

THE CONGRESS DAILY

Bills passed in both chambers and placed on the governor's desk include:

- H.B. 100/S.B. 300 Agriculture Education
- H. B. 106/S.B. 306 Labeling of Alternative Animal Proteins
- H.B. 216/S.B. 416 Accurate Identification on a Texas Birth Certificate
- H.B. 263/S.B. 463 First Responder Mental Health Training
- H.B. 264/S.B. 464 Foster Care Sibling Separation

All bills were signed into law by Governor Skaggs.

On July 19, 2022, Governor Skaggs proclaimed August 15, 2022 should be officially known as Robb Elementary Memorial Day.



Lobbyists pass notes to get thoughts to the senators and representatives on the floor.

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**SCAN FOR FULL
ARTICLES & VIDEOS!**

**"Do not settle for a job.
Find your calling."
- Jim Olson**

Buzzing Bill 394

Today, the buzz ended on the "Save the Bees" bill. After much debate on Senate Bill 394, our senators ultimately voted against this bill. This result seems to be a product of the extreme fines and for the defense of those allergic to bees. However, supporters of the bill believed it was a loss for those working to protect our pollinators who are critical in producing honey, melons, berries, cherries, apples, almonds, and other produce that comes from the agriculture we know and love.

- Megan Clark, Reporter



Texas, Hold'em Up for Casinos!

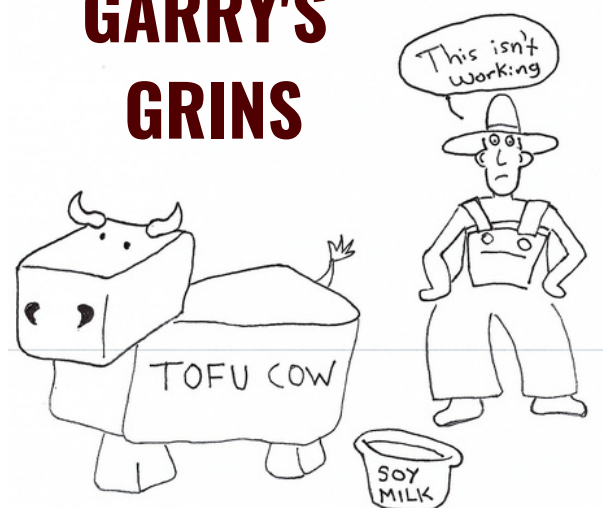
There was a full house of Bill 203 opposition today! Our legislators were split 42 in support of the bill and 91 opposed. While the "Legalization of Gambling Facilities" bill failed in the House of Representatives, it was met with a very different conclusion in the senate. Nevertheless, no casinos will legally be constructed in the Lone Star State under 4-H law.

- Megan Clark, Reporter



Your 2022 Press Corps

GARRY'S GRINS



Thank you for being here and pouring so much into your roles! We hope you had a great time!

Prison to Plants

Theft. Murder. Arson. Crime is a highly important issue that many of our Texas legislatures are working to combat within congress this week. One bill that was brought up that could have the solution to combating crime is a bill that could combine the agricultural world with the judicial world. House Bill 246 / Senate Bill 446, "Inmate Agricultural Educational Program Enactment" worked to provide not only the bridge between the agricultural and judicial world, but also provides a solution to help combat mental health.

The bill first had intention to introduce agriculture to the judicial world to help provide jobs for those who are released from jail. Some say that, oftentimes, upon being released from jail, ex-inmates cannot find work and are forced back into a life of crime because there is no available job for them due to their history. Instilling this program could provide an educational program to educate our inmates of agricultural occupational opportunities. Not only did this bill hope to provide them with job opportunities, but to increase the amount of citizens involved directly within the agricultural industry. Currently, America faces production and employee shortages in the agricultural industry, with only 2% directly involved in agriculture. This bill hoped providing inmates with the knowledge and skills necessary to make an impact in the agricultural industry would not only provide them jobs, but would bring jobs to the agricultural industry.

Secondly, the bill could suggest that promoting agriculture within the judicial systems to the inmates helps improve mental health. Studies throughout the National Institution of Medicine, National Library of Medicine, and the Texas A&M Research Department all noted that people who are involved within agriculture have improved mental health, often increasing by 73% and helping combat depression, anxiety, and drastically decreasing recidivism rates by 99%. The author believed that providing programs such as this could not only improve the mental health of inmates, but may decrease our recidivism rates which is currently costing the state of Texas \$2 million annually. Introducing a hands-on program such as this could benefit the mental health of prisoners and drastically cut recidivism rates, helping to improve Texas' economy, culture, and agriculture.

