that encourages appropriate government control, access, choice, interoperability, and vendor neutrality. The committee shall consider, but not be limited to, public access to information, expected storage life of electronic documents, costs of implementation, and savings.

2. Research, investigate, and make recommendations regarding litigation brought by school districts receiving state funds under Chapter 46, Education Code, for defective construction of instructional facilities and the state’s interest in ensuring the use of such funds for the repair or reconstruction of defective facilities or the return of state funds.

3. Review authorized offices of inspector generals and assess the benefit of having a statewide office of inspector general for all executive branch agencies.

4. Study and review current laws regarding licensing and regulation of professionals, as well as current laws regarding practice acts, and make recommendations on creating limitations and streamlining of licensure requirements, such as the public policy implications of decriminalization of license-related violations.

5. Review a wide variety of state agencies with an eye to streamlining state government. Recommend the amendment or repeal of unnecessary statutory requirements, the deregulation of certain industries if in the public interest, and ways to implement agency efficiency recommendations identified by the Legislative Budget Board, the State Auditor's Office, and the Sunset Advisory Commission.
6. Evaluate and make recommendations, if necessary, regarding state contracts with pharmacy benefit managers. Assess the feasibility of combining prescription drug programs of state health insurance programs. All recommendations should take into consideration any budgetary impacts. (Joint Interim Charge with the House Committee on Pensions and Investments)

7. Monitor the agencies and programs under the committee's jurisdiction.

**HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION**

1. Evaluate the cost and feasibility of requiring students who attend institutions of higher education to be covered by a health benefit plan. Evaluate whether institutions should have the authority to offer tuition waivers or insurance coverage to graduate students and fellows.

2. Study and evaluate strategies for improving student participation and success, particularly in the critical fields identified in *Closing the Gaps*, through student financial aid or incentive funding for higher education institutions.

3. Examine and evaluate institutional policies and programs designed to promote student participation and success, including outreach, admissions, and transfer policies, developmental education programs, and relevant student support programs.

4. Research alternative methodologies for funding developmental education, and evaluate whether or not appropriating a portion of these funds directly to the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board could help improve developmental education results.

5. Examine state and local policies that relate to the marketing and sale of college textbooks.

6. Study and recommend policy approaches or structures to ensure that the establishment or expansion of higher education programs, facilities, and institutions are aligned with the educational goals and economic needs of the state.

7. Examine strategies for improving state financial aid programs. Evaluate the design and administration of state financial aid programs in terms of operational efficiency and effectiveness in advancing state goals for student participation and success.

8. Study innovations in state educational data systems. Develop recommendations for a comprehensive state educational data system that will ensure the best available information for educators and policymakers, include unique student records that may be transferred easily among authorized institutions, minimize duplicative or onerous reporting requirements, and meet federal privacy requirements in a manner consistent with the practices of leading states. Recommend statutory changes as necessary to facilitate the implementation of the new data system and to eliminate unnecessary reporting requirements. (Joint Interim Charge with the House Committee on Public Education)

9. Monitor the agencies and programs under the committee's jurisdiction.
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HOUSE ADMINISTRATION

1. Study and make recommendations with assistance from the State Energy Conservation Office on ways to conserve electricity and water at the Texas State Capitol.

2. Review potential sites for monuments on the Texas State Capitol grounds.

3. Make recommendations for additional security measures within the Texas State Capitol, the Capitol Extension, and the Texas House Chamber.

4. Study and make recommendations for alternative voting devices in the Texas House Chamber.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES

1. Research strategies to promote permanency and stability for children and families involved with Child Protective Services. Identify any priorities that would approve the adoption process.

2. Explore strategies to support the needs of aging Texans effectively and efficiently. This investigation should include best practices in delaying or avoiding the need for institutionalized care as well as promoting high-quality services for those who are best served in nursing homes.

3. Evaluate Prevention and Early Intervention programs at the Department of Family and Protective Services that have been funded by the Texas Legislature for the prevention of child abuse and neglect. Consider if higher priority for selection should be given to child or family mentoring or other support services, such as foster grandparents and efforts that assist mothers.

4. Evaluate existing and past efforts by the state for Youth Transitions in Independent Living. Recommend improvements to educational, occupational, health, and life skills components of preparation of foster children for adult living.

5. Investigate the need and potential of respite care programs to delay or avoid institutional placements, thereby resulting in cost savings for the state.

