

— TEXAS EAGLE FORUM —

February 2025

Dear Texas Eagles,

First, I want to thank each and every one of you who has contributed to helping us start the 89th session in good financial shape. Although most of us are volunteers, and our small, vital part-time staff is compensated like volunteers, we still face operational costs which increase during the legislative session. It can be humbling to ask for help, but we need it and are deeply grateful for your support. We thank God for your ability to partner with us financially and physically and pray He will bless you for helping us preserve conservative values in Texas and America.

Most of our new conservative Representatives are eager to get to work, and we're starting to see who is willing to stand on principle; those seeking the praise of God versus the praise of man. Work ethic is a key focus, and we're proud to see our most conservative officeholders voting against long recesses to ensure they stay focused on the people's business.

But to be honest, we have witnessed some disconcerting behavior from House leadership. Earlier in the session, Chairman Todd Hunter defended the draft of new House rules: a 200+ page document that had only been delivered to offices at 4 AM that morning. Conservative legislators went to work to create needed amendments and were ready to discuss and work to improve the rules, despite the unreasonably short notice. Members used the back mic to ask important clarifying questions but were cut off when Rep. Jared Patterson moved to call the question on debate (which many of us, including TEF, felt was premature). Ultimately, the new rules were deemed 'approved' without any vote from the members.

Our strongest Representatives on both sides of the aisle stood firm against shutting down questions, debate, and amendments. We will score the vote that closed discussion. Since then, we have watched additional rules and expensive budgetary changes be made without a vote from House members. It is becoming increasingly clear who is aligning with leadership at the expense of their voters, versus those who are genuinely working to fulfill the promises made to their constituents.

The Senate Committee on Finance was in session for weeks. During that time, the first floor of the Capitol Extension was filled with well-dressed individuals lobbying for more taxpayer dollars. It makes me wonder who is keeping an eye on all this spending? Texas needs to take inspiration from what's happening in D.C. and start identifying areas where our state's spending is inefficient. In the future, we could report on wasteful government spending and request the Finance Committee cut unnecessary costs, especially in areas where the recipients aren't being good stewards of taxpayer money.

Speaking of being good stewards: We are concerned about both SB 2 (passed in the Senate) and HB 3, recently filed in the house. As we shared in our recent Alert, parents already have the option to educate their children outside the public school system. These bills create an entitlement for some students to get taxpayer support when they choose a non-public option.

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The same body that has made many laws governing public education is now presenting us with a narrative that we must help as many children as possible to flee the system at a cost of at least a billion dollars! 10% of the money set aside for this program will go to newly designated organizations and the comptroller to oversee parental choices and administer the program. If we were truly offering a choice in education, it would be offered to all school-aged children, not just a select few. Before we pass any school choice program, private school options must have constitutional protection of their right to operate, unfringed by the government.

As a parent or grandparent this money is tempting, but it is for a limited few, and it allows TEA to approve vendors. Better, more simple, universal bills have been filed, and we hope these will get a hearing too. We were pleased to discover Rep. Brisco Cain's HB 212, which would allocate a portion of the money Texas spends on public education to students who choose alternatives like private or home schools. His bill *saves* the state money, as it does not redirect savings back to the public schools. Instead, it would ensure that public schools still receive a fair per-student allocation based on attendance, without creating a taxpayer-funded subsidy for private education.

Either way, let's not forget, last session our legislators created a new, more classical curriculum for K-5th grades, which TEF supported. It was an expensive endeavor, and the new Bluebonnet Curriculum has not seen even one day in classrooms to improve student outcomes. Not to mention, the second phase for 6th-12th grades hasn't even been completed yet! Why are we rushing to spend even more money before we've fully assessed the effectiveness of the new curriculum in raising academic achievement?

Gambling bills have now been filed in both the House and the Senate, as well as proposals to allow up to 10 oz of marijuana for personal possession—about a year's worth for a heavy user. These are issues we'll continue to monitor closely.

The progressive green agenda was resoundingly rejected by American voters in November, and President Trump has taken important executive action to stop harmful environmental policies in their tracks. But what about the damage already done? How can we restore our constitutional rights and reclaim the private property taken from us? In this month's *Torch*, American Stewards of Liberty Executive Director Margaret Byfield shares five ways Congress can rollback the disastrous land grabs committed by the Biden Administration under its 30x30 Agenda and "Natural Assets" scam. These actions will help return control of the land to the American people and prevent future progressive administrations from implementing similar policies.

Thank you again for your support and for standing with us in these critical times.

Faithfully,



Cindi Castilla
President
Texas Eagle Forum