In conclusion, this bill was intended to provide state jails and prisons an agricultural education program to decrease recidivism, provide disadvantaged citizens an agricultural education, and assist in combating recidivism. In the end, time was not a friend to this bill and it did not make it to either floor.

- Makayla Jones, Reporter

POV: House and Senate Work as a Lobbyist

One important aspect of having an effective congress session are lobbyists. While some might believe that lobbyists play a meager part in the legislative process, they are in fact essential, playing as the bridge between the people and the legislators. Today, reporter Makayla Jones had the opportunity to interview one of Texas 4-H Congress' own lobbyists, Julia Guerrero.

Question:

"I know in the Senate there were a lot of Bills the Lobbyists were pushing as a whole that the Senate discussed and the House did or did not plan to pass. How did that go when trying to convince them with those bills? Do you feel the lobbyists convinced them pretty effectively or was it a really big challenge?"

Answer: "I feel that a lot of the big challenges were whenever talking to them a lot of them had already made up their mind... so you had to really push to persuade them to talk about other things. When we had the Lobbyist Reception, that's when we got a lot of people to talk about our views. On pushing the Bills, we wanted to become close and personal to them; and ask them questions. They [also] asked us if we had any concerns about the Bill. We got a chance to explain it further... and we helped them make up their own opinions."

Truly the lobbyists help to represent the people and connect them to their representatives and senators. While lobbyists may be in the backseat of the senate and house, they are at the forefront of helping bills get passed and representing the people as their spokesmen and women.

- Treasure Deanes, Reporter

The Birth of A New Bill

Bill 216 "Accurate Identification On A Texas Birth Certificate" states that it was made to "ensure that all Texans are properly identified from the moment of birth until the end of their life" (Sec. 2, House Bill 216). But is this the true intention of the bill? Does it serve a bigger purpose, or is it an excuse to limit others' freedom? With all that is going on in our state's political climate, 4-H Congress participants had to really put aside their differences to open-mindedly discuss what they felt was best for the future of our great state.

Those in favor of the bill had many statements to be heard. The Sponsor stated that not only is the bill there to clarify the "identity" of the Texas citizen, but that it's all for the safety of our state's people as well as preventing people from "nefarious actions."

Representatives that went up to the stand to plead for the positive also agreed with the previous statement. One representative asked the house to contemplate the bill's very name. He stated that since it is a birth certificate and "not a midway through life certificate" Texans should not be allowed to change it. Others in favor of the bill did not beat around the bush and went to their main moral issue. A representative in favor of passing the bill said that she felt people are "born either a man or a woman, and nothing [people] can do, can change the genetics of that." Recently those who identify as transgender have been in the spotlight of scrutiny of the Texas Government especially with Senate Bill 1311, that would prohibit healthcare providers from performing transition-related care. The performance of such operations by doctors to be punishable by law. House Bill 216 from 4-H Congress brings up the same moral, religious, and political discussion that Senate Bill 1311 hints at. Do Texans want trans identities to be valid in the eyes of the law?

Those who spoke up in the negative towards the bill had many counterpoints to present. The two main arguments that were brought up were whether this law felt religiously and emotionally charged instead of factually, and whether it went against the United States Constitution based on the bill's structure. The first representative in opposition to the bill discussed how the bill's wording that God assigned people only and permanently either male and female "immediately invalidates the bill in my (his) eyes." He reminded the house that the first amendment declares that "congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion." He further concluded that "this bill gives power to religious institutions that not all Texans worship" and believe in. Others agreed with this first speaker in opposition saying they are concerned religion is being brought into our government. One more main issue the opposition brought up was the bill being too vague and leaving more questions than answers. One speaker asked the question, "What if I lived in another state? Would I not be allowed to [change my birth certificate] even though that state I was living in allowed it...because I was born in Texas?." It is true that the bill does not answer this question, nor does it specify where the funding for the bill will come from. Because of this, 4-H participants had to decide how passionate they were about passing the bill, or if these issues were too big for them to agree.

After all discussion and the closing argument, representatives were tasked with deciding what the final decision would be. While the discussion was varied and both sides had a lot of people advocate, Bill 216 was passed with a decent marginal gap, passing in the house with 108 I's. The result of Bill 216 truly showed how differing opinions can have the same amount of passion, and yet still not have the same strength in numbers of support.

