

# CONGRESS

Vol.4

Spotlight

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TEXAS 4-H CONGRESS

16TH JULY, 2024



## SWEARING IN OF THE OFFICIALS



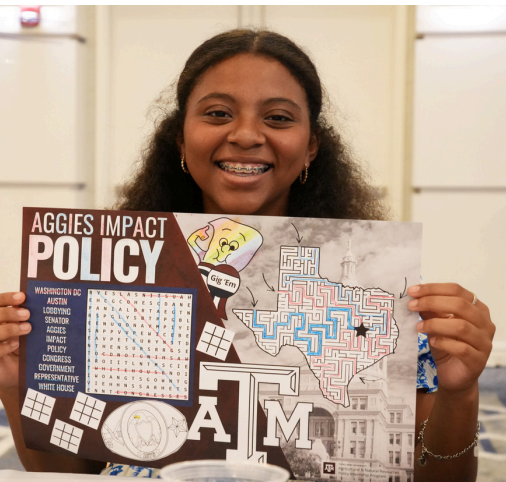
## Daily Dad Joke

What kind of underpants do attorneys wear?

They wear briefs.

The swearing in of the 2024 Texas 4-H Congress members on Monday, July 15th by the Honorable Justice William Adkison.

# THANK YOU...



# THE RIGHT WAY TO TURN LEFT

Written by: Olivia Hanson

The House of Representatives Homeland Security and Public Safety Committee passed and failed bills affably, each member agreeing with what the previous representative had said. That unity was entirely forgotten when House Bill #288, a favorite mentioned by our Governor, arrived on the floor.

This bill, which advocates for a flashing yellow arrow to replace a green light when signaling to yield for oncoming traffic, divided the room into two extremes. The negative, headed by Colton Payne, argued that the yield sign is taught in the mandatory Drivers Ed courses that everyone on the road has passed and the law is not responsible for the ignorance of the people. "Just look at the sign and watch for cars," Payne said when asked for a comment.

The affirmative responded by saying that green is a common signal to go, and the double meanings of this color cause unnecessary- and often fatal- confusion. One member cited a visual impairment which made it more difficult for her to discern lettering on street signs, and said that she relied heavily on adages like 'Green Means Go' when driving. It was determined by those in favor that simplifying the visual language of our street signs would place less stress on the driver and make our roads safer.

The bill was ultimately passed, but not debated today. It remains to be seen how the House of Representatives at large will vote.



## CLOSE VOTE: A CHASE TO THE GOVERNOR'S DESK

Written by: Michaela Beckman

Despite Governor Wunderlich's adamant stance on vetoing any bill based on educational vouchers, a heated discussion occurred this afternoon in the Government, Finance, and Appropriations House Committee public hearings.

The Texas Public School Voucher Equivalency, H.B. 261/S.B. 561 aims to maintain equivalent educational funding throughout the state by providing revenue per student in similar funding. The debate was led by eager speakers both affirmative and negative. The negative debate centered on the disadvantage homeschooled students would face with the passing of the bill. The initial argument stemmed from the hesitation to pass a bill Governor Wunderlich insisted he would veto. It was also expressed that homeschooling families would have to pay taxes towards an act that wouldn't benefit them at all. It is important to note that much of this discourse stemmed from personal experience. A speaker with a homeschooling background noted that while there may be potential harm done to learners like him, it doesn't discount the fact that this bill would benefit students in public schools.

Ultimately, whether it was an overwhelming concern for homeschoolers or hesitation to pass a bill the governor had warned against, H.B. 261/S.B. 561 did not make it out of House public hearings after a close vote of 3-4.

# IS SWEET TEA OUT AND DR.

## PEPPER IN?

Written by: Bella Sione

One of the hot topics in Congress is the Dr. Pepper Bill, given Governor Dylan Wunderlich voiced his avid support for it. The aim of the bill is to make the original Dr. Pepper recipe, the Texas state drink.

Many people voiced their support for the bill at the House public hearing, including lobbyist coordinator Justin Hill, who remarked, "I think there is no other drink that embodies Texas more."

The author of the bill and Speaker of the House, Cooper Mau, also spoke at the House hearing. Mau stated "If you do not pass this bill, you are missing out on submitting a piece of Texas heritage that has been a part of this state for over one hundred years." He further noted that Dr. Pepper was first created in Dublin, Texas, further supporting his reasoning of the drink's importance to Texas.

Multiple members of the House committee found these points agreeable, but an important question was raised: Does this bill have the support of Keurig, the company that owns Dr. Pepper? Mau admitted that he has not been in contact with Keurig.

While the House and Senate eventually passed the bill, concerns remain about its plausibility. For perspective, in the past, the owners of Dr. Pepper, Snapple Group, Inc., filed a lawsuit against Dr. Pepper Bottling Co. of Dublin, Texas, for distributing the soda using pure cane sugar and the original logo. While that lawsuit was eventually settled, questions remain about the new company's willingness to allow the use of the soda and its recipe, especially since it includes pure cane sugar, which is the main difference between the original and the current recipe. And the bigger question remains; has Dr. Pepper officially kicked sweet tea to the curb?

# 4-H EXCUSED ABSENCE ACT

Written by: Sincere Banner

The 4-H Excused Absence Act, House Bill 154 that was passed, mandates that schools excuse students for participating in approved 4-H activities. Students must be active 4-H members with activities approved by the county 4-H Extension Agent. This bill intends to encourage student involvement in 4-H activities by eliminating the fear of unexcused absences.

All activities must be approved by the county 4-H Extension Agent/Educator to qualify for an excused absence and must be a scheduled activity that is deemed educational and beneficial for the student's development by the 4-H Extension Agent/Educator.

A formal process will be established for 4-H Extension Agents/Educators to approve activities. Students and parents will need to provide the school with documentation from the 4-H Extension Agent/Educator confirming the activity and its approval. The activities covered under this bill may include but are not limited to: 4-H meetings, educational workshops, competitions, fairs, and community service projects.

While absences will be excused, students will still need to make up any missed work. Under this bill schools will have to work with students to ensure they can make up any missed work or assignments without penalty.

The bill recognizes the significant role that 4-H programs play in youth development, including leadership, civic engagement, and life skills.

4-H also helps students balance their academic responsibilities with extracurricular interests that provide valuable learning experiences.

Ultimately this bill will promote the integration of formal education and extracurricular educational activities.

# LEGISLATIVE STALEMATE?

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Written by: Campbell Baron and Press Corps

In a bicameral legislature there are a few risks to productivity. One of which we are seeing today. The house and senate are disagreeing. For a bill to make it out of committee, it must be passed by both the house and senate committees. If it does not gain bipartisan support then the bill fails.

One example of a bill that the chambers disagree on was the Welfare Recipients Shall Participate in Drug Screening Bill (Senate 627/ House 327). This bill polarized senate chambers, but received strong and swift support in the house. After many senators debated on the bill the previous question was called. For those that are unfamiliar with it, this motion is to cease discussion on the topic and vote immediately. The previous question was passed and the vote resulted in the death of the bill. After speaking to members of the senate, it was clear to me that this move was controversial. This governor endorsed bill, which was assumed to be a slam-dunk success, hit major backlash in the chamber. The debate, which left members of the press and participating senators confused, caused the end of a generally favored bill. Could this be because of its association with the governor, controversial nature, or maybe just the turning tide of the senator's opinions? Either way, as bills get shot down left and right, no one knows what will make it to the governor's desk.

Another case of this phenomenon is the Itemized Bills proposition (Senate 555/ House 255) which garnered unanimous support in the house. However, it was cut down by the senate. This may have been caused by a lack of communication. Of course, ideally both chambers would have the same information and resolve. Apparently this is not the case. Which is why the duty falls to the legislators. We trust them to do their due diligence when voting on the bills presented to them. Because when they don't, they can make costly mistakes. Every bill must be considered with full sincerity. If this need is not met then are the best interests of the Texan people really at heart?

While our 4-H legislators argue on sweet tea vs Dr Pepper, bills that could affect the lives of everyday people are overlooked. When the main priority of our best and brightest is what they would rather drink on a hot day, issues of the everyday citizen fall to the back burner. This is why cooperation, communication, and the will of the people are the pillars of our legislature. We call on the members of 4-H congress to choose to prevent a legislative stalemate and fight for their values. God bless Texas, and goodnight... or morning.

