

Status of Ag-Related Bills in the 2023 Texas Legislature followed by the Texas Agricultural Cooperative Council

As of a bill closing date of March 10, 2023, a record number of bills had been filed at the State Capitol (7,859). One reporting service indicated as many as 9,500 had been filed. The State Legislative Session concludes on May 29, 2023.

Bill	Latest Action	Date	Bill Sponsor Phone (512-463-)	Essence of the Bill
S.B. 1 / H.B. 1 <i>(The two-year state budget)</i>	Passed in the Senate ▪ Passed the House	4/17/23 ▪ 4/6/23	R) Joan Huffman of Houston (0117) R) Greg Bonnen of Friendswood (0729)	This is the only bill required by state law that must pass, but is also one of the last ones to ever get passed... likely in mid to late May. The budget runs from September 1, 2023-August 31, 2025. In addition to the number that gets passed, another \$100-\$150 billion in revenue will also be forthcoming from the Federal government. There appears to be about \$33 billion extra tax dollars in this current budget cycle, so legislators are busy trying to see how to spend these excess funds (<i>i.e. property tax relief, school safety, border security, etc.</i>). Funding of the boll weevil eradication program is hidden in this bill as a rider. The House version totals \$302.6 billion over the next two years and the Senate version \$308 billion. The bill now goes to Conference Committee to work out the differences.
Special Rider <i>(To fund gin infrastructure)</i>	Heard in House Appropriations Committee	04/06/23	R) Charles Perry of Lubbock (0128) R) Cecil Bell of Magnolia (0650)	Included in S.B. 1 and H.B. 1 is a special rider, just like what provides for the boll weevil eradication funding. This request of \$50 million <u>does not</u> come from state tax dollars, but rather from Biden's American Rescue Plan Act, of which Texas is set to get over \$5 billion. This money would be available to cotton gins and infrastructure such as warehouses in \$500,000 maximum amounts. To qualify: your facility must be located in a D-2 or D-3 drought disaster area in recent years, you must prove a loss of 30% or more in gross revenue from 2021 to 2022 and the funds only apply to fixed costs, not variable costs, in the operation. If passed, this is only a one-time offer program. While cotton farmers have federal crop insurance to rely on, cotton businesses do not. This would significantly aid them.

Broadband

Bill	Latest Action	Date	Bill Sponsor Phone (512-463-)	Essence of the Bill
SJR 27 <i>(Creates a telecommunications funding mechanism)</i>	Referred to the Senate Business and Commerce Committee	2/15/23	R) Charles Perry of Lubbock (0128)	If this bill passes at the State Capitol, it would go to the voters of the state in November 2023 as a constitutional amendment. Via the State Comptrollers Office, it sets up a Texas Connectivity Fund to provide financial resources for the development of telecommunication services throughout the state.

Education

Bill	Latest Action	Date	Bill Sponsor Phone (512-463-)	Essence of the Bill
SB 8/HB 5261 <i>(Education Savings Accounts)</i>	Passed the Senate ▪ Referred to the House Public Education Committee	4/6/23 ▪ 4/17/2023	R) Brandon Creighton of Conroe (0104) R) James Frank of Wichita Falls (0534)	This will eventually be the lead bill on school vouchers if one ever gets passed. It allows parents to opt out their kids from the public school system and receive an \$8,000/student voucher to place them in a private or home school.
SB 176 <i>(School Choice Funding)</i>	Heard and left pending in the Senate Education Committee	3/22/2023 ▪ 4/11/23	R) Mayes Middleton of Galveston (0111)	This is but one of many bills filed dealing with school choice. Currently, the state pays about \$6,160/student to local school districts. Some want to raise this amount to \$7,070/student. Under this bill, it establishes taxpayer-supported bank accounts for those parents that wish to remove their kids from the public school system. This bill will face stiff opposition in the House.

