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As reported last week, when the House Democrats began taking the entire 10 minutes to debate bills on the Local and Consent Calendar, it killed everything else.

There is good news in that, and bad news in that.

The good news is that we did not have a showdown on the House floor on Texas Department of Insurance Sunset—the bill died. And, many other bills that could have presented threats to business died also. But, among the dead bills were our Indemnification Bill (SB 555) and Alternative Delivery System Bill (SB 1110). The chances of a special session appear minimal since the Senate apparently found a vehicle for the Texas Windstorm Insurance Association Bill. This also is good. But, the latest reports are that there may be an attempt to attach the Mesothelioma Causation language onto the Windstorm bill via some provisions addressing Multi-District Litigation Panels. While the chances are slim, it is a serious threat. We are meeting this afternoon (Friday, May 29) to discuss this and other threats.

When I told you about the beginning of the “chubbing” (frivolous debate designed to slow the process), I mentioned only three possible outcomes. None of those occurred—the House resolved itself to protect the Calendar process and to allow the protesting Democrats to kill every bill after the Local and Consent Calendar.

We’ve still got a few loose ends to tie down, among them trying to keep a good Senate amendment on a House bill (HB 987) that allows recovery of attorney’s fees when prevailing in a breach of contract lawsuit with local governments. We’re hoping to keep some favorable “safe schools” language (contractors are responsible for background checks on their own employees) adopted in the Senate in HB 2730 (Department of Public Safety Sunset Bill).

HB 3, the Public Education Accountability Bill which contained some favorable CTE language in the House version, is in conference committee. But, both the House and Senate versions set the controversial 4x4 program back three years. That puts us one year ahead of where we were going into this session when the next session begins!

Committee hearings this past week:

Senate State Affairs—HB 1657 (Entergy) was heard on Saturday, May 23.

Bob Parker, an ABC of Texas Board member from the Coastal Bend Chapter, testified against the bill

Below is a brief summary of action or relevant information on ABC of Texas' Priority Legislative Issues that remain active:

Immigration—Immigration issues are dead for the session.

Alternative Delivery Systems—SB 1110 by Senator Mike Jackson died on the House Major State Calendar.

Indemnification/Workers' Compensation/Third Party Liability—SB 555

(Indemnification) died on the House Major State Calendar. HB 1657

(Entergy) was never brought up in the Senate (not enough votes—our blockers held!) and is dead.

Trust Funds—HB 1513 by Rep. Wayne Smith and Senator Mike Jackson has been sent to the Governor.

Prevailing Wage—HB 1042 by Rep. Tan Parker was heard in the House Committee on Technology, Economic Development and Workforce. The author, Rep. Tan Parker, is Vice Chair of the committee. A late hearing spelled doom for the bill. Rep. Parker is considering proposing an interim study which could give us traction for some changes in the future.

Trades Legislation—Thanks to the efforts of ABC of Texas members, we have successfully killed all the bad trades legislation. One bill dealing with electrical apprentices was amended to allow our NCCER craft training programs to qualify as apprentice training. That bill passed.

Bills to regulate cranes, sheet metal workers, roofing contractors, fire sprinkler technicians and disaster remediation contractors failed to pass.

Monday, June 1 is the last day. It is for corrections only in both Houses.

Things have finally slowed down.

I will have a final bulletin early next week. A full report will be available once the Governor's veto period has passed (late June). I will also be making the rounds and giving presentations to the Chapters when invited. Plus, Texas Merit Shop Journal's July issue will contain a recap.

The full ABC of Texas Board of Directors will meet in Austin on July 8.