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**Lt. Governor Dewhurst Issues Select Interim Charges Relating to
Transportation, Homeland Security and Criminal Justice**

AUSTIN—Today, Lt. Governor David Dewhurst issued select Interim Charges to the Senate Transportation and Homeland Security and Senate Criminal Justice committees.

"As lawmakers, our first priority is ensuring the physical safety of all 25 million people who call Texas home," said Lt. Governor Dewhurst. "Border security is not just about keeping illegal immigrants from crossing our border – it's about keeping our citizens safe and our communities free from dangerous drugs and violent transnational gangs. We also want to provide a safe and efficient transportation system for our rapidly growing population, so Texans can spend less time on the road, less on fuel, and more time with their families."

Lt. Governor Dewhurst tasked Senate committees with the following:

Transportation and Homeland Security Committee

- Examine the impact of border violence and illegal trafficking on the Texas economy, including the infringement on Texas property rights. Make recommendations for enhancing border security and maximizing federal resources targeted for this purpose.
- Analyze the financial and personnel situation at 911 or emergency call centers across the state. Determine if call centers can be run more efficiently and effectively. The committee shall consider the oversight of local and county officials in their findings and recommendations.
- Study the appropriate role of Texas state military forces in enhancing the safety of all Texans, and make recommendations for improving the coordination, accountability, and effectiveness of all components of our state military forces, including the national, state, and air guards. Identify limitations on the forces providing border security and other operations, and make recommendations for better coordination with federal, state and local law enforcement agencies. (Joint Charge with the Veteran Affairs and Military Installations Committee)

- Examine the anticipated impacts of the Panama Canal expansion on Texas' cargo and shipping industry, intermodal facilities, roadways, and ports. Examine the implementation of the Houston Ship Channel Security District and determine if additional security districts are needed for other ports.
- Analyze both near-term and long-term planning process documents for Metropolitan Planning Organizations and evaluate the impact of the current plans on congestion mitigation, specifically the state's 100 most-congested roadway segments.
- Study current state statutes and agency rules regulating oversize and overweight vehicles. Evaluate the public safety benefit of enforcing these regulations and effectiveness in preventing roadway damage, including the cost of repair and maintenance to infrastructure associated with overweight vehicles. Provide recommendations that balance economic productivity, public safety, and protection and maintenance of roadways. Provide recommendations on the need for additional weights and measures training for law enforcement in this state.
- Study the potential for toll collection and enforcement tools to pursue toll scofflaws for Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) and local toll project entities.
- Examine the need for additional natural gas fueling infrastructure to efficiently utilize Texas' vast domestic reserves of natural gas. Also, examine the future requirements for public and private electric vehicle charging stations and the impact of the increased usage of alternative-fueled vehicles. Include geographic balance in the evaluation of alternative-fuel infrastructure. Assess the impact that increasing numbers of electric vehicles will have on the state's electric grid.
- Review and make recommendations regarding best practices for traffic-flow management to meet future statewide transportation needs. This study should consider a full range of options, including implementing employee flex time at all state agencies, park & ride, telecommuting, and rail.
- Study and make recommendations regarding the methods of financing for capital investment in the state's transportation system. Examine ways to prevent further wear on our roadways and reduce congestion in the system. Consider the long-term impact of the accumulation of debt for transportation projects, as well as the total cost of vehicle ownership as a result of varying levels of congestion and road maintenance. Educate and inform the public regarding the seriousness of the transportation challenges to better engage the public in forming a solution. (Joint Charge with Senate Finance Committee)
- Monitor the implementation of legislation addressed by the Senate Committee on Transportation & Homeland Security, 82nd Legislature, Regular and Called Sessions, and make recommendations for any legislation needed to improve, enhance, and/or complete implementation. Specifically, monitor the following:
 - Implementation of the Sunset Advisory Commission recommendations, statutory changes specified in TxDOT's sunset legislation and TxDOT's modernization efforts, including the use of public and private engineering services and the implementation and use of business performance measures;

- Implementation of Proposition 12 funding provided by the fiscal year 2012-2013 Appropriations Act, including an assessment of the impact of this funding on the state's Top 50 list of congested roadway segments and the funding needed to advance each region's priorities in fiscal year 2014-2015;
- Progress of the Texas Department of Public Safety's Driver License Division efforts to enhance driver license processing, including technology and staff improvements, establishment of mega centers, additional mobile offices, and increased number of temporary visitor document processing staff.

