

# THE CONGRESS DAILY

## Hot off the Press Illegal False Rape Accusations

On Monday in the House of Representatives Judiciary and Juvenile Justice Committee meeting, the room's discussion was so hot it was boiling! One hot topic that was on debate was House Bill 245 "Illegal False Rape Accusations." This bill would ensure that rape accusations that have been investigated and proven false, the rape accuser would face legal punishment.

4-H participants handled this heavy topic with patience and open-mindedness. Those who opposed the bill had very convincing and thought-provoking points on the bill. Representative Gabe Whately stated that while false accusations do happen, "90% of the accusations are true." He and others that were opposed argued that this bill being passed and put into place would take away from what they viewed as the main problem, (true accusations), by focusing on the smaller problem (false accusations). Those opposed to the bill felt that instead of focusing on passing a bill for false accusations, the government should focus their time to the confirmed rape cases...

- Madeline Catron,  
Press Corps

## Agriculture Education

Up first tomorrow, H.B 100/S.B 300 will be on the Governor's Desk for final deliberation. H.B.100, otherwise known as the "Agriculture Education" bill, will require that all students in grades 9th-12th in the State of Texas be required to take one additional Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills credit class pertaining to Production Agriculture.

- **Megan Clark, Press Corps**



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"Texas 4-H. License to lead. History of leadership. I could be speaking to my own reflection. Only your skills die with your body. However, your legacy will survive long after we're gone." (*A Time to Lead*). It truly is a time to build our legacies and make impacts as dynamic leaders; and what better way to learn than at the License to Lead black tie event "...Out on some kind of fashion assignment, dressing to impress..."

We will be attending this event where our notable speaker is Olson: Jim Olson! At this event, Agent Olson spoke on the importance of leadership, encouraging us to be dynamic future leaders!

- **Makayla Jones,**  
**Press Corps**



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ARTICLES!

### **Identifying the truth**

Some see it as a wall, others see it as a new path leading to freedom. Some say you can call yourself whatever you want. But others, such as the sponsors of House Bill 216, Senate Bill 416

"Accurate Identification On A Texas Birth Certificate," see it differently. The bill states that it is "in recognition that God bestows at birth a specific sex; no person should be allowed to change their designation on their birth certificate."

**- Samantha Butler, Press Corps**

### **Who funds you?**

House Bill 144 / Senate Bill 344, "Legalizing Casino Gaming in the State of Texas." The objective of the bill was to legalize casino gaming by providing licenses to applicants and mandating that casino tax will be funding the Texas public educational systems.

**- Makayla Jones, Press Corps**

### **Energizing Opinions**

House Bill 270 and Senate Bill 470 "Making Energy Drink Restricted Substances Act," highlights that energy beverages should be restricted to everyone under the age of 18.

**- Anna-Laura Whitaker, Press Corps**



**GARRY'S GRINS**



### **Protein Product Packaging Plans**

As we all discover more and more ways to create food that's not quite an animal, consumers understanding the difference between agricultural products is more vital than ever. H. B. 106/S. B. 306, "Labeling of Alternative Animal Protein," aims to increase transparency in alternative meats.

**- Ashley Perry, Press Corps**

### **Lobbying Against Labels**

Tensions rose with the lobbyists as they pushed for House Bill 261/ Senate Bill 461 "Country-of-Origin Labeling" to fail. This bill would essentially require the labeling of all beef, pork, and chicken products sold within the state of Texas to include the products' country of origin, as well as additional countries where packaging or redistribution of the product occurs.

**- Megan Clark, Press Corps**

Meet our 2022 Texas 4-H Congress governor, Governor Skaggs! Governor Skaggs is from Brazos County, District 9. As a highly qualified and committed governor, she is excited about helping advance Texas 4-H in all areas, specifically within Agriculture and Livestock, Education, and Government, Finance, and Appropriations. While Governor Skaggs never gave her stance on certain bills, Texas 4-H is more than excited to see what bills she may be signing this year and what her stance will be on several hot button topics that may get passed! Stay tune for more with The Congress Daily, and do not forget to scan the QR Code for information, videos, and more!

**- Makayla Jones, Press Corps**



## Illegal False Rape Accusations

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4-H participants handled this heavy topic with patience and open-mindedness. Those who opposed the bill had very convincing and thought-provoking points on the bill.

Representative Gabe Whately stated that while false accusations do happen, "90% of the accusations are true." He and others that were opposed argued that this bill being passed and put into place would take away from what they viewed as the main problem, (true accusations), by focusing on the smaller problem (false accusations). Those opposed to the bill felt that instead of focusing on passing a bill for false accusations, the government should focus their time to the confirmed rape cases.

Those in favor also brought many good points to the conversation. Representative Isabelle Parkey spoke that since "false rape accusations can ruin someone's life, their moral values, their family, [and] everything they've worked for", the person responsible of the accusation should face punishment. Another Representative also talked about the severity of the cost of accusing someone of such a serious issue. Representative Devyn Rios recounted a case from her county where a man was accused and spent "45 years of his life behind bars, even though the girl came back" and said that her mom had forced her to make the accusation.

