

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
NOTICE OF FORMAL REQUEST FOR INFORMATION

COMMITTEE: Judiciary & Civil Jurisprudence
TIME & DATE: N/A
 Friday, November 6, 2020
PLACE: N/A
CHAIR: Rep. Jeff Leach

Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and the challenges in scheduling public hearings at this time, the Committee is requesting written submissions from state agencies, interested parties, and the public regarding all assigned interim charges. In addition, the Committee is seeking information regarding the effects of COVID-19 in areas within its jurisdiction.

Submission Guidelines:

- Submissions must be in Microsoft Word or Adobe PDF.
- Submissions are limited to five (5) pages in length.
- Submissions must be submitted via email to the Committee Clerk, Cassidy Zgabay, at cassidy.zgabay_hc@house.texas.gov.
- Submissions must include the submitter's name, organization or entity (if applicable), phone number, and mailing address.
- If responding to multiple topics, please submit separate submissions for each one.
- **The deadline for all submissions is Monday, November 30, 2020.**

All submissions will be distributed to each member of the Committee after the deadline and posted on the House website.

The Committee is requesting information on all interim charges, listed below:

Interim Charge 1: Monitor the agencies and programs under the Committee's jurisdiction and oversee the implementation of relevant legislation passed by the 86th Legislature. Conduct active oversight of all associated rulemaking and other governmental actions taken to ensure intended legislative outcome of all legislation, including the following:

- **HB 2899**, which specifies that highway construction contractors are not liable for design defects. Investigate whether expansion of those policies to other areas of public/private contracting is in the best interest of the state.
 - **HB 3809**, which raises the statute of limitations for suit for injuries from a sexual assault of a child from 15 years to 30 years. Study and deliberate ways to enhance protections for
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victims of sexual abuse. Review other Texas laws relating to reporting and investigating incidents of workplace sexual harassment. Make recommendations to remove barriers to reporting and investigating incidents of sexual harassment and to make improvements to existing policies where necessary.

- **HB 4531**, which authorizes adults under guardianship to consent to forensic medical examination protocols. Monitor the impact of the legislation on the prevention, investigation, and prosecution of sexual assault, and study the impact on other related offenses and the treatment and services provided to victims of those offenses.
- **SB 2342**, which increases the amount in controversy for certain courts and expedited proceedings and makes reforms to jury requirements in order to improve access to courts. Review the impact of the legislation on the administration of justice and access to courts for Texas citizens.

Interim Charge 2: Study opportunities to modernize and improve local and statewide data collection throughout the criminal justice system in Texas, including improving the collection and reporting of court records, to promote transparency and ensure uniform data collection processes.

Interim Charge 3: Study the Rule Against Perpetuities as used by trusts. Examine whether statutory changes are necessary and appropriate to make Texas more competitive and keep trust capital and estate planning businesses in Texas.

Interim Charge 4: Monitor the State Auditor's review of agencies and programs under the committee's jurisdiction.

The Committee is also requesting information relating to the COVID-19 pandemic:

1. Have you had any difficulty acquiring PPE for your court, county, or staff?
2. How have your caseloads been impacted by COVID-19? Do you have a backlog of cases?
3. What has been your experience in using Zoom or other online platforms for court proceedings?
4. How has the pandemic impacted court staff, e.g. space teleworking, flexible work shifts, etc.?

In the event where it becomes feasible to safely conduct a public meeting, the Committee reserves the right to hold an interim hearing relating to these topics.
