

**Texas Grassroots Coalition:
The 2018/2019 State Budget and
Unfinished Business Important to the People of Texas
Friday, May 26, 2017 – Three Days from Sine Die**

The **\$217 billion** Conference Committee report for the 2018–2019 biennium budget was distributed to the legislature at 10:00 PM last night (5/25/17). ***That's a lot of money.*** People all over Texas worked very hard to make that money to send to the State.

We are three days away from *sine die* for the 85th legislative session. House and Senate legislators have not yet reviewed the 970-page budget report. The people of Texas do not have the budget details. Yet, some officials are already trying to tell us what a great budget it is.

It appears that the usual Great Budget Cram-down is about to take place, and ***frankly, this flies in the face of how Republican leaders define themselves.*** Taxpayers demand transparency, not budgets passed before anyone has a chance to know the details. ***We believe the people paying the freight deserve a little respect.***

The people's elected representatives should know and understand what is contained in the budget. The people of Texas themselves should know what is in that budget. Ramming the budget for the State of Texas through only guarantees one thing – a bunch of surprises. ***The people of Texas deserve better.***

Yes, and the people deserve better when it comes to getting their priorities passed too.

Take property tax reform. Last weekend, the leadership of the Texas House of Representatives once again thumbed their noses at taxpayers. No issue unifies Texans like our frustration with the burdensome – almost confiscatory – property tax system. Lt. Governor Dan Patrick and the Texas Senate demonstrated their support for property tax reform when, earlier in the session, they passed a comprehensive reform measure designed to put voters in charge of property taxes.

Last Saturday, the Republican-Democrat coalition in charge of the Texas House took what was already a watered down version of that Senate measure and turned it into little more than an expanded posting requirement before local governments raise taxes on Texas families. The “big change” in the House bill was changing the name in law from the “effective rate” to the “no-new-revenue tax rate.”

If the House tax name change proposal is all that is passed, this session constitutes an epic failure on property tax reform.

Next, we have the Privacy Act (SB6). Protecting the safety, dignity, and privacy of



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Texans from overreaching local governments is a critical issue with broad support among voters. This has been a legislative priority for many pastors, conservative leaders, and citizens throughout the entire 85th legislative session. Lt. Governor Patrick and the Senate responded, passing a comprehensive privacy act that would protect the safety, dignity, and privacy of all Texans in locker rooms, changing facilities, and bathrooms in public schools and other government buildings. It also protected private businesses from overreaching local ordinances.

After spending the majority of the 85th legislature obstructing and delaying SB 6, House leadership decided to pass a worthless and ineffectual amendment so they could claim credit and avoid a special session.

Here we are at the end of the session, with no proper privacy protections for public school children, including those enrolled in dual credit courses at institutions of higher education, or conscience protections for business owners.

If the House amendment is all that is passed on this matter, it constitutes yet another epic failure of the legislature to serve the interests of Texans this session.

Pro-life bills – a legislative priority spelled out in the Texas Republican Party Platform – have yet to see final passage. Without the House Freedom Caucus fighting to get pro-life amendments tacked on to other bills, not a single pro-life bill would have gotten out of the House State Affairs or Calendars Committees. The governor’s call for substantive ethics reform was attacked in the House.

Despite the Senate making a landmark ethics reform bill its first bill passed, the House Speaker refused to even refer that bill to committee. While the House passed several small, non-controversial reforms, ***this session will end as a failure on ethics.*** Despite the push for reform, public officials will continue to be allowed to work as hired gun lobbyists while in elected office. Likewise, the revolving door will remain open, and those officials who don’t lobby while elected, will continue to be allowed to immediately leave office and join the lobby. Efforts to require lobbyists to disclose their wining and dining of legislators also died.

Finally, not one substantial election integrity or ballot security bill has passed this session. This is particularly appalling since it has been discovered that ***neither the Texas Secretary of State nor any election official in any of our 254 counties is mandated by law to verify the driver’s license or Social Security numbers used by individuals when they register to vote!*** In addition, the Secretary of State’s Office has been issuing waivers allowing local election officials to avoid printing paper back-ups to electronic voting machines.

These facts, coupled with the mail-in ballot harvesting schemes uncovered by activists in the Dallas–Fort Worth Metroplex (and currently under investigation by the Texas Attorney General’s Office), should have been plenty of incentive for the legislature to act to stamp out opportunities for voter fraud.

