



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF TEXAS

ACTION ALERT: SB 657 – TCEQ Sunset Bills

Requested action:

Please call, fax or write to ask your state senator to support SB 657 to continue the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) instead of the bill passed by the House, HB 2694. Contact information for your state senator is available by putting in your address at: <http://www.fyi.legis.state.tx.us/>

Who should receive the Action Alert?:

Members

When:

Please call, fax or write your Senator now while both SB 657 and the House passed bill, HB 2694, are under consideration in the Senate Natural Resources Committee.

Background:

Based on the review of TCEQ, the Sunset Commission prepared a bill for continuation of TCEQ that was introduced in the House as HB 2694 (Wayne Smith) and in the Senate as SB 657 (Huffman).

LWV-Texas and many other environmental groups supported the Sunset bills as introduced in the House and Senate because they represent some improvements over current operations in the TCEQ. Improvements include increasing potential penalties for violations and requiring adoption of an enforcement policy that is made available to the public.

The House passed and sent to the Senate a version of HB 2694 that includes amendments sponsored by State Rep Warren Chisum that would significantly weaken the TCEQ's power to regulate by :

- Placing the burden of proof for a contested permit on the affected person who requested the hearing instead of on the applicant.
- Preventing a state agency from contesting the issuance of a permit beyond merely filing comments.
- Requiring that the rules, guidance and policies in effect at the end of the technical review period remain in force throughout the consideration of an application for permit.
- Reducing the fees imposed on the delivery of petroleum products, thus reducing approximately \$7,000,000 from a pool of money used to remediate pollution related to underground storage tanks.

The Senate Natural Resources Committee now has both the original Senate bill and the House bill under consideration. LWV-TX believes that SB 657 is superior to the weakened version of HB 2694 sent to the Senate by the House.

What to say:

Tell your senator that you support SB 657, the stronger bill for continuation of TCEQ, and you oppose any actions that weaken environmental regulation, such as HB 2694. Protection of the environment and thus the health and safety of all Texans is important now and as is vital to the future of Texas.

For more information see the material from Legislative Newsletter No. 7 available on the LWV-TX website.

Questions can be directed to Laura Blackburn at laura2blackburn@gmail.com.