



Justices of the Peace and Constables Association of Texas, Inc.

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88th Legislative Session Monday Brief, February 20th

This is the latest update from your President Judge Sergio De Leon and your Legislative Committee Chairs and Vice-Chairs, Judge J.R. Woolley, Constable Carlos Lopez, Judge Nicholas Chu, and Constable Buck Stevens

Please keep in mind we are currently tracking hundreds of bills pertaining to Justices of the Peace and Constables. We will continue to keep you updated throughout the 88th Legislative Session.

The following will be a brief overview of where JPCA priorities are for this session.

Updates from Last Week

- [HB 2362](#) by Rep. Moody (D-El Paso), Chairman of Criminal Jurisprudence filed the companion to [SB 760](#) by Sen. Morgan LaMantia (D-McAllen): Relating to taking a blood specimen from the body of a deceased person during an inquest.
- Rep. Cody Vasut (R-Angleton) filed [HB 2381](#) which would increase the maximum judgment amount awarded by a justice court in cases regarding the repair of residential rental property from \$10,000 to \$20,000.
- Senate Finance met to discuss the judiciary, the Office of Court Administration, and the Texas Indigent Defense Commission.
- House Appropriations met for hearings about the backlog of availability of mental health beds and are very interested in hearing from counties on addressing this issue.
 - House Appropriations Sub-Committees have been announced. It is important to note that on the Article I, IV, V subcommittee which relates to the judiciary and public safety are the following members
 - Rep. Mary Gonzalez (D-El Paso), Chair
 - Rep. David Spiller (R-Jacksboro), Vice-Chair
 - Rep. Steven Allison (R-Kerrville)
 - Rep. Mano DeAyala (R- Houston)
 - Rep. Jarvis Johnson (D-Houston)



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- [HB 2338](#) by Rep. Janie Lopez (R-Brownsville) filed the companion to [SB 157](#) by Sen. Charles Perry (R-Lubbock): Relating to the amount of the reimbursement fee paid by a defendant for a peace officer's services in executing or processing an arrest warrant, capias, or capias pro fine.
- Gov. Abbott Issues Emergency Items
 - Gov. Greg Abbott delivered his biennial State of the State address on Thursday, outlining his priorities for the legislative session. His designation of seven emergency items allows those matters to be taken up immediately by the Legislature. Other legislation will need to wait for March 10 or day 60, as prescribed by the Texas Constitution. House and Senate committees can immediately post for public hearings on the seven emergency items, titled:
 - Fight the fentanyl crisis.
 - Secure the border.
 - **End revolving-door bail.**
 - The Governor expressed filing legislation that would grant judges greater authority to deny bail. Much like [HJR 4](#) from last session.
 - The Governor announced that he wants to prioritize passing legislation that creates liability for judges regarding bail decisions to defendants that are arrested on a subsequent offense. The specifics are still yet to be determined, but JPCA will closely monitor and weigh in on any effort to punish judges for exercising our constitutional duties and judicial discretion. We look forward to working with the Governor's office and the Legislature to protect judicial independence and keeping our community safe.
 - School safety.
 - Education freedom.
 - End Covid restrictions forever.
 - Cut property taxes.



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Upcoming Committee Hearings

- Tuesday, Feb. 21 at 2:30pm or upon adjournment
 - House Criminal Jurisprudence will hold an organizational meeting.
- Thursday, Feb. 23 at 8:00am
 - House Appropriations Sub-Committee on Articles I, IV, V will meet to hear budget recommendations from the following agencies of interest to JPCA
 - Office of Court Administration
 - Court of Criminal Appeals
- Monday, Feb. 27 at 8:00am
 - House Appropriations Sub-Committee on Articles I, IV, V will meet to hear budget recommendations from the following agencies of interest to JPCA
 - Texas Commission on Law Enforcement
 - Department of Public Safety
 - Texas Department of Criminal Justice

You can view committee hearings [here](#).

That is all for this week. Please expect the next brief to occur on Monday, February 27th