6. Examine compliance issues and concerns of hospices with certification surveys and ability to meet federal standards.

7. Monitor the agencies and programs under the committee's jurisdiction.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON INSURANCE

1. Examine states that have made the transition from heavily regulated health insurance markets to less regulated markets in order to assess the impact on market competitiveness, prices, consumer satisfaction, and regulatory costs in those states. Specifically, identify current barriers and possible enhancements to flexibility in purchasing health insurance, including the purchase of health
insurance plans offered in other states. Review and evaluate state law and agency rules related to the use of health savings accounts and health reimbursement arrangements, particularly by small businesses. Review possible tax incentives for purchasing private insurance.

2. Study the practice of balanced billing by medical providers and determine which portions of the cost out-of-network care patients, insurers and providers should ultimately be responsible for paying.

3. Research state and federal law to determine whether Texas may enact legislation that mandates proof of financial responsibility for vehicles entering the United States through Texas, as Texas citizens are required to provide when they enter Mexico. Study the possible benefits and costs of such legislation.

4. Study and make recommendations on increasing the portability of health insurance in an increasingly fluid Texas labor market.

5. Make recommendations on potential alternatives to the Texas Health Insurance Risk Pool for providing private health insurance to otherwise uninsurable individuals.

6. Study and make recommendations regarding the feasibility of establishing a "health insurance exchange" in Texas.

7. Study the need for a state catastrophe fund to protect the Texas economy against major disasters. Examine the structure and performance of such funds in other states and assess the potential of such a fund to reduce the reinsurance costs and premiums borne by Texas homeowners.

8. Research and evaluate the potential costs and benefits to the State of Texas of providing coverage for bariatric surgical procedures for state employees who have a specified minimum years of service with the state.

9. Monitor the continued implementation of the Texas Financial Responsibility Verification Program authorized by SB 1670, 79th Legislature, Regular Session, and determine whether any further statutory enhancements are needed to reduce the number of uninsured motorists in Texas. (Joint Interim Charge with the House Committee on Transportation)

10. Monitor the Texas workers' compensation system and the continued implementation of the reforms of HB 7, 79th Legislature, Regular Session, by the Texas Department of Insurance and other state agencies. Specifically, evaluate the recent decision by the Texas Supreme Court in Entergy v. Summers in terms of its impact on the system. (Joint Interim Charge with the House Committee on Business and Industry)

11. Monitor the agencies and programs under the committee's jurisdiction.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY

1. Examine the current Texas jury system. Consider possible changes to enhance the jury experience and increase citizen participation on juries.

2. Examine the current Texas court system, including its complex layers of trial
courts with overlapping and varying jurisdiction. Consider whether the system needs modernization to improve judicial efficiency.

3. Study the issue of municipal sovereign immunity for damages to citizens' private property, and recommend any necessary statutory changes.

4. Monitor the agencies and programs under the committee's jurisdiction.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON JUVENILE JUSTICE AND FAMILY ISSUES

1. Study the current Texas law governing suits by nonparents affecting the parent-child relationship, specifically including suits for possession of or access to a child by a grandparent under Family Code Sections 153.432-153.434 in light of *Troxel v. Granville* and other court rulings. Recommend any needed changes.

2. Evaluate child support guidelines and formulas, considering whether the current methods provide adequate support to a child. Also, study child support for the costs of college.

3. Review methods for determining equal access and visitation under the standard possession order, and ascertain whether or not the distance parents reside from each other should create the need for a distinct standard possession order.

4. Consider the law governing presumption of parentage, and examine the adequacy of relief available to presumed parents who are child support obligors and who assert a claim of paternity fraud.

5. Consider the law governing no-fault divorces and make recommendations for any possible changes.

6. Study the use of police diversion under Chapter 52 of the Family Code for youth who are referred to the juvenile justice system, including those there as a result of incidents in school.

7. Study victim-offender mediation and neighborhood restorative justice panels.

8. Determine whether current mental health practices followed by the Texas Youth Commission are adequate or appropriate, and make recommendations for any needed changes.

9. Study the organizational structure of the Texas Youth Commission and the Texas Juvenile Probation Commission to determine if the current system is effectively and efficiently addressing the needs of the juvenile justice system in conjunction with the sunset review of these agencies. (Joint Interim Charge with the House Committee on Corrections)

10. Study Disciplinary Alternative Education Programs and Juvenile Justice Alternative Education Programs, including referral rates, age of students, whether parents have sufficient recourse to challenge a placement, funding, and course requirements. (Joint Interim Charge with the House Committee on Corrections)

11. Monitor the agencies and programs under the committee's jurisdiction.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON LAND AND RESOURCE MANAGEMENT
1. Examine the authority of the General Land Office, the School Land Board, and similar state agencies to engage in various types of real estate transactions, and determine the appropriateness of this authority.

2. Observe and study ongoing litigation and actions by condemning authorities in light of the *Kelo* decision and make recommendations for changes in eminent domain law needed to protect private property rights. Specifically, examine the body of law used to determine the amount of compensation property owners receive when their land is condemned, in whole or part, and determine the appropriateness of this scheme as compared to others.

3. Research annexation practices in the state to determine whether municipalities are abiding by both the spirit and the letter of the state's annexation laws, thereby maintaining a proper balance between municipal governments and individual residents.


5. Study and evaluate policies held by other states in relation to how they treat wind resources as a property right.

6. Examine recent attempts by municipalities to exert regulatory authority beyond city limits and extraterritorial jurisdiction. Evaluate the current relationship between and possible conflicts related to regulatory authority expressly given to state agencies by the legislature and regulatory authority delegated to home-rule municipalities. (Joint Interim Charge with the House Committee on County Affairs)

7. Monitor the agencies and programs under the committee's jurisdiction.

**HOUSE COMMITTEE ON LAW ENFORCEMENT**

1. Study the qualifications and standards necessary to be designated a police agency.
2. Monitor the impact of current Texas laws banning the carrying of firearms by holders of concealed carry licenses on the premises of educational institutions.

3. Study the funding of Texas 9-1-1 and poison control systems and the requirement to transition Texas 9-1-1 systems to the next generation of technology to meet future expectations for emergency communication systems.

4. Review the current requirements for receiving a Texas driver's license or ID card to determine whether they should be more stringent in order to prevent a criminal or terrorist from fraudulently obtaining an official form of Texas identification.

5. Monitor the report issued by the Independent Investigator for the Houston Police Department Crime Laboratory and Property Room, the independent panel review of certain criminal convictions prompted by the conclusions of this report, and the implementation by the City of Houston of any reforms recommended in this report. Also, monitor other urban crime laboratories and their compliance with state laws regulating their functions. (Joint Interim Charge with the House Committee on Urban Affairs)
6. Monitor the agencies and programs under the committee's jurisdiction.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON LICENSING AND ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURES
1. Study ways to support and promote horse and greyhound racing and breeding programs in Texas by increasing revenues. Review the practices of other states with healthy racing industries and identify which practices might be applied in Texas. Study ways to strengthen and enforce Texas laws to reduce illegal gambling.
2. Identify alternative supplemental funding to increase incentives and purses for horse and greyhound trainers and owners.
3. Study current distance requirement provisions in the Alcoholic Beverage Code, and recommend any changes needed to promote clarity and uniformity.
4. Review the Bingo Enabling Act, and recommend needed changes to the licensing process, fee structure, and permitted forms of play. Study whether specific changes are needed to direct a greater share of bingo revenue toward the charities the act was intended to benefit.
5. Study the possible need for regulation of charitable raffles.
6. Examine the current practice of certain occupations, and determine whether these occupations pose any significant threat to the health, safety and welfare of the general public to the extent that increased regulation is needed.
7. Monitor the agencies and programs under the committee's jurisdiction.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT WAYS AND MEANS
1. Study whether Texas law should be amended on the methods used to determine the "place of business" of retail operations under Chapter 321, Tax Code, governing municipal sales taxes, and whether better-defined procedures and limitations should be enacted to assist the comptroller in determining reallocation of sales tax revenues from one municipality to another.
2. Review provisions for local government notices on potential tax rate increases and clarify potentially conflicting statutes. Look at requiring two (rather than one) public hearings on the tax rate increase.
3. Examine the addition of members to the board of directors of appraisal districts who are not appointed by the taxing jurisdictions of the district. Determine methods for appointing these additional directors.
4. Examine the system for appraising property for property tax purposes:
   • Study the implementation and effects of HB 1010, 80th Legislature, Regular Session.
   • Consider whether the statutory system for choosing the Central Appraisal District Board of Directors and governing the board's operation adequately protects the public interest.
   • Evaluate whether the authority of the chief appraiser should be limited.
   • Consider alternative methods and procedures for conducting the Comptroller's School Value Study to ensure both the equitable distribution of state school aid and a more stringent review of local appraisal practices.
   • Examine constitutional and statutory constraints on the enforcement of uniform appraisal standards across the state and the ability of the state to provide oversight of appraisal districts.
   • Consider ways to improve appraisal district efficiency, transparency and
services, including, but not limited to, the reconfiguration of appraisal
districts.
* Evaluate changes in the property valuation appeal system that could expedite
and reduce the cost of dispute resolution.

