

# **TML** LEGISLATIVE UPDATE



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## **Special Session Update: Impasse Continues**

As the first called special session reaches its midway point, the Lt. Governor, the Speaker and the Governor remain at an impasse on the best plan for property tax relief.

This week, the Senate Committee on State Affairs approved three bills not included on the Governor's call: bills dealing with the period of prayer and reading of the Bible or other religious texts in public schools, displaying the Ten Commandments in public schools, and the right of a public school employee to engage in religious speech or prayer while on duty.

The House still stands adjourned *sine die* and the prospect of legislation passing during the first called special session appears to be very slim.

## **Comptroller Announces Upcoming Changes to Texas Broadband Development Program Following Newly Signed Legislation**

On June 14, Comptroller Glenn Hegar announced that his office would be updating the state's Broadband Development program following the signing of [S.B. 1238](#) by Nichols. S.B. 1238 dramatically expands the areas eligible for broadband infrastructure funding by designating areas as served, unserved, or underserved based on much higher minimum broadband speed thresholds and other technical standards. Other changes in S.B. 1238 include prioritizing funding for unserved and underserved areas and a preference for fiber optic technology.

The comptroller's office will update the Texas Broadband Development Map to reflect these new thresholds. The higher minimum speed thresholds will result in far greater funding eligibility across the state. The comptroller explained that the public comments and map challenges submitted earlier this year were crucial as his office advised legislators on crafting S.B. 1238. "Our partners at the local level have been able to share critical information through the challenge process that will ensure this unprecedented amount of funding will be used efficiently and effectively."

Through the Broadband Development Office (BDO), the state has been allocated \$363.8 million of its \$500.5 million in Coronavirus Capital Projects funding to carry out critical broadband access infrastructure projects. The BDO will distribute these funds through a multi-round competitive grant process. The first round of funding will total \$120 million.

On November 7, 2023, voters will be asked to approve a state constitutional amendment to create the Broadband Infrastructure Fund. If approved, the state will allocate \$1.5 billion in state funding into the fund. In addition, the state anticipates receiving billions of dollars of additional Federal Infrastructure Bill funding to improve broadband access across the state.

## **Speaker Forms New Committee on Education**

Speaker Dade Phelan announced the formation of the House Select Committee on Educational Opportunity and Enrichment. The 15-member committee is charged to consider issues and matters that broadly affect educational opportunities for K-12 students in Texas. The committee membership and charges can be found [here](#).

The committee must issue a report no later than August 11, 2023, on its findings ahead of an expected special session on educational saving accounts (school vouchers).

## **Governor Announces Grants to Military Communities**

Governor Abbott [announced](#) a round of two million dollars in grants from the Texas Military Preparedness Commission (TMPC) Defense Economic Adjustment Assistant Grant (DEAAG) program. The DEAAG program is a grant program that invests in infrastructure projects and other initiatives to increase the military value in Texas military installations to help prevent any potential future Base Realignment and Closure round (BRAC) from occurring in Texas.

The following cities will receive FY2022-2023 DEAAG reimbursements:

- City of Corpus Christi: \$175,000 for the acquisition of portable solar powered electric charging stations at the Corpus Christi Army Depot
- City of Corpus Christi: \$1,000,000 for perimeter fencing and gate replacement at the Naval Air Station Corpus Christi
- City of Fort Worth: \$360,000 for anti-terrorism protection security system at the Naval Air Station Joint Reserve Base Fort Worth

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