



# TEXAS HOUSE *of* REPRESENTATIVES

*James White*

*House District 19  
Jasper, Newton, Hardin, Polk, Tyler*

CORRECTIONS  
CHAIR

REDISTRICTING

JUDICIARY &  
CIVIL JURISPRUDENCE

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Tuesday, May 7, 2019

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### **Texas House Passes Texas Taxpayer Transparency Act; Protects Free Speech on College Campuses**

- Weekly Legislative Update 5/3/19 -

(Austin, TX) - The Texas House passed the Texas Taxpayer Transparency Act, which provides much needed transparency in the property tax system. Property owners deserve every opportunity to weigh in on how their taxes are being raised & spent. This bill will do just that.

I am proud to have voted for and co-authored the Texas Taxpayer Transparency Act, which gives homeowners the tools needed to make informed decisions about their property taxes. You'll know who wants to raise rates, by how much, and where you can go to protest. For too long, homeowners have been cut out of the property tax rate-setting process. Slowing the growth of skyrocketing property taxes starts with Senate Bill 2.

Here are a few highlights of what SB 2 as it is currently written will accomplish:

- Lowers the rollback rate to 3.5% for most taxing units and 2% for school districts
- Maintains the current rollback rate for special taxing units with unique situations like junior colleges, hospital districts, and those with an M&O tax rate of \$0.025 (per \$100) or less
- Makes the final passage of this bill contingent upon final passage of the House's plan for school finance (HB 3)
- Institutes an automatic November ratification election when a taxing unit adopts a property tax rate exceeding the rollback rate
- Calculates how much one would owe under the proposed tax rates and discloses the "No New Revenue" tax rate for each taxing unit on an individual's tax notice (like a line-item receipt)
- Requires the same property tax notice to include the time, date and location of public hearings where property tax rates will be deliberated or adopted
- Further enhances tax notices by requiring local governments to include a chart comparing what the recipient paid in property taxes last year versus what they will pay this year
- Gives taxpayers the option of filling out a short form -- attached to their electronic tax notice -- that will generate a message outlining the taxpayer's stance on their tax rate before automatically sending it to the appropriate taxing unit



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- Creates a flexible rollback banking system that allows those who stay under the rollback rate to save the portion they didn't use and put it toward raising the rollback rate in another year -- without triggering an election -- until the amount is spent or five years have gone by
- Creates a "de minimis revenue rate", the rate allowing a taxing unit to raise up to an additional \$500,000 in property tax revenue without triggering an election
- Allows taxing units to adjust their No-New-Revenue M&O rate to include the increased costs of a homestead exemption should they elect to provide one
- Creates a Property Tax Advisory Board within the Office of the Comptroller to make ongoing recommendations to improve effectiveness and efficiency in the property tax system
- Expands opportunities for property owners to protest or appeal their appraisal value through after-hours protests and requires notices from appraisal districts to be issued electronically
- Protects property owners from seeing their property value increase during the protest process at the appraisal review board level

After the passage of SB 2, the Texas House has officially passed it's 3 biggest priorities:

- A fiscally responsible budget.
- A transformational school finance plan.
- A property tax reform bill.

I'm proud to have voted for all 3, which work together to provide meaningful tax reform and relief for Texans!

The Texas House has also passed legislation to protect free speech on college campuses. While the U.S. Constitution and Texas Constitution express that we have the right to speak freely, colleges are working to limit that expression on their campuses. Higher education institutions have disinvited speakers, created 'free speech zones' relegating where speech can take place, and have adopted limits on topics and locations for demonstrations. These actions have shown that there is a threat to free speech across the country.

House Bill 2100 establishes that public higher education institutions must develop policies that are committed to protecting an individual's right to express themselves so long as they do not interfere with someone else's ability to do so themselves. Specifically, this legislation accomplishes the following:



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- Requires universities to establish a policy on expressive activities and ensures that students will be informed of their official policy on free expression;
- Ensures that the common outdoor areas of the institution's campus are deemed traditional public forums and permits any person lawfully present to engage in expressive activities in those areas freely;
- Establishes a system of disciplinary sanctions for students and anyone else who interferes with the free-speech rights of others;
- Reaffirms the principle that universities, in their official institutional capacity, should remain neutral on issues of public concern to encourage the widest possible range of opinion and dialogue within the university itself;
- Requires fees for invited speakers to be reasonable, and not based on the content of the speech. Allows the university to restrict the use of university facilities to invited individuals; and,
- Allows person(s) whose free speech rights have been improperly infringed upon by the university to recover court costs and attorney's fees.
- The protections established by House Bill 2100 are applied equally to all students, student groups, and student organizations.

I co-authored HB 2100 and hope that our colleagues in the Senate will agree in addressing this issue. Our college campuses are a places conducive to the deliberation of different ideologies for the purpose of promoting a rich academic experience.

The Capitol of Texas belongs to you and visiting the Capitol during the biennial legislative session is a great experience. To assist in arranging your visit please call Saul Mendoza, my Chief of Staff, at (512) 463-0490. Or, you can email him at [saul.mendoza@house.texas.gov](mailto:saul.mendoza@house.texas.gov).

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