5. Research the policies and procedures by which local tax appraisers value rentrestricted
affordable housing properties and authorize legislatively established tax
exemptions. Evaluate application and interpretation of existing statutes by local
appraisal districts to affordable housing properties throughout the life cycle of
developments. Make recommendations for statutory changes. (Joint Interim
Charge with the House Committee on Urban Affairs)

6. Monitor the agencies and programs under the committee's jurisdiction.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES

1. Monitor ongoing efforts related to joint planning in groundwater management
areas, including progress toward setting desired future conditions for aquifers.
Examine and evaluate the process relating to an appeal challenging the approval
of desired future conditions.

2. Review and evaluate the regulatory model for investor-owned water and sewer
utilities as provided in the Water Code, especially Chapter 13, and Article 1440a
of the Public Utility Regulatory Act; rate case processes and timing, consultant
fee recovery, and overall cost reductions; and, options for more effective
customer participation. Consider consolidated tariffs for companies owning more
than one system, and review and evaluate methods for financing expansion to new
developments.

3. Monitor the implementation of HB 2876, 79th Legislature, Regular Session,
relating to certificates of public convenience and necessity for water service and
sewer service.

4. Monitor the implementation of legislation enacted by the 80th Legislature,
including HB 3, HB 4 and SB 3; work in conjunction with legislatively created
committees, such as the Environmental Flows Advisory Group, the Water
Conservation Advisory Council, the Bexar Metropolitan Water District Oversight
Committee, and the Joint Interim Committee on State Water Funding.

5. Evaluate creating a uniform template for the creation of Municipal Utility
Districts or other special districts with addendums for special powers to expedite
the creation of new districts.

6. Examine "resign to run" rules for soil and water conservation district members in
comparison to groundwater district members.

7. Study issues related to the current efficacy of flood control devices in Texas,
including the condition of aging infrastructure, liability issues, and the legal
authority and financing needed to make repairs.

8. Review the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality fee structure for water
programs and examine the scope of services being funded by such fees and the
allocation of resources, including personnel to provide services on a timely basis.
9. Monitor the agencies and programs under the committee's jurisdiction.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON PENSIONS AND INVESTMENTS

1. Evaluate the possibility of requiring the state and employee contribution rate to meet the annually required contribution for the statewide retirement funds each biennium in order to prevent unfunded liabilities.

2. Explore options for funding other post-employment benefits, and examine strategies employed by other governmental entities in addressing these obligations.

3. Study the impact of actuaries on public pension plans, and evaluate the need for legislation to ensure appropriate actuarial assumptions, actuarial audits or regulation of actuaries contracting with state pension plans.

4. Analyze the impact of allowing a retiree to return to work in the Texas Municipal Retirement System.

5. Assess the representational proportion of each of the stakeholder groups, eligibility requirements, qualifications, and selection and election procedures of the boards of trustees of the retirement systems.

6. Examine eligibility criteria for membership and possible inclusion of additional employees in the Law Enforcement and Custodial Officers Supplemental Retirement Fund (LECOSRF). Evaluate the effect of diversion of funds from the auto registration fee on the unfunded liability of the LECOSRF, and explore the possibility of creating a similar supplemental retirement program as part of the Teacher Retirement System of Texas for those members performing law enforcement duties.

7. Evaluate and make recommendations, if necessary, regarding state contracts with pharmacy benefit managers. Assess the feasibility of combining prescription drug programs of state health insurance programs. All recommendations should take into consideration any budgetary impacts. (Joint Interim Charge with the House Committee on Government Reform)

8. Examine the operation of the Houston Municipal Employees Pension System, its Board of Trustees and staff. (Joint Interim Charge with the House Committee on Urban Affairs)

9. Monitor the agencies and programs under the committee's jurisdiction.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC EDUCATION

1. Study best practices in instructional technology, including online course delivery, professional development, and supplementary instruction and course support. Examine the costs and benefits of these applications versus traditional delivery models.