Elections/Ethics

Bill	Latest Action	Date	Bill Sponsor Phone (512-463-)	Essence of the Bill
SB 2 / HB 4198 <i>(Illegal Voting)</i>	Passed the Senate • Referred to the House Elections Committee	3/14/23 • 4/10/23	R) Bryan Hughes of Tyler (0101) R) Steve Toth of The Woodlands (0797)	This bill would increase the penalty for illegal voting from a misdemeanor to a felony and up to 20 years in prison.
SB 175 / HB 3538 <i>(Taxpayer Funded Lobbying)</i>	Passed the Senate • Referred to the House State Affairs Committee	4/06/23 • 4/13/23	R) Mayes Middleton of Galveston (0111) R) Ellen Troxclair of Lakeway (0490)	Many cities in Texas hire expensive lobbyists around the State Capitol to make sure no offensive measures are passed that harm them. Under this bill, it would ban taxpayer funded lobbying at the State Capitol by big city lobbyists. The House sponsor was a rare conservative on the Austin City Council and files numerous bills at the state level to rein in ordinances from larger cities.
SJR 59 / HJR 75 <i>(Earlier State Session Start)</i>	Passed the Senate • Referred to the House State Affairs Committee	4/6/23 • 3/28/23	R) Brian Birdwell of Granbury (0122) R) John Raney of Bryan (0698)	Unless cited by the Governor, only emergency bills can be voted on at the State Capitol within the first 30 days of a State Legislative Session and then establishes a 60 day limit by which all bills must be filed once a Session starts. If passed, this bill allows for a two week preparation time to study bills prior to a session and allows immediate voting once a session starts. If passed, this would go to the voters of the state in November 2023 as a constitutional amendment.

Energy

Bill	Latest Action	Date	Bill Sponsor Phone (512-463-)	Essence of the Bill
SJR 45 <i>(Incentivizing energy preparedness)</i>	Referred to the Senate Business and Commerce Committee	3/1/2023	R) Charles Perry of Lubbock (0128)	If passed at the State Capitol, this measure would be taken to the voters of the state in November 2023 as a constitutional amendment. In short, this bill creates a special funding mechanism incentivizing for energy preparedness.
SB 1001 / HB 3343 <i>(Electric Vehicles)</i>	Passed by the Senate • Passed the Licensing and Administrative Procedures Committee	3/29/23 • 3/28/23	R) Charles Perry of Lubbock (0128) R) Ken King of Canadian (0736)	This bill provides for the state oversight of electric vehicle charging stations and putting that responsibility in the hands of the Texas Department of Licensing and Regulation.

Environment

Bill	Latest Action	Date	Bill Sponsor Phone (512-463-)	Essence of the Bill
SB 872 / HB 692 <i>(Disposal of dairy waste)</i>	Heard and left pending in the Senate Water, Ag, and Rural Affairs Committee • Passed the House Environmental Regulation Committee	4/13/23 • 4/4/23	R) Drew Springer of Muenster (0130) R) Glenn Rogers of Graford (0656)	During the tragic February 2021 freeze, loads of dairy milk had to be thrown away since electricity was out for long periods of time by the EPA & TCEQ. However, disposal of bad milk on land is illegal. This bill would allow such land application to occur.
SB 1074 / HB 1761 <i>(Registering Pesticides)</i>	Referred to the Senate Water, Ag, and Livestock Committee • Passed the House	3/03/23 • 4/14/23	R) Charles Perry of Lubbock (0128) R) Dewayne Burns of Cleburne (0538)	This bill was filed by the chemical industry to aid when such industries merge, then what follows in the re-registering of all their products. This would simplify that re-registering protocol.