Criminal Justice Committee

- Review statutes and regulations relating to money laundering to enhance state, federal, and local efforts to combat money laundering and enforce administrative and criminal actions against perpetrators of money laundering.
- Study and evaluate the long-term stability of the Crime Victims Compensation Fund (CVC) including: the original statutory purpose of the fund; the definition of "crime victim"; the current funding streams; the current ability to pay claims; and impact of the fund on victim organizations supported by the fund. Make recommendations to increase collection rates for effective and efficient use of the fund and resources.
- Study the law governing the Texas bail bond industry and determine local practices for the pretrial release of the accused. Determine the financial impact of various pretrial release options for the accused, and the financial impact on counties for the failure to release pretrial.
- Evaluate existing comprehensive diversion and treatment systems within the state, including mental health treatment, to determine cost effectiveness, reductions in correctional populations, impact on healthcare systems, and the overall number of people treated effectively. Examine federal, state and local collaborations and make recommendations for best practices to maximize effective use of funding and resources.
- Study the use of administrative segregation in TDCJ, including issues related to: the frequency and justification of its use; the process and classification system which determines an inmate's placement; the impact on prisoners' mental health and recidivism rates; the process of reviewing placement and inmates' transition into both the general prison population and the general public; options for alternative confinement arrangements; and the potential for the expansion of the Serious and Violent Offender Reentry Initiative (SVORI) or similar programming in order to improve inmates' transition from solitary confinement to the general public.
- Assess the current trends in prescription drug abuse including crimes and arrests, abuse of prescription and over-the-counter medication in the prison population, impact on probation violations and recidivism, and incidences of law enforcement as the first responders to prescription drug overdose emergencies. Identify strategies for law enforcement and criminal justice systems to work with education and health care professionals to use all means, including technology, to identify abuses, and increase education and prevention. Make recommendations to enhance drug abuse prevention and intervention programs.

- Conduct a comprehensive review of school discipline practices. Specifically, review and make recommendations on:
 - The effectiveness of Disciplinary Alternative Education Programs (DAEP) and Juvenile Justice Alternative Education Programs (JJAEP) in reducing students' involvement in further disciplinary infractions and in promoting positive educational achievement;
 - Disproportionate school discipline referrals, including suspension, expulsion and Class C misdemeanor citations;
 - The issue of "Zero Tolerance" in secondary education school discipline, their use of alternative education campuses, and the barriers they create toward graduation. Also include the role that specialized school police departments play in these systems. Consider the impact on the juvenile justice system and the adult prison system;
 - The number of students in the conservatorship of the Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) referred to juvenile or municipal courts, suspended, expelled, and placed in Disciplinary Alternative Education Programs (DAEP). Examine data-sharing practices between DFPS, TEA, and local education agencies and make recommendations to increase communication between schools and DFPS to increase educational outcomes for children in foster care;
 - Evidence-based models used for addressing juvenile delinquency prevention that are targeted to non-adjudicated, but at-risk youth, in the school disciplinary system. (Joint with Senate Committee Education Committee)

- Monitor the implementation of legislation addressed by the Senate Committee on Criminal Justice, 82nd Legislature, Regular and Called Sessions, and make recommendations for any legislation needed to improve, enhance, and/or complete implementation. Specifically, monitor the following:
 - Implementation of and transition to the new Texas Juvenile Justice Department. Examine the consolidation of the probation and parole functions, and make recommendations to enhance the integration of the two agencies and promote successful outcomes for youths, victims, and taxpayers;
 - Overall care of female inmates;
 - Implementation of SB 1616 and SB 1636, relating to the testing of evidence;
 - Implementation of SB 321, relating to an employee's lawful transportation and storage of certain firearms or ammunition while on property owned or controlled by the employee's employer;
 - Implementation of legislation relating to human trafficking in coordination with the Joint Interim Committee to Study Human Trafficking.

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