- Madeline Catron, Reporter

Honorable Mentions of Congress

Although many noteworthy bills were signed into law this afternoon, not everything made it to the governor's desk-or even the chamber floors. However, this does not mean that those individual's perspectives are any less valuable than the next or do not deserve to be seen. Without further ado, here are some of our honorable mentions of 2022 Texas 4-H Congress, as recommended by randomly selected participants.

H.B. 244/S.B. 344 "Halt of All Insurance Requirements to Post"

This act doesn't allow insurance policies for businesses across Texas to require building owners to post the 30.06 sign on their windows. "Basically that is saying that 'you cannot carry on our premises.' And I think that that should be up to the business, not the insurance company. So I think that the insurance companies should not be able to force the business to put that sign up."-**Isaac DeVille, District 9, Member of the House of Representative Judiciary & Juvenile Justice Committee**

H.B. 168/S.B. 368 "Special Sports"

"Special Sports" requires that schools serving 300 or more students open a sports program available to kids with disabilities or functional impairments. "A bill that I wished would have gone further was the special sports bill, which would make schools have a sports team for special needs kids. And I think this bill is very important because I think that special needs kids shouldn't have to feel like they're not good enough to play with other kids and be on the same playing field as others."-**Carly Watson, District 4, Member of the Senate and Judiciary & Juvenile Justice Committee Chairperson and Floor Leader**

H.B. 240/S.B. 440 "Ban On The Affluenza Defense"

This act mandates that criminal defense attorneys across our wonderful state are banned from utilizing the term 'affluenza', or a condition affecting wealthy young individuals resulting in a lack of motivation, feelings of guilt, or a sense of isolation due to their financial status. "I believe that the ban on affluenza defense should have passed the House and the Senate because of equality for every individual. Just because they have grown up in this privileged status does not mean that they shouldn't be treated equally."-**Wes Shaw, District 1, Lobbyist**

- Ashley Perry, Reporter

Core Principles of Congress

At Texas 4-H Congress, we take great pride in our work, bills we represent, and the state that we are speaking on behalf of. We stand to protect the rights of the people and represent them with passion yet decorum. Some important elements and core principles of Congress, both at a federal and state level, include the following: truth and validity of facts and arguments; constitutionality and consistency with the Bill of Rights from our federal government; and the separation of church and state.

One of the first elements of maintaining a successful congressional meeting is providing truthful and valid facts within arguments and debates. As sworn-in congressmen and women, it is their duty to maintain truth when presenting cases. Research within presentations and debates should be truthful, valid, and with current information about the issue. Deterring from the issue at hand, utilizing out-of-date information, or using parts of facts (and not the entirety of the truth) do not help the citizens. While it might help to push or pass a bill, in the long run it ends up affecting the situation being addressed negatively due to appropriate information being withheld. In order to best impact the great state of Texas and maintain a successful congress assembly, providing truthful and valid facts in arguments and debates is the most effective.

Secondly, recognizing the constitutionality of bills presented and adhering to the information provided in the Bill of Rights will benefit the citizens of Texas in a positive way. Representatives and senators are in their roles on behalf of the people. They are encouraged to recognize that if a bill is unconstitutional, the Federal Law has the right and power to overturn it, making it unnecessary to pass when more important matters could be passed and may not help those who may need relief from struggles that the bill could provide. Supporting and passing bills that abide with the constitution and Bill of Rights is a responsibility that every representative and senator has.

Lastly, maintaining a successful congress includes recognizing the separation of church and state. Understanding that everyone comes from different walks of life, religions, and perspectives is part of the process. It all works to show that enforcing one's beliefs on another person or using religious reasons to push opinions on each other infringes upon others' rights. Senators and representatives work to represent the law and facts, not lifestyle choices. It is the choice of the people what lifestyle they will choose, and elected officials' roles are to present the opinions of the people, to represent the law. Leaving state and church within their respective categories eliminates biases and infringement upon each others' rights. Maintaining the separation of church and state to effectively represent the people works to have a successful legislative session.

Moving forward, take pride in your work, the people you represent, and the state that you are a part of that represents us well! Thank you for all your hard work this past week!

Check out the photos from the event
[flickr.com/photos/tx4hphotos/albums](https://www.flickr.com/photos/tx4hphotos/albums)