Insurance/Labor

Bill	Latest Action	Date	Bill Sponsor Phone (512-463-)	Essence of the Bill
SB 814 / HB 2127 <i>(Required sick leave payment by businesses)</i>	Heard and left pending in the Senate Business and Commerce Committee • Passed the House	4/4/23 • 4/19/23	R) Brandon Creighton of Conroe (0104) R) Dustin Burrows of Lubbock (0542)	Some cities have passed very unfavorable ordinances in recent years that are detrimental to the business community---such as Austin requiring businesses to pay sick leave to their employees. This bill would prohibit such action.
HB 238 <i>(Migrant housing penalties)</i>	Placed on General State Calendar	4/26/23	D) Diego Bernal of San Antonio (0532)	Should this bill pass, it would lower the daily "out of compliance" fines for housing migrant labor from \$200/day to \$50/day.
HB 883 <i>(Migrant housing fees)</i>	Passed the House Urban Affairs Committee	4/4/23	D) Ramon Romero of Fort Worth (0740)	Under this bill, it would increase the application fee for housing seasonal migrant labor and also change penalty amounts for those found out of compliance.
SB 1621/HB 3846 <i>(E-verify workers)</i>	Heard and left pending in the Senate Business and Commerce Committee • Referred to the House State Affairs Committee	4/11/23 • 3/20/23	R) Lois Kolkhorst of Brenham (0118) R) Steve Toth of The Woodlands (0797)	This bill would require all businesses in Texas to e-verify all their workers for citizenship purposes.
HB 2461/HB 4859 <i>(Eliminates special insurance groups)</i>	Referred to the House Business and Industry Committee • Heard and left pending in the House Business and Industry Committee	3/13/23 • 4/17/23	R) Hugh Shine of Temple (0630)	For decades, the State of Texas allowed for self-funded workers compensation insurance plans. There were nine beginning in 2003. Today, there is only one - the Texas Cotton Ginners' Trust. The bill would eliminate the special provisions allowing for their existence. State Senator Charles Perry filed SB 2269, which would allow the Texas Cotton Ginner's Trust to remain a legitimate provider of workers compensation insurance --- and it passed the Senate Business and Commerce Committee on 4/17/23 and was placed on Senate Intent Calendar 4/20/23.

Miscellaneous

Bill	Latest Action	Date	Bill Sponsor Phone (512-463-)	Essence of the Bill
SB 264 / HB 4238 <i>(Hemp Production)</i>	Referred to the Senate Water, Ag, and Rural Affairs Committee • Referred to the House Public Health Committee	2/15/23 • 3/21/23	R) Charles Perry of Lubbock (0128) R) Stephanie Klick of Fort Worth (0599)	Since numerous bills passed the last State Legislative Session regarding the production, distribution, and marketing of hemp, some of the industry chose to abuse the "system." This legislation's intent is to tighten the regulations of the industry.
SB 664 / HB 1788 <i>(Fake Meat Bill)</i>	Passed the Senate • Placed on House General State Calendar	4/20/23 • 4/25/23	R) Charles Perry of Lubbock (0128) R) Brad Buckley of Salado (0684)	In short, this same bill died last session by a state legislator from the heart of cattle country in Fredericksburg. Needless to say, the legislator <u>did not</u> rerun for his seat largely due to push back he received. This bill forces proper labeling of cultured or petri-dish fake meat so as to avoid misbranding of food to shoppers.
SJR 44 / HJR 181 <i>(Increasing penalties for violent crimes)</i>	Passed the Senate • Set for hearing in the House Criminal Jurisprudence Committee	3/20/23 • 4/25/23	R) Joan Huffman of Houston (0117) R) Reggie Smith of Van Alstyne (0297)	This bill would make it much more difficult for violent criminals to get out of jail after simply posting bond---in those larger cities where liberal district attorneys tend to place less severe penalties.
SB 2036 / HB 3257 <i>(Animal Health Commission Security)</i>	Set for hearing in the Senate Water, Ag, and Rural Affairs Committee • Heard and left pending in the House Ag and Livestock Committee	4/24/23 • 4/19/23	R) Lois Kolkhorst of Brenham (0118) R) Kyle Kacal of College Station (0412)	Nearly all issues regarding state agency work are subject to the "open meetings act." This bill was filed to protect the Texas Animal Health Commission from having to conform to this act in certain circumstances as it relates to biosecurity and other sensitive long-term obligations.

SB 815 / HB 73 (Cattle Breaks)	Received in the Senate from the House ▪ Passed the House	4/18/23 ▪ 4/18/23	R) Andrew Murr of Junction (0536)	This bill protects cattle operators and landowners in the event someone damages a fence and the cows get out on the road and are involved in a traffic accident. Many times traffic accidents occur at night damaging a fence to the point where cattle get out and are involved in an accident, thus leaving the landowner liable. Not under this bill.
HJR 75 (Casino Gambling)	Referred to the House State Affairs Committee	2/28/23	R) Charlie Geren of Fort Worth (0610)	In recent years, there has been increasing attempts to allow casino gambling in Texas, especially since so many Texans travel to neighboring states to have their fun. Under this bill, it would allow 8 casino gambling centers in Texas. One being considered would be built by Mark Cuban just north of the Metroplex to not only include a gambling casino, but also the Dallas Mavericks Basketball Center would be moved to the new location.
SB 222 (Allows for parental leave)	Passed the Senate ▪ Passed the House State Affairs Committee	3/22/2023 ▪ 4/14/23	R) Robert Nichols of Jacksonville (0103) R) Will Metcalf of Conroe (0726)	This bill has agreement from both political parties and allows for up to 30 days parental leave for all teachers and state agency employees due to childbirth in the immediate family.
SB 715/HB 1942 (Permits sports gambling)	Referred to the Senate State Affairs Committee ▪ Passed the House State Affairs Committee	3/1/23 ▪ 4/17/2023	R) Lois Kolkhorst of Brenham (0118) R) Jeff Leach of Allen (0544)	This bill would allow regulated sports betting in Texas. Twenty-nine states currently have such a law. If passed, this measure would go before the voters of the state as a constitutional amendment in November 2023.
HB 2843 (Allows for casino gambling)	Passed the House State Affairs Committee	4/3/23	R) John Kuempel of Seguin (0602)	This bill would allow casino gambling in Texas.

Property Rights

Bill	Latest Action	Date	Bill Sponsor Phone (512-463-)	Essence of the Bill
SB 147 (Restricts foreign land purchases)	Passed in the Senate State Affairs Committee	4/13/23	R) Lois Kolkhorst of Brenham (0118)	Would prohibit Texas land purchases by citizens or businesses of North Korea, Russia, China and Iran.
SB 711 (Restricts foreign land purchases)	Heard and left pending in the Senate State Affairs Committee	03/02/23	R) Charles Perry of Lubbock (0128)	Prior to a land purchase in Texas, an entity from a bad actor country must meet certain thresholds prior to being allowed, if ever, to make such a purchase.
HJR 81 (Eminent Domain)	Referred to the House Land and Resource Management Committee	03/03/23	R) Mike Shofield of Katy (0528)	Creates a constitutional amendment to be voted on by citizens in November 2023 that would prohibit the taking of eminent domain by a private entity <u>without</u> regard to economic development or enhancement of tax revenues.
HJR 126 / HB 1750/ SB 1421 (Right to Farm)	Referred to the Senate Water, Ag, and Rural Affairs Committee ▪ Passed the House	4/20/23 ▪ 4/10/23	R) Charles Perry of Lubbock (0128) R) Dewayne Burns of Cleburne (0538)	Increasingly, some larger municipalities are imposing more and more ordinances that restrict a person from farming crops and having hay and cattle operations within a city's limits and imposes severe penalties. This would call for the State Extension Service to prepare a manual on the 123 "generally accepted" and minimum policies that allow such operations to occur. The bill would also override any current and future restrictive local and county ordinances to the practice of farming and ranching; this measure would apply to leased land as well. SB 1421 passed the Senate on 4/3/23. This bill pretty much relates to land being farmed within a city limit.
HB 376 (Eminent Domain)	Passed the House Land and Resource Management Committee	4/4/23	R) Glenn Rogers of Graford (0656)	Creates a landowner bill of rights for use as a guide in takings via eminent domain; with special emphasis on how the transaction may impact land values.
HB 695 (Wind Farm Eminent Domain)	Referred to the House Land and Resource Management Committee	3/23/2023	R) Glenn Rogers of Graford (0656)	Under this measure, it prohibits the use of eminent domain authority to purchase property for use as wind farms.
HB 696 (Landowner Notification)	Was set for hearing in the House Energy Resources Committee, then pulled	3/27/23	R) Glenn Rogers of Graford (0656)	Under this bill, a neighboring landowner must be made aware and properly notified of a planned excavation by a utility. Also, this applies to each landowner in the affected area.

HB 1075 (Limits buyers of land)	Heard and left pending in the House State Affairs Committee	4/19/23	R) Cody Harris of Palestine (0730)	This bill would prohibit foreign buyers from purchasing ag land that is listed as Subchapter C or D, Chapter 23 of the state tax code. (Land in ag valuation or wildlife valuation) .
HB 1348 (Restricting veterinarians)	Passed the House Ag and Livestock Committee	3/16/23	R) Lynn Stucky of Denton (0582)	Many rural veterinarian practices are headquartered in small towns in Texas---within the city limits. Increasingly, such ag operations are being limited in functions they can perform due to restrictive city ordinances. This bill would outlaw a city from imposing needless restrictions to such practices.
HB 3398 (City annexation)	Referred to the House Land and Resource Management Committee	3/15/23	R) Stan Gerdes of Smithville (0682)	Increasingly citizens in the suburbs of cities have felt <u>helpless</u> over the ability and ease with which a city can access outlying property and annex it into the town. Under this bill, it would call for a citizen vote by those that would be impacted by the annexation. This bill only applies to counties adjacent to a county with one million or more population.
HB 4489 (Poultry odor)	Passed the House Environmental Regulation Committee	4/4/23	R) Cody Harris of Palestine (0730)	If you are a poultry operator, this is not a good bill. It makes it much easier for a neighbor to impose penalties on your operation. It stiffens odor nuisances on the part of the poultry operator from 3 "violations" to 3 "complaints" --- within a 12-month period, then the poultry operator is no longer in compliance. In short, this bill would make it easier to place a poultry operator out of compliance on odor.
SB 1133 / HB 4670	Passed the Senate ▪ Passed the House State Affairs Committee	4/13/2023 ▪ 4/20/23	R) Cesar Blanco of El Paso (0129) D) Tracy King of Uvalde (0194)	This bill would require the state attorney general to administer a grant program to compensate landowners who suffer property damage on ag land by a trespasser involved in drugs, human trafficking and evading arrest. The bill was intended for many South Texas ranchers who have been abused by border crossings.

Rural Economic Development/Healthcare

Bill	Latest Action	Date	Bill Sponsor Phone (512-463-)	Essence of the Bill
SB 251 / HB 617 (Telemedicine)	Received in the Senate from the House ▪ Passed the House	4/5/23 ▪ 4/4/23	D) Carol Alvarado of Houston (0106) R) Drew Darby of San Angelo (0331)	This bill would establish a PILOT emergency telemedicine program in rural areas (<i>counties with less than 50,000 population</i>) via the Texas Tech Health Science Center.
SB 675 (Economic Development Funding)	Heard and left pending in the Senate Finance Committee	3/13/23	R) Drew Springer of Muenster (0130)	Rural businesses were hit hard during the COVID outbreak. This bill provides some funds and insurance tax credits for such businesses to restore themselves. It is patterned after similar legislation passed in Ohio, Georgia, Utah and Pennsylvania to enact rural investment programs to attract private capital to rural entrepreneurs.

