

Capitol Watch 433: Bills Passed

Written by Betsy Blevins
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May 12, 2011 - As of this writing, there are only 23 days left in the 82nd Legislative Session. Bills are moving through the legislative process, and a few have been finally passed. This week, I will discuss a few bills of importance that have received final passage and have been sent to the governor.

House Bill 15, about which I have previously written, was passed this week. This bill would require a pregnant woman who is considering an abortion to have a sonogram prior to the procedure. This bill was on the governor's emergency items list, as was Senate Bill 18. SB 18 is a reform of the use of eminent domain, and provides greater protections to property owners. Another emergency item, HB 12, relating to the prohibition of sanctuary cities, was being debated by the House on Friday and Saturday. HB 12 seeks to address concerns about certain cities that have policies that prohibit law enforcement officials from inquiring about a detained person's immigration status.

This week also saw the passage of the first of the redistricting maps. HB 600, which redrew the boundaries for the State Board of Education districts, was passed on Thursday, May 5, after the House voted to accept the Senate's amendments to the bill.

SB 257 finally passed this week also. This bill would create a specialty license plate that reads "Choose Life." The fees from this specialty plate would go into a fund held by the attorney general. Pregnancy care centers could then apply for grants from the fund to provide services for pregnant women in need.

A conference committee report for SB 14, the voter identification bill, has been distributed to both the House and Senate. Conference committees are made up of members from both the house and senate and are formed to work out differences between the house and senate versions of a bill. It is expected that SB 14 will be finally passed next week.

For more information on these bills or any other legislative matter, please contact my office by writing to P.O. Box 2910, Austin, TX 78768-2910 or by emailing me at larry.phillips@house.state.tx.us. My district office phone number is (903) 891-7297.