2. Review the functions of the agencies and boards under the committee's jurisdiction. Evaluate the capacities of these agencies and boards versus their appropriate roles in supporting instruction in public schools.
3. Evaluate early childhood education programs in public schools and study the impact of different instructional and funding models on students' school-readiness and schools' operational efficiency.

4. Research and evaluate state-supported policies and programs designed to attract, train, and support effective teachers and instructional leaders, including programs designed to recruit and retain teachers in hard-to-staff schools.

5. Monitor the implementation of legislation passed by the 79th and 80th Legislatures.

6. Study innovations in state educational data systems. Develop recommendations for a comprehensive state educational data system that will ensure the best available information for educators and policymakers, include unique student records that may be transferred easily among authorized institutions, minimize duplicative or onerous reporting requirements, and meet federal privacy requirements in a manner consistent with the practices of leading states. Recommend statutory changes as necessary to facilitate the implementation of the new data system and to eliminate unnecessary reporting requirements. (Joint Interim Charge with the House Committee on Higher Education)

7. Monitor the agencies and programs under the committee's jurisdiction.

**HOUSE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC HEALTH**

1. Monitor and evaluate the full array of wellness initiatives undertaken by the State of Texas to include the newly adopted state employee wellness and prevention legislation (HB 1297, 80th Legislature, Regular Session) and a pilot program to encourage healthy lifestyles, such as smoking cessation within the Medicaid program (SB 10, 80th Legislature, Regular Session) and for state employees. Develop strategies for maximizing potential health benefits and optimizing the return on the State of Texas' investments in wellness. Include a review of other state and private sector programs for employee wellness that result in prevention cost savings.

2. Research issues relating to the Indigent Health Care and Treatment Act (Chapter 61, Health and Safety Code) and related local health care initiatives (Chapter 534, Government Code), and make recommendations to address any imbalance between counties for the provision of health care.

3. Review issues related to federal changes for tamper-resistant prescription pad requirements, and monitor the activity of the Texas Department of Public Safety Controlled Substances Advisory Committee in response to SB 1879, 80th Legislature, Regular Session.


5. Examine the status of asthma in Texas, and make recommendations to prevent asthma and to assist children and adults with asthma to more effectively manage their disease. Develop strategies for decreasing the direct medical and indirect related costs associated with asthma.

6. Examine activities at the Texas Medical Board as they relate to the protection of
public health and the practice of medicine, and the status of implementation requirements established by HB 1973, 80th Legislature, Regular Session. The committees should consider any findings by the Texas Sunset Commission. (Joint Interim Charge with the House Committee on Appropriations)

7. Examine the State of Texas' preparedness level to handle a public health emergency. (Joint Interim Charge with the House Committee on Defense Affairs and State-Federal Relations)

8. Review the effectiveness of the Driver Responsibility Program, and provide recommendations for increasing the collection rate of assessed penalties. Provide recommendations for amnesty and incentive programs established by the passage of SB 1723, 80th Legislature, Regular Session. Examine the status of Texas' current statewide trauma system infrastructure and how the system may be optimized to meet future trauma care needs in a rapidly growing state with overburdened emergency rooms. (Joint Interim Charge with the House Committee on Transportation)

9. Study the state's current and long-range need for physicians, dentists, nurses and other allied health and long-term care professionals. Make recommendations regarding strategies related to geographic distribution and barriers to recruitment of high-need professions, especially for primary care providers and long-term care professionals. (Joint Interim Charge with the House Committees on Border and International Affairs and Appropriations)

10. Monitor the agencies and programs under the committee's jurisdiction.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON REDISTRICTING

1. Consider the need for modifications to judicial districts in Texas.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON REGULATED INDUSTRIES

1. Examine the impact of broadband Internet access on economic development, focusing on potential updates that would create incentives to help spur investment by network providers across a variety of platforms. Recommend changes to Texas law that would emphasize economic development through policy formulation.

2. Study and assess the ability of entities regulated by the Public Utility Commission of Texas to meet the communication needs of the Texas military forces during declared emergencies, including an assessment of current capabilities and technological compatibility among service providers throughout the state.