After the whirlwind discussion the House of Representatives Judiciary and Juvenile Justice Committee went and passed the bill with 4 v. 8 in favor. The bill then was passed to the House of Representatives Session for discussion. Out of the ten bills discussed, Bill 245 was sure the talk of the town! Six people went up to the stand to either oppose or push for the bill to be passed. Three representatives of the Judiciary and Juvenile Justice Committee spoke not only at the Committee meeting but also at the House Session to speak their case. Unlike the Committee meeting, the House Session also brought up not morals but the bills structure and whether there were flaws that should be amended. This new perspective helped 4-H House Representatives really learn what it was like voting on such a difficult subject for the greater good of the fellow Texas Citizen.

House Bill 245 was voted on and vigorously discussed until finally votes were tallied. With everyone on the edge of their seats, the Speaker of the House, Logan Baker, declared that with a total of 60 to 73 in favor of opposition, bill 245 "Illegal False Rape Accusations" was terminated. All 4-H members that participated in the discussion of bill 245 should be proud of the work they did for standing up for what they believe is right, regardless of the outcome.

*- Madeline Catron, Press Corps*

## Agriculture Education

Up first tomorrow, House Bill 100/Senate Bill 300 will be on the Governor's Desk for final deliberation. H.B.100, otherwise known as the "Agriculture Education" bill, will require that all students in grades 9th-12th in the State of Texas be required to take one additional Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills credit class pertaining to Production Agriculture. Agriculture is involved in each and every Texans' lives in some way or another. H.B.100 will help ensure that all Texan students better understand the vast, agricultural world around them. "Ag education is very important for high schoolers so that they can learn about the world around them and what 'pasture to plate' means," stated Lobbyist Ava Clark. Tomorrow will mark the final step in the legislative process for H.B. 100, as the decision is left to Governor Skaggs.

*- Megan Clark, Reporter*

## Identifying the Truth

Some see it as a wall, others see it as a new path leading to freedom. Some say you can call yourself whatever you want. You can be whatever feels right. But others, such as the sponsors of House Bill 216, Senate Bill 416 "Accurate Identification On A Texas Birth Certificate," see it differently. Avery Fohn and Elliot Peters see the act of changing gender on a birth certificate as a wall, blocking the truth from others. They see it as a lie, not only against other Texans, but God. The bill states that it is "in recognition that God bestows at birth a specific sex; no person should be allowed to change their designation on their birth certificate." It is safe to say that the sponsors believe that walls of falsification created by that change must be torn down. Lobbyist Cecillia Haddox said that it is a matter of health and safety. "If you're in any sort of injury or accident," Haddox said, "you have to know how to treat it." After her words, it is clear that the sponsors of "Accurate Identification On A Birth Certificate" do not stand alone. The question is did the Texas legislators stand with them? And will the Governor? We'll have to wait and see.

*- Samantha Butler, Reporter*





## Who Funds You?

How would you like to bring in \$2 billion of revenue annually to your educational system . . . At the cost of legalizing casinos and gambling in Texas? House Bill 144 / Senate Bill 344, "Legalizing Casino Gaming in the State of Texas". The objective of the bill was to legalize casino gaming by providing licenses to applicants and mandating that casino tax will be funding the Texas public educational systems, specifically targeting teacher retention and pay. This bill was certainly a hot button topic, and there has been major debate amongst the Senate and House members.

The supporting side of the bill was the Senate. They noted the possibilities that casinos offer financially through bringing gambling revenue back to Texas instead of other states citizens are traveling to so that they can participate in the events. It was noted that gambling will bring back Texas revenue from travel and traveling purchases. They also noted that other states are gaining \$2 billion in casino taxes alone. "Imagine bringing in \$2 billion in state revenue to help increase teachers' salaries and improve our school systems!" The defendant stated. The economic growth would be tremendous and the Senate is highly supportive of this bill!

Opposing Side of the bill was the House. Within the House of Representatives, they noted while gambling and casinos may be 'fun', they promote bad morals, despite funding education. They also noted that education starts in the home, and what are we teaching children if they have bad examples in the home? It was also brought to attention that states sponsoring casinos have a consistent 15% increase in crime rates. Funding education through an activity that has a negative stigma about increasing crime seems counterintuitive. The House of Representatives is strongly opposed to supporting gambling and casinos to fund our education.

Other factors to be considered include underground gambling and the fact that Texan citizens travel out of state to still participate in this event. Also, an anonymous congress member stated that, "Gambling is not the issue. The issue is that self-control is up to the person and they need to know when to say 'no' to prevent gambling from becoming an addiction. Despite that, I see how providing billions to help the educational systems will help reduce crime, not encourage it.". While gambling itself cannot fully be eliminated, the revenue has been decided to remain in other states or in underground gambling events. While billions of dollars might not be streaming back into Texas' pockets and the bill was killed in the House, we are learning about the topics that Texan youth are interested in and are gaining valuable perspectives of other opinions. As Speaker of the House, Logan Baker, stated, "You could say for hours to love and respect others, but you cannot truly understand their perspective and struggles until you walk in one's shoes.". Remember this week as we continue exploring some controversial topics that everyone comes from all walks of life and have different perspectives and beliefs. Our role as representatives and senators is to walk in others' shoes to try to understand them to help encourage and support them to the best of our ability. Make the best better, consider others, and remember your purpose this week!

