



CONGRESS

Spotlight



TEXAS 4-H CONGRESS

17TH JULY, 2024

Daily Dad Joke

What do Congressman and ducks have in common?

They both have bills.



On behalf of the Press Corps, thank you for following along and allowing us to inform your journey through Texas 4-H Congress 2024. Safe travels home & see you in 2026!

DON'T BE GOOD, BE GREAT...



SECURE BORDERS AND IMMIGRATION REFORM

Written by: Katelyn Martin

Today in the House of Representatives, a sudden and slightly heated debate arose surrounding the topic of immigration laws in Texas. Our Representatives clearly had more caffeine (or just more Dr. Pepper) than I did this morning at the rate 4-Hers were shooting out of their chairs to get a spot at the podium.

The main issues brought up regarding House Bill 282/Senate Bill 582 included immigration along the United States southern border being higher than ever and the point that illegal immigrants and illegal workers might be seeking physical safety for their families that Texas offers. More than 22 Representatives definitely had strong opinions on the matter, based on the way they fought for the Speaker's attention to debate this bill. One testimony on the subject was from a child of a legal Mexican immigrant, who spoke in favor of bill 282. He expressed that it's not for the people who are law abiding, it's for those who are actively smuggling and being smuggled across the border.

In section 4, the bill noted that violators will receive at least 2 years of jail time, jail time that would be funded and manned by legal or naturalized citizens of the U.S.A. In finding different perspectives from those who witnessed the morning proceedings, one House member was eager to share his thoughts.

"I think we had some great debate this morning, especially with some of the more important bills... I think everybody was relatively respectful and did a great job debating." Representative Luke Landry told the press, "I think the immigration bill is actually a great bill, the only problem I had with it was that the punishment for if you do cross the border illegally is serving a two year prison sentence. I don't think that's the right thing to do, because if you have non-U.S. citizens in federal jails, you're using taxpayer money for non-U.S. citizens. That doesn't seem right to me."

Overall, we had a wide range of conversations throughout the week, and we hope it encourages youth across Texas to learn more about legislation.

SPILLING THE TEA...

Written by: Campbell Baron

Texas 4-H Congress was filled with arguments about Sweet Tea vs Dr. Pepper. Even Governor Wunderlich let the legislature in on his thoughts about the act... Or so we thought. This afternoon the governor vetoed the Dr. Pepper bill written by our very own Speaker of the House, Cooper Mau. [READ MORE...](#)

The Dr. Pepper bill, which was assumed to be a favorite of the Governor, was one he spoke about repeatedly. He had everyone convinced that it was his desire to pass the bill. Then he abruptly pulled the rug and claimed sweet tea to be the drink he was rooting for all along. He claimed it to be a drink of the south. Sweet tea was invented in other states in the deep south, while Dr. pepper was made in Waco, Tx, and later Dublin, Tx. Not only does Dr. Pepper have historical importance in Texas, but the bill had astounding support in both chambers. When it came down to it, Governor Wunderlich betrayed his voters, supporters, and nearly the entirety of the legislature.

The people deserve to know that the Governor was pressured by lobbyists to veto the Dr. Pepper bill, and ultimately was moved enough by their persuasion to do his best to remove the piece from legislation completely. Nonetheless, the people prevailed and Dr. Pepper shall now be further known as the Official Drink of Texas.

DEATH AND TAXES!

Written by Lilliana Lange

The only thing that is sure in life is death and taxes, but here at Texas 4-H Congress we are arguing about both. After covering two bills on ending life for prison inmates, this controversial debate ended with one failing, and one passing.

In today's session, the house debated two bills on abolishing Capitol death punishment, and on Physician Assisted Suicide for Inmates facing life without parole or Capital punishment. The main arguments made for both these bills were getting out of their sentences. This argument was made for the ending Capitol punishment bill and against the physician assisted suicide. Many representatives argued that letting the inmates end their lives would be allowing them to get out of the punishment of Capital punishment and life without parole. They also argued that there are reforms with inmates who spend all of that time in prison, and killing them would not allow for that.

Another argument made for both these bills was on the waste of taxpayers money. This was used to argue against both the bills. Representatives said the amount of money needed for having only one inmate for life was over \$600,000 for forty years. Many representatives agreed that they would rather spend this money on other government funded programs that they could benefit from instead of paying for inmates to spend life in prison. One said that they would never be in that situation, and that they would rather pay taxes for programs they could directly benefit from.

The first bill on abolishing the death penalty was not passed in the house and was a very interesting debate with both sides bringing up interesting points that made the representatives really think about the way they wanted to vote for this bill. They also brought up the fact that 4% of inmates sentenced to capital punishment are innocent and how that is irreversible. Although many representatives did not get to give their arguments due to time constraints, the opinions of the representatives were shown through the vote count.

The second bill discussed which was for the physician assisted suicide was passed in the House and again had a very diverse and interesting debate with both sides. The representatives had a problem with the term suicide because it means to intentionally cause harm to end a life and they wanted to see it as a merciful and compassionate killing. However, the sponsor then said that if the bill is signed on the Texas 4-H Governor's desk, it could be reformed before being presented to the real Texas legislature, which resulted in it passing with a two-thirds majority.

Both these bills were important to the youth of Texas and everybody who debated was very passionate about this topic. It is great to see these passionate youth seeking to make a change in today's society. They show you that you can make a change no matter how young you are!

DR. PEPPER WINS!

Written by: Speaker Cooper Mau

Despite the Governor's and Lobbyists' valiant attempts at thwarting Dr. Pepper's journey to State Drink, both the House and Senate prevailed by overruling the Governor's Veto!



FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Written by: Allison Gray

Regardless of committee, bills concerning the health and clarity of the ingredients in our meals had the attention of our leaders & legislators. Varying from dairy, seafood, and allergens, these plans were given careful thought and consideration through debate.

It is now evident that food regulation is an issue the Texas 4-H Legislature hopes to alleviate. The 'Restaurant Truth in Labeling of Seafood' bill #320/620 called for accuracy in product labeling to the benefit of Texas' aquaculture and fisheries industries and the citizen consumer. These changes would require seafood labeling to visibly cite the species name, country of origin and whether it lived its life in a wild or farm environment. This safeguards against the false advertising prevalent in our industries today.

This bill was the groundbreaking first unanimous vote to pass in senate this year. So is it now an accepted reality that the companies persuading us to purchase their products are permitted to fib or misdirect our attention? Is all this back and forth just semantics, or are our concerns well-placed? Does common sense not play a role? These are just a few of the concerns expressed by our senators and representatives regarding 'Standards of Excellence in Labeling Dairy Substitutes' #141/441 in the Agriculture & Livestock Committee.

This bill seeks to ensure expectations of consumers are met and that the dairy industry would be given a monopoly on the use of the word 'milk'. Under the FDA's standards of identity, all foods titled 'milk' would be required to rebrand and rename. The issue of what terminology to replace 'milk' with was met with curiosity and humor from the senators, so much so that order had to be called at some points. These alternative milks (almond, oat, coconut) sported such attractive names as almond liquid, dairy substitute and oat juice. Some argued that the new names of these alternate milks would only add to the confusion of the average consumer and appear unappealing to those who are lactose intolerant or don't consume dairy.

The debate continued on to mention that common sense should prevail, and if the consumer cannot recognize the distinct differences, we have a larger issue of agricultural ignorance, not just labeling misinformation. In the senate, William Adkison addressed the marketing aspects of this in his argument in the negative saying "... however, advertising is advertising and branding is branding and it is not always rooted in fact. A large degree of advertising is basically straight up lies, yet are allowed anyway because it is effective marketing and drives our economy to a great degree."

Affirmative arguments were made to eliminate the ambiguous labeling, making it easier for the consumer. Bill #141/441 passed +25/-19 in the senate and similarly in the house. The safety of those affected by food allergens was prioritized when #305/605 Food Allergy Awareness Training in the Public Health & Welfare Committee was reviewed. The American with Disabilities Act officially recognizes food allergies as a disability. This law proposes that any and all Texas state employees undergo training to properly handle allergic responses and hopefully instate preventative measures. Some debate was had over the bill, questioning how effective the trainee's group can be as opposed to others. Ultimately, bill # 305/605 passed in the senate +27/-17 and similarly in the House.

The work done here at Texas 4-H Congress has the potential to help Texas citizens be safe and informed about their food, whether it be in the legislative or grocery aisles.

