



# SILVER BULLETIN

## 18<sup>TH</sup> TSHL 1Q2020

### FROM THE TSHL SPEAKER:

Welcome. In this issue, we start with a reminder of who and what we are and the extent of TSHL's authority and responsibility as a nonpartisan, quasi-legislative body established by the Texas Legislature 33 years and 17 sessions ago.

Then, we're proud to announce 13 TSHL resolutions made their way into legislation passed into law by the 86<sup>th</sup> Texas Legislature and Governor Abbott in their 2019 session. Our many thanks to 15 Texas legislators who authored bills addressing TSHL resolutions that now are law.

Research is well underway for resolutions that the 18<sup>th</sup> TSHL will present to the 87<sup>th</sup> Texas Legislature for their 2021 session.

-- Rhonda Rogers, TSHL Speaker

[www.txshl.org](http://www.txshl.org)

# TSHL: A Nonpartisan, Quasi-Legislative Body

In 1985, the Texas Legislature created the Texas Silver-Haired Legislature (TSHL) to research and author nonpartisan resolutions that bring to light concerns negatively affecting seniors' quality of life.

"We are an all-volunteer, quasi-legislative body with the purpose of helping state legislators with emerging and recurring Aging matters that call for a legislative solution," says Scott Christensen, TSHL Legislative Action Committee chair (Brazos Valley AAA 13).

TSHL is the only quasi-legislative body ever created by the Texas Legislature. As such, TSHL is the only other body authorized to meet in the Texas House Chambers for legislative sessions and have ready access to Texas representatives and senators. TSHL knows that holding true to its nonpartisan, quasi-legislative charge is pivotal.

## Roadmap to A Nonpartisan Resolution

Following are TSHL's steps to research and develop a nonpartisan resolution to a legislative Aging issue. It is TSHL's responsibility to the Texas Legislature to:

- **Identify** a legislative issue by conducting local town hall meetings, giving public speeches, and developing relationships with local civic and senior organizations and the 28 Area Agencies on Aging that serve Texas.
- **Formulate** an initial hypothesis about the issue.
- **Research** all sides.
- **Gather** additional information and studies from a representative array of advocacy, lobbying, and state agency points of view to include with research toward a recommendation that balances and holds Texas seniors' and taxpayers' best interests above all else.
- **Make no alliance**, commitment, agreement, or promise to any advocacy or lobbying entity or individual. To do so would overstep TSHL's authority.
- **Revise** the initial hypothesis, per the research findings, to address objections or roadblocks uncovered.
- **Recommend** a way forward based on the research.
- **Write** a balanced, nonpartisan resolution.
- **Assess** need for further research and adjust hypothesis.
- **Prepare** to debate and deliberate the resolution.
- **Lay out resolution** for Texas House Floor debate in the May 2020 TSHL Legislative Session.
- **Anticipate** floor challenges and be ready with responses.
- **Deliberate** whether each amendment is in the best interest of Texas seniors and taxpayers.

## Roadmap... (from P. 1)

- **Weigh** the resolution's integrity to be considered by the Texas Legislature.
- **Rank** the top ten TSHL resolutions that are most important to Texas seniors and taxpayers.

At this point, the Texas Legislature gives TSHL, and only TSHL, the authority to present the issues, research findings, and recommendations—in the form of resolutions in the *TSHL Legislative Report*—to the Texas Legislature for consideration.

“No advocacy group has this authority from or responsibility to the Texas Legislature,” Christensen says, “which is why we must remain independent of improper advocacy or lobbying alliances.

“Although TSHL may share information and testify on the same matters, we must not form advocacy alliances, carry the water for an advocacy group, or ask anyone other than a state legislator to carry TSHL's resolutions.”

### TSHL Is Aging-Issue Research Arm of Texas Legislature

In short, TSHL acts as the independent, nonpartisan, research and recommendation arm of the Texas Legislature regarding Aging issues. No crusades. No demands. Just thorough research and nonpartisan recommendations and resolutions.

Christensen says, “Our bosses at the Texas Legislature need and expect us to research all sides of an issue so they can determine the best solution for Texas. Collaborating only with entities with which we as individuals agree falls short of our responsibilities to the Texas Legislature and, therefore, Texas seniors and taxpayers.”



Speaker, Rhonda Rogers, Paris  
Speaker Pro-Tem, Sherry Hubbard, Junction  
Deputy Speaker Pro-Tem, Barbara Aydlett, Aquilla  
Secretary, Pam Edgerley, Bryan  
Comptroller, Barbie Butler-Johnson, Hearne

## TSHL Issue Research Template

Once a TSHL member identifies an emerging or recurring Aging issue, the research phase of resolution-writing begins by asking:

1. How did you become aware of this issue? Is it a one-off matter or systemic? How do the 3 Rs of resolution-writing apply to it?
2. Simply stated, what is the issue and initial hypothesis or legislative recommendation?
3. Is there an existing state law and/or regulation that addresses this issue?
4. Who are the subject matter experