

## Testimony for noted Bills below

I submit the following testimony to this committee demanding that priority be given to Texas taxpayers, not to government bureaucracies & special interests.

**Interim Charge 1A:** HB 803 and SB 198, which relate to toll project financial reporting and use payments. Monitor the effectiveness of the tools available to Texas toll project entities for enforcing unpaid tolls while protecting customer rights.

- Toll fines should be capped at \$48/year for all toll agencies.
- All criminal penalties must be removed (the House voted 136-3 to de-criminalize in 2017).
- Bills should be sent immediately with a uniform, timely billing standard required (ie - tolls incurred must be billed within 14 days and payment should be not be due before 30 working days from the time of receipt.) Like most financial delinquencies, there must be a statute of limitation on how far back an agency can go to collect a toll. Agencies should not be allowed to collect tolls more than six months old. Drivers should have at least 90 working days before an unpaid toll bill is sent to collections.
- Toll agencies should be required to prove the customer actually received notice of tolls owed before any fines or fees are assessed.
- Requirement that agencies must make payment arrangements with those unable to pay in full at the time of billing without fines and fees tacked on for inability to pay in full at the time of the billing cycle.
- Agencies must immediately notify drivers of any problems with payment cards associated with their toll tag accounts. The practice of holding back bills to allow fines and fees to rack up before notifying drivers of a problem with

payment cards must stop. We mustn't tolerate from government agencies what we wouldn't tolerate from consumer/commercial institutions.

All that is being asked here is that the same standards of debt collection applied to private businesses, be applied to the government agencies collecting tolls. Citizens have been fighting the toll collection battle for a long time with horror stories told on social media of thousands of dollars of fees being added to very small toll bills.

**Interim Charge 1B:** SB 282 and SB 962, which relate to the funding for the State Highway Fund. Study the current mix of user fee-based funding for the state highway system, including registration fees, tolls, and fuel tax, and determine if current funding generated is sufficient to maintain cost demands. Make recommendations for additional methods of funding or innovative tools that the state could utilize to deliver road infrastructure projects.

What I support are:

- No new taxes, tolls, fees, or debt.
- A lean and transparent highway department and toll agencies. TX Dot should not be allowed to spend money on frivolous projects, there are many examples...bridges installed and never used etc.
- Agencies that are responsive to the taxpayers, not special interests.
- Projects prioritized by objective measurements.
- Projects' price tags scaled to available funds.
- Zero-based budgeting implemented and disclosed so it can be verified.

**On a related matter I support Disabled Veterans ability to use HOV lanes regardless of number of occupants in vehicle.**

Milton J. Turner Jr.

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