3. Research the effects of both wholesale and retail competition in the Texas electric market.

4. Study and review information on the Internet and other communications services, and how Texas can best prepare for potential changes to Internet and communications services, and infrastructure demands. Recommend policy changes to encourage greater infrastructure investment while ensuring the continued growth and development of the Internet. Study the current state and local communications tax structure, including an analysis of the tax burdens
imposed on consumers and providers of communications services.

5. Study and examine whether Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP) should be adhered to under Chapter 66 of the Public Utility Regulatory Act (PURA), and review procedures for revenue audits.

6. Monitor agencies and programs under the committee's jurisdiction, including identifying possible ways to merge or streamline agency functions to produce long-term financial benefit to the state and better efficiency of the agencies.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON STATE AFFAIRS

1. Research and recommend the best ways to require governmental entities in Texas, both state and local, to develop reasonable investment strategies that will help the Texas economy and increase jobs and resources brought to the state.

2. Study the cost/benefit to the state for projects approved by school districts for a limitation on appraised value under the Texas Economic Development Act (Chapter 313, Tax Code).

3. Study the merits of developing a coherent state policy of offering incentives to local governments for activities relating to recruiting and hosting special events.

4. Research the possibilities of including Texas manufacturing in the Invest Texas First/Buy Texas First Program.

5. Examine the current state of the nanotechnology industry in Texas and the impact and potential that the industry has on economic development. Review any current federal and state regulations that are designed to ensure the safety of the development, use and disposal of nanotechnology-related materials and waste products.

6. Study and make recommendations to encourage authorization for political subdivisions to enter into agreements with the United States Department of Homeland Security under Section 287(g), Immigration and Nationality Act, to perform the functions of immigration officers.

7. Study the issue of using state funds to advertise government programs and services to discern if taxpayer dollars are being spent appropriately, and to consider legislation that will ensure that these dollars are not spent to coerce, but rather benefit, the public through honest educative efforts.

8. Review changes in border security and immigration on the state and federal level. (Joint Interim Charge with the House Committee on Border and International Affairs)

9. Monitor the agencies and programs under the committee's jurisdiction.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

1. Research and make recommendations to the legislature on programs to improve safety for teen drivers.

2. Study the concept of using corridor planning organizations to provide a
mechanism for local involvement in the Trans-Texas Corridor.

3. Study and make recommendations for funding mechanisms for the Rail Relocation Fund.

4. Study and make recommendations regarding the feasibility of a motor bus-only lane program for state highways in Texas that focuses on the use of improved shoulders as a low-speed bypass of congested highway lanes. Examine comparable laws from other states that allow transit buses to operate on state highway shoulders.

5. Examine the role of metropolitan planning authorities in state law, as well as the creation of rural planning authorities to address the planning needs outside of metropolitan planning organizations but within council of government boundaries.

6. Study and make recommendations for changes to statutes regarding handicapped parking.

7. Review the effectiveness of the Driver Responsibility Program and provide recommendations for increasing the collection rate of assessed penalties. Provide recommendations for amnesty and incentive programs established by the passage of SB 1723, 80th Legislature, Regular Session. Examine the status of Texas' current statewide trauma system infrastructure and how the system may be optimized to meet future trauma care needs in a rapidly growing state with overburdened emergency rooms. (Joint Interim Charge with the House Committee on Public Health)

8. Review the current requirements for driver's license and identification card holders in Texas in order to recommend legislative measures to prevent these documents from being used to further criminal activities, and recommend ways to enhance homeland security. (Joint Interim Charge with House Committee on Defense Affairs and State-Federal Relations)

9. Monitor the continued implementation of the Texas Financial Responsibility Verification Program authorized by SB 1670, 79th Legislature, Regular Session, and determine whether any further statutory enhancements are needed to reduce the number of uninsured motorists in Texas. (Joint Interim Charge with the House Committee on Insurance)

10. Monitor the agencies and programs under the committee's jurisdiction.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON URBAN AFFAIRS

1. Assess the current senior housing market and available options for affordable senior housing.

2. Research and update legislation that permits residential neighborhoods whose deed restrictions have lapsed to reinstate those deed restrictions or create needed deed restrictions through a petition committee by expanding them to more areas.

3. Study and evaluate the levels, methods and alternatives by which the state funds all affordable housing programs, focusing on administrative cost-effectiveness to determine greater returns on investment, savings and efficiency. Examine the