Taxes/Appraisals

Bill	Latest Action	Date	Bill Sponsor Phone (512-463-)	Essence of the Bill
SB 3 (Increase homestead tax exemption)	Passed the Senate ▪ Referred to the House Ways and Means Committee	3/22/23 ▪ 4/10/23	R) Paul Bettencourt of Houston (0107)	This is one of many bills filed to give property tax relief to <u>homeowners</u> . It would increase the current homestead tax exemption from \$40k to \$70k and for the disabled and elderly an additional \$20k. For businesses, this bill would give them property tax relief totaling about \$1.5 billion via tax exemptions and inventory tax credits.
SB 4 (Lowers school tax rate)	Passed the Senate ▪ Referred to the House Ways and Means Committee	3/21/2023 ▪ 4/10/23	R) Paul Bettencourt of Houston (0107)	This is another one of those bills we all knew was coming that gives property tax relief to homeowners. It would lower the tax rate school districts can levy on citizens by 4 cents and would result in a savings of about \$785 to the average homeowner and it would ask the state to increase its share to fund schools to \$5.4 billion. In short, it would place the school property tax rate at 70-75 cents/\$100 valuation. Under this bill, there is little relief to renters. Some groups are suggesting that HB 2 appraisal caps be used to lower property taxes, but others counter that appraisal caps would increase the cost of doing business in Texas. HB 2 would lower the state's cap on how much the value of a homeowner's main residence can rise from 10% to 5%. HB 2 passed the House at promising \$17 billion for property tax relief. SB 4 also lowers amounts of funds that property rich school districts would have to share with poorer districts (<i>Robin Hood Plan</i>).

SB 5 (Tax Incentives)	Passed the Senate ▪ Referred to the House Ways and Means Committee	3/22/23 ▪ 4/10/2023	R) Todd Hunter of Corpus Christi (0672)	Texas has led the nation in securing huge companies to Texas with a special tax forgiveness plan known as Chapter 313 tax exemptions. This measure was allowed to recently expire after many years of successful use. This bill would restore such tax incentives to those businesses who would like to relocate to the state. This bill would not apply to clean energy businesses. It would give businesses a ten year school property tax break. SJR2 is also a part of this bill.
HB 623 (Eliminate property tax on feed in storage)	Placed on the House General State Calendar	4/25/23	R) Cody Harris of Palestine (0730)	Under current law, feed left in storage at retail feed stores around the state at December 31, annually must pay a property tax on that feed. This bill would eliminate such a tax.
HB 3418 (Miles travelled tax)	Passed the House Transportation Committee	4/5/23	D) Terry Canales of Edinburg (0426)	Currently, the highway road system in Texas is funded by a tax on diesel and gas. Under this bill, such fuel <u>used by commercial motor vehicles</u> would switch from present day to a <u>pilot</u> "miles travelled" tax on its fuel use.

Transportation

Bill	Latest Action	Date	Bill Sponsor Phone (512-463-)	Essence of the Bill
HB 5225 (Overweight farm vehicles)	Passed the House Ag and Livestock Committee	4/14/2023	R) Ryan Guillen of Rio Grande City (0416)	This bill would allow for 10% excess on overweight farm vehicles if they pay a \$90 special permit fee annually. Such vehicles could not drive on the Interstate or travel on roads that exceed maximum overweight limits on bridges.

Water

Bill	Latest Action	Date	Bill Sponsor Phone (512-463-)	Essence of the Bill
SJR 75 / HJR 130 (Establishes a state water fund)	Passed the Senate ▪ Heard and left pending in the House Natural Resources Committee	4/3/23 ▪ 4/18/23	R) Charles Perry of Lubbock (0128) D) Tracy King of Uvalde (0194)	This bill establishes a "Water Supply for Texas Fund" at the Texas Water Development Board to assist in new water projects and upgrade existing water infrastructure across Texas; with an emphasis on rural areas. Also on part of SB 28.
SB 156 (Groundwater Districts)	Passed the Senate ▪ Referred to the House Natural Resources Committee	3/16/23 ▪ 4/10/23	R) Charles Perry of Lubbock (0128)	The bill: 1) requires groundwater districts (GWD) to inform a neighbor of a pending water well drilling permit, 2) allows a landowner another resource (<i>rather than simply always going through the courts</i>) if a GWD imposes a negative regulation upon a property owner, and 3) forces a GWD to
HB 4444 (Water conservation)	Passed the House Natural Resource Committee	4/19/23	D) Tracy King of Uvalde (0194)	The definition of "waste" water has regulatory implications. This bill eliminates ambiguous and outdated definition of "waste" as it applies to water. The bill requires "reasonably efficient