



Vol. I, Issue 3

Yesterday, House Speaker Joe Straus of San Antonio announced House Committee assignments (see attached).

ABC Coastal Bend Chapter member Todd Hunter will chair the Committee on Judiciary and Civil Jurisprudence. The Vice Chair is Bryan Hughes. Other members include Dan Branch, Will Hartnett, David Leibowitz, Roberto Alonzo, Jim Jackson, Tryon Lewis, Jerry Madden, Armando Martinez, and Beverly Wooley.

The Licensing and Regulation Committee is chaired by Edmund Kuempel of Seguin. Senfronia Thompson of Houston is Vice Chair. Other members include Delwin Jones, Jose Menendez, Warren Chisum, Charlie Geren, Roland Gutierrez, Mike Hamilton, and Chente Quintanilla.

Another committee of interest to ABC of Texas members is the House Committee on Business and Industry. The Chair of that committee is Joe Deshotel. The Vice Chair is Gary Elkins. Other members include Wayne Christian, Dan Gattis, Sid Miller, Kirk England, Helen Giddings, Jim Keffer, Rob Orr, Chente Quintanilla, and Sylvester Turner.

The Calendars Committee which sets bills for consideration by the full House is chaired by long-time legislator and first-time chairman, Brian McCall. Eddie Lucio III is Vice Chair. Other members include Norma Chavez, Garnet Coleman, Byron Cook, Brandon Creighton, Charlie Geren, Jim Keffer, Lois Kolkorst, Edmund Kuempel, Jim McReynolds, Allan Ritter and Burt Solomons.

The next issue of *Texas Merit Shop Journal* will contain an outline of the changes in both houses' committee structures.

This week ABC of Texas joined with at least 8 other business associations and Texans for Lawsuit Reform in agreeing to sign a letter opposing SB 222 (arbitration).

I was also invited on behalf of ABC of Texas to join Texas Employers for Immigration Reform in a leadership role. This group is having a summit in Austin next week. I circulated the link to the registration form to Chapter Presidents earlier this week.

On Tuesday, I hosted a meeting among leaders of our industry workforce coalition with Robin Painovich, Executive Director of the Career and Technology Association of Texas (CTAT), and Marty De Leon, an education lobbyist for CTAT. Also in attendance were Hector Rivero,

President of Texas Chemical Council; Luke Bellsnyder, Executive Director of the Texas Association of Manufacturers; and David Lindsay (a former Lyondell employee who has ties with the National Center for Construction Education and Research). We reviewed a draft Op-Ed piece that had originated with an ABC of Texas meeting attended by Chuck Swallow, David Ford and me with Arnold Garcia, Editorial Page Editor of the Austin American-Statesman. Trying to get a committee to approve an Op-Ed piece after several authors have written different versions can be rather inefficient. But, if we can get the entire group to sign on, the message is more powerful.

Texas Literacy Day organizers held an 11:00 a.m. rally on the Capitol steps. David Lindsay (mentioned above) was a key organizer. At his request, I solicited Luke Bellsnyder of TAM to be a featured speaker joining Senate Education Committee Chair Florence Shapiro (Luke's former employer) and House Public Education Committee Chair Rob Eissler. I was a recognized attendee and spoke very briefly about ABC Chapter training programs providing the bulk of construction education training in Texas. This event allowed for additional networking to elevate our role in CTE efforts.

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

Immigration—ABC of Texas is opposing 2 of the 3 immigration bills sent to the Chapters for positions. Those are HB 48 by Rep. Debbie Riddle (knowingly employing persons not legally in the United States) and HB 266 by Rep. Leo Berman (comprehensive bill that would punish employers). ABC of Texas ended up supporting HB 128 by Rep. Burt Solomons (prohibiting the issuance of licenses to those not legally in the country), although the vote was close.

Contractor Licensing—Nothing new to report.

Alternative Delivery Systems—Nothing new to report. Now that committees have been assigned, we will be working with the other groups supporting the bill to secure House and Senate authors.

Indemnification/Workers' Compensation/Third Party Liability—Our natural allies, AGC-TBB and TCA, have been working together on an Indemnification Bill. Although both groups kept telling ABC of Texas that we would get a copy of a bill to comment on, before that could happen, both State Senator Robert Duncan and State Rep. Craig Eiland introduced legislation—SB 555 and HB 818, respectively—based on an earlier group draft. These bills have been circulated to get an ABC of Texas position. ABC of Texas held a conference call among members of the Executive Committee and interested Chapter Presidents (as well as some issue experts) on Thursday to discuss this bill. As this bulletin is being sent, ABC of Texas has another conference call scheduled this afternoon (Friday, February 13) to continue those discussions. Only two chapters have given ABC of Texas their positions, and both favor the bill. Other members have serious reservations and are talking with those chapters who favor the bill to see if those reservations can be addressed.

Trust Funds—Following conversations with Ben Wescott of the Greater Houston Chapter, our issue leader, State Representative Wayne Smith is having a minor re-write done to the bill before its introduction. I have had conversations with a potential Senate author, but no commitment at this point. And, no sooner had I returned from the Capitol than I heard from an AGC-TBB building branch resource that he had serious problems with the bill despite a draft

having been circulated to him in early October of last year—he hadn't read past the first page or two. We are in the process of trying to address his concerns.

Prevailing Wage—Members of the ABC of Texas Executive Committee and interested Chapter Presidents participated in a conference call on this issue on Thursday. We will be waiting to see the referral of HB 1042 by Rep. Tan Parker before deciding on a course.

Trades Legislation—Nothing to report on the state level.

In addition, ABC of Texas has taken positions on the following bills. For text of the bills, please see <http://www.capitol.state.tx.us/> --use the Search Legislation menu.

SB 180 (State OSHA)—Against
SB 222 (prohibiting arbitration agreements in contracts)—Against
SB 229 (expanding availability of design-build)—For
SB 447 (allowing local preference in municipal contracts)—Against
HB 48 (license suspensions for employing illegal aliens)—Against
HB 266 (punitive and expansive immigration bill)—Against
HB 303 (tax exemption for green buildings)—For
HB 308 (employer jury duty pay)—Against
HB 431 (state building standards—LEED)—For
HB 535 (preference for employers with health insurance)—Against

Jon Fisher
President
Associated Builders and Contractors of Texas
P.O. Box 1891
Austin, TX 78767-1891
823 Congress Ave., Suite 230
512/470-5756
512/495-9031
jon@abctexas.org