



Texas BOMA Legislative Update
by Robert D. Miller, Yuniedth Midence Steen, and Gardner Pate
January 5, 2015

Happy New Year! Now that 2014 is behind us, we can look forward to the 2015 Texas legislative session.

The Session Begins

The Texas Legislature meets every two years for 140 days. This year, the Session begins on Tuesday, January 13, and runs through Monday, June 1.

Bill Filings Are Up

While the Legislature won't gavel in until next week, legislators have been hard at work for several months. November 10, 2014, marked the start of bill filings for the 2015 regular session. Through the Friday before Christmas, bill filings are up significantly from the 2013 regular session. In the House, filings were up by 87% over two years ago, and in the Senate, filings were up by 66%. It is difficult to say at this time whether the bill filings will continue on this pace, though it is likely that 2015 will see more bills filed than we saw in 2013.

Taxes and Spending

The only bill the Legislature must pass each session is the budget, which this session will govern state spending from September 1, 2015, through August 31, 2017. Just before the start of each session, the Comptroller issues his revenue estimate. This number is an estimate of how much money the state will collect in taxes and fees over the biennium. By law, the Legislature is unable to spend more money in the budget than the Comptroller forecasts the state will collect during the period.

Newly-elected Comptroller Glenn Hegar (R) took office on January 2, 2015, succeeding former Comptroller Susan Combs (R), who had held that office since 2007. Comptroller Hegar will provide the Legislature with his revenue estimate early next week. It will be interesting to see the revenue forecasts for oil & gas-related activities, as the price of oil dropping will likely negatively impact production in Texas, resulting in less direct and indirect economic activity.

New Leadership

Speaker Joe Straus (R-San Antonio) has held his post since the 2009 session. We anticipate the House will reelect Speaker Straus to a fourth term this month.

In the Senate, Lt. Governor David Dewhurst (R) lost his reelection contest to State Senator Dan Patrick (R-Houston). Sen. Patrick will be sworn in as the new Lieutenant Governor on January 20—one week after the Legislature convenes. This means the Legislature will convene under Lt. Governor Dewhurst, then switch to Lt. Governor Patrick's control a week later.

Governor Rick Perry, who has held his post since December 2000, will be replaced on January 20 by Greg Abbott (R), who has held the post of Attorney General since December 2002.

The Elections Continue

On Tuesday, January 6, voters in certain districts will have the opportunity to once again make their voices heard.

Senator Leticia Van de Putte (D-San Antonio) announced in December that she was resigning from the Legislature to run for Mayor of San Antonio. The special election to replace her will take place on January 6. Among the various contestants are current State Representatives Trey Martinez Fischer (D-San Antonio) and Jose Menendez (D-San Antonio).

Representative Mike Villarreal (D-San Antonio) announced last year that he would refuse to take office again in 2015 so that he, too, can run for Mayor of San Antonio. The election to fill his seat will be held on January 6 as well.

Finally, Representative Tim Kleinschmidt (R-Lexington) will not be taking the oath of office as a new Representative, either. Representative Kleinschmidt will join incoming Agriculture Commissioner Sid Miller as the Commission's General Counsel. The race to replace Representative Kleinschmidt will also be held on January 6.

We will continue to monitor these issues as they develop, and we will keep you informed.