- Makayla Jones

## Energizing Options

House Bill 270 and Senate Bill 470 "Making Energy Drink Restricted Substances Act", highlights that energy beverages should be restricted to everyone under the age of 18. During intense discussion Sophia Sexton explains that the consumption of energy drinks of minors under the age of 18 leads to lower performance in school, insomnia/sleep issues, and even failing grades.

House Bill 270 focuses on restricting energy drinks to everyone under the age of 18. For many teens under 18, an energy drink is part of a routine that takes place every day. Another point that was brought up was that the issue with energy drinks is the overall lack of self-control teens face when it comes to consuming energy drinks.

After discussing, some members were still confused on which energy drinks were technically considered "energy drinks," such as coffee and creatine, which made them reconsider their votes. However, House representative Sophia Sexton seemed very passionate, but was also very open to the opposing sides' views.

On the flip side, a substantial debate is that many teens that work jobs after school may need the extra "kick" to keep going at their job or school activities.

As stated by Representative Finley Van Dyk "We shouldn't be focusing on the effect energy drinks have on teens under the age of 18, but we need to be shifting our focus and worrying about what the companies are actually putting into energy drinks."

In conclusion, both arguments are strong and had a great debates along with great points, but in the end House Bill 270/Senate Bill 470 failed!

## Protein Product Packaging Plans

As we all discover more and more ways to create food that's not quite an animal, consumers understanding the difference between agricultural products is more vital than ever. Without a sense of trust between Texas farmers and the individuals funding the industry from the ground level, the economy will slowly fall apart. H. B. 106/S. B. 306, "Labeling of Alternative Animal Proteins", aims to increase transparency in alternative meats through increased font size of meat terms and their proximity to the rest of the product description, as well as packaging that clearly distinguishes between genuine livestock products and meat substitutes.

This bill was a hot topic in both the House committee meetings and afternoon session, with discussions ranging from pregnant cows to hamsters. Disclaimers such as vegan or plant-based would become more visible and obvious to the consumer to decrease confusion in stores across the state as well as increase the trust between Texas consumers and livestock producers. Throughout the day, dialogue about strange alternative meat options have also come to light, including mentions of pregant cow 'membranes' and China's supposed use of hamster ovaries to stimulate stem cell growth in producing quote-unquote 'fake' meat.

As it stands currently, 25 U.S. states have implemented similar bills, as Representative Travis Barrett mentioned in his introductory speech, and Texas might be next. If passed, this bill would punish offenders that do not use common terms to indicate beef, poultry, or other meat alternatives with hefty fines up to \$50,000 and the possibility of the responsible plant being shut down.

In the afternoon House sessions today, there was no negative debate for the first two bills presented, H. B. 106/S.B. 306 included. The final results of House voting today resulted in the passing of this bill, with a nearly unanimous vote! A whopping 119 out of 123 participating individuals were in support of this bill to help rebuild consumer's confidence in the agricultural industry of Texas. The lobbyists have also expressed their willingness to get it passed on to Governor Skaggs to become a permanent monument of 2022 Texas 4-H Congress. All of our thanks to the applicants who have written these thoughtful and passion-filled pieces of legislature!

### Lobbying Against Labels

Tensions rose with the lobbyists as they pushed for House Bill 261/ Senate Bill 461 "Country-of-Origin Labeling" to fail. This morning, Representative Joseph LeBlance succeeded in passing his sponsored bill, "Country-Of-Origin Labeling" within the House. This bill would essentially require the labeling of all beef, pork, and chicken products sold within the state of Texas to include the products' country of origin, as well as additional countries where packaging or redistribution of the product occurs. Supporters of House 261 argued that this bill would encourage Texan consumers to purchase U.S. produced meat.

However, the lobbyists are concerned that House 261 may be costly to Texas producers. Lobbyist Coordinator Addie Brown states that "The problem with this bill is that it will force producers to label their products as U.S. products which causes a significant amount of financial burden because it's causing them to add one more step in the supply chain. This will cost producers a lot of money to implement this, and in the end, it could be very detrimental for producers." Furthermore, Ms. Addie Brown argues consumers wouldn't be swayed by the U.S. labeling to purchase additional goods from U.S. produced meats. "They say that the consumer will be more apt to buy the product of the United States, even though studies show over and over again that consumers are not as concerned as much where the product comes from as much as they are the taste, the quality, and overall what they are paying for it." Ms. Addie Brown was adamant that her stance reflects the views of the lobbyists and the best interests of the people.

I feel as if I must commend Addie Brown for her very colorful and highly organized binder. It is easy to tell that our lobbyists and their leader have their work cut out for them with the Texas 4-H Congress' extensive bill book. As a Lobbyist Coordinator, she is entrusted with keeping up with our delightful lobbyists and the many bills they support or reject. Nevertheless, the multicolored tabs and blue highlighter make it obvious that our lobbyists have substantially studied the bills at hand and the remainder of our time will, undoubtedly, be productive.