Make no mistake – this is not a scheme that can be attributed to Democrats alone. We’ve seen enough to believe that there are Republican officials up to their eyeballs in election tampering. **Wide-open opportunities for voter fraud**



aren't something Texans should be expected to tolerate until the 2019 legislature convenes. Voter fraud is not like accepting the rain ruining a picnic.

If nothing more is done to combat election fraud, then this session will have also been an epic failure on this vitally important issue.

With the clock winding down on the session, the unfinished business of reducing property taxes, protecting citizens' safety, dignity, and privacy, defending the unborn, restoring ethics in state government, and eradicating opportunities for voter fraud just amplifies the lack of transparency on our state budget. ***The people of Texas deserve better.***

None of these issues can wait until the 2019 Legislative Session. Texans deserve property tax relief, the full defense of life, safety, dignity, and privacy in the most intimate settings, and the peace of mind that election results are dependable and verifiable. Likewise, hardworking Texans deserve to know exactly how and why the State of Texas intends to spend their hard-earned dollars.

We strongly agree with Governor Greg Abbott that, "voter fraud must be eradicated," that "we must do all we can to help women have privacy, safety and security to the fullest extent," and that we must also secure "real constraints on the rise in property taxes on our fellow Texans."

If meaningful action is not taken on these issues before *Sine Die*, we call on Governor Abbott to respect the people of Texas, make good on his priorities, and make plans to call a special session of the Texas Legislature to complete this important unfinished business for the people. ***Anything less is unacceptable.***

The undersigned Texas Grassroots Leaders:*

JoAnn Fleming, Executive Director, Grassroots America - We the People PAC

Michael Quinn Sullivan, President, Empower Texans

Pastor Dave Welch, President, Texas Pastors Council

Cathie Adams, Board Member, National Eagle Forum; past President, Texas Eagle Forum

Trayce Bradford, President, Texas Eagle Forum

Dana Hodges, State Director, Concerned Women for America/Texas

Aaron Harris, Executive Director, Direct Action Texas

Laura Pressley, Ph.D., Founder, Save our Texas Vote Coalition



Tim Lambert, President, Texas Home School Coalition

Farris and Jo Ann Wilks, Cisco Conservatives

C. R. "Dick" Saulsbury, Saulsbury Companies

Monty Bennett, Ashford, Inc.

Julie McCarty, President, NE Tarrant TEA Party

Bill Hussey, Founder & Past President, Llano TEA Party

Ray Myers, Chairman, Kaufman County TEA Party

Maggie Wright, Founding member, past President, Texas Patriots TEA Party

Robin and Jim Lennon, President & Director, Kingwood TEA Party, Inc.

Suzette Griffin, President, Clear Lake TEA Party

Mary and Dale Huls, Past President & current Executive Committee members, Clear Lake TEA Party

Dr. Dwayne Collins, Founder & Chairman, Edom TEA Party

Dean Wright, Co-founder/Director, New Revolution Now & the Austin TEA Party

Larry Korkmas, President, TFIRE

Russell Ramsland, Founder, Park Cites/Preston Hollow Leadership Forum

Mike Openshaw, Co-founder, Communications Director, North Texas TEA Party

Allen Tharp, President, San Antonio TEA Party

Jeremiah Hunter, Chairman, We the People – Longview TEA Party

Pat Tibbs, President, Montgomery County TEA Party PAC

Barry A. Schlech, Ph.D., A Founder/Past President, Texas Patriots TEA Party

Josie Schoolcraft, President, Cherokee County Republican

Terri Hall, Founder/Director, Texans Uniting for Reform and Freedom (TURF)

Ruth York, President, TEA Party Patriots of Eastland County

Pastor Greg Young, Nationally Syndicated Radio host, Chosen Generation

Don Dixon, longtime transportation reform activist & blogger, San Antonio



Fredericksburg TEA Party



Lyleann McClellan Thee, President, San Angelo TEA Party

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Karen Albright, President, Freestone County TEA Party

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Jackie King, a Founder, Conservative Society of Navarro County

Dottie Barnes, Charter member, Conservative Society of Navarro County

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Bill Bingham, Spokesman, Bryan/College Station TEA Party

Stacy McMahan, Executive Director, East Texans for Liberty

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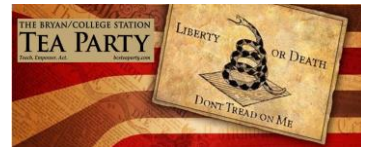
Maria Martinez, Houston Inner Loop Grassroots

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Lynn Gaston, Precinct 2 Chair, Mitchell County



* Organizations are listed
for identification purposes.