

Lobby Day Training: Principles & Key Legislation

Everyone who registers for the ReEnergize Texas Summit will have meetings scheduled with their Representative and their Senator and/or their staffs. We have four guiding principles for our lobby day. Together these comprise our demand that Texas lead the country and the world towards a clean and just energy future.

Principle	House Bill(s)	Senate Bill(s)
Funding for student energy and environmental projects through the creation of green fees on campuses state wide	HB 3353 (for)	SB 2182 (for)
Green jobs through training programs in the Texas Workforce Commission and Texas Youth Commission	HB 516 (for) HB 2492 (for)	SB 108 (for)
Energy efficiency upgrades and renewable energy incentives	HB 278 (for) HB 280 (for)	SB 427 (for) SB 546 (for)
Ending dependence on dirty energy	HB 2721 (against) HB 4012 (against)	SB 126 (for)

HB 3353 & SB 2182: Campus Green Fees (For)

These two bills are equivalent to one another. HB stands for House Bill, and SB stands for Senate Bill. These bills, if passed and signed into law, would allow students to vote for an “environmental services fee” of up to \$5 per student per semester. In order for the fee to go into effect, the student body of the campus would have to approve it by a majority vote, and then the governing board of the institution (such as a Board of Regents) would have to approve it.

The key to passing this legislation is to demonstrate student support. Due to rising tuition, many in the legislature want to put a cap on tuition. It is important that we show that the state can cap tuition while still giving students the right to choose a new fee that brings improvements to their campus. In many cases the fee could be invested in energy efficiency or other projects likely to save the university money in the near or long term.

Committees: Higher Education in the House, not yet assigned in the Senate (Higher Education likely)

HB 516 & SB 108: Green Jobs Training (For)

These two bills are equivalent to one another. They aim to provide Texans with the training necessary to find work in the “green economy.” Affected industries would include energy efficient building,



renewable energy, energy storage technologies, biofuels, waste recycling techniques, products recycling techniques, energy efficiency assessments, manufacturing of sustainable products, and water conservation and efficiency. The funds would be administered through the Texas Workforce Commission and would be put to use by local coalitions consisting of community partners and universities.

This is our best opportunity to invest in the jobs of tomorrow and make sure that leading industries choose Texas. Governor Perry's Competitiveness Council stated that 2/3 of new energy sector jobs over the next 10 years would come from renewable energy sector. This number could increase dramatically depending on how well the Legislature anticipates new federal priorities being created by the US Congress and the Obama Administration.

Committees: HB 516 is out of committee; SB 108 is in the Economic Development committee

HB 2492: Texas YouthBuild (For)

This bill has no equivalent in the Senate. When speaking to Senators you can ask them to "carry" the bill in the Senate once it has passed in the House.

This bill would create the Texas YouthBuild Program to "disadvantaged or at-risk youth, non-violent juvenile offenders, and young veterans" in energy efficient building techniques by "restoring abandoned properties and historic areas, enhancing public places, and increasing the availability of affordable, energy-efficient housing for individuals and families of low income."

This bill is an opportunity for Texas to solve three crucial problems at once. It will increase employment while benefiting communities to improve the economy; it will help us address the energy and climate crisis; and it will give disadvantaged young people a better shot at gaining job skills that will help them stay out of prison. This is not charity, it is giving people the bootstraps to pull themselves up by.

Committee: HB 2492 is in the Technology, Economic Development, and Workforce committee

HB 278 & SB 427: Distributed Solar Power (For)

These bills are identical. They would create a minimum requirement that Texas produce 2,000 megawatts of electricity from distributed solar panels by 2020. The bill creates a strong incentive for the manufacturers of thin-film and photovoltaic (PV) solar collectors to locate in Texas as there will be a guaranteed market. It will spur innovation and competition that will lead to better technologies at a lower price.

The bill would require utilities to create incentive programs that encourage solar panel installation. This would mean the creation of rules by the Public Utility Commission (PUC) that would ensure utilities



are able to recover their costs and that end-benefits are appreciated by consumers. This is a bill that helps grow the Texas economy, reduce energy costs over the long term, increase energy security, and prepare the state to address carbon ahead of federal regulations.

Committees: HB 278 is in Energy Resources; SB 427 is in Business & Commerce

HB 280 & SB 546: Energy Efficiency Standards (For)

These bills are NOT identical, but both relate to energy efficiency. Energy efficiency is the cheapest way to address energy and climate in Texas and the US. Whenever we improve energy efficiency we save businesses and consumers money by reducing the amount of energy needed to provide the same amount of benefit as before. This is NOT energy conservation, which means simply using less energy (such as by turning off the AC). According to Barry Smitherman, chairman of the Texas Public Utility Commission (appointed by Gov. Rick Perry) we get \$2 back for every \$1 we invest in efficiency.

HB 280 is designed to have electric utilities increase incentives for efficiency in homes and buildings so that by 2016 overall electricity demand will be decreasing by 2% a year. It sets smaller targets for 2011, 2013, and 2015. This is an aggressive goal which will make Texas far more competitive for businesses, and will substantially reduce electricity bills for Texas families. It is also likely to create jobs as more energy efficiency assessments and upgrades will be needed.

SB 546 is a less aggressive bill, but it is hoped that changes can be made to it to increase its impact. It would require utilities to meet 30% of growth in electricity demand from residential and commercial customers with efficiency upgrades by the end of 2010, and would raise the standard to 50% by the end of 2015.

Committees: HB280 is in the Energy Resources committee; SB 546 is in the Business and Commerce committee

HB 2721 & HB 4012: Gutting Permitting Processes for Coal and Nuclear Plants (Against)

HB 2721 will further streamline the permitting process for nuclear power plants. The process has already been streamlined through the creation of pre-approved reactor designs, but now certain members of the Legislature want to remove the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality's ability to send a permit application through a hearing process. This is one of the few tools the public has left for contesting the safety of a proposed nuclear power facility. Nuclear power is by far the most dangerous form of energy on the planet. If these new rules are implemented it can only reduce the safety of Texas citizens.

HB 4012 does the exact same thing for coal plants in Texas. Dr. James Hansen, one of the first scientists to raise the alarm about global climate change, has said that coal plants are enemy #1 when it comes to reducing carbon. Furthermore, coal plants have enormous health risks for



communities located nearby or in the wind path of a plant. Taking away the public's ability to contest these plants during the permitting phase is irresponsible and undemocratic.

Committees: Both bills are in the Environmental Regulation committee

SB 126: Coal Plant Moratorium (For)

If passed this bill would place a temporary moratorium on all new coal-fired power plants. Once a coal-fired power plant is built, it will run for 30-50 years. If Texas invests in coal today, we may be stuck with it decades down the road when it is untenable due to the rising cost to produce CO₂.

Texas should place a moratorium on new coal development within the state until it becomes clear what the federal government will do in terms of carbon regulation. These plants are massive investments. If Texas wants to grow its economy and its energy sector in the coming years, we should halt new coal construction, focus on efficiency and renewables, and see what new technologies and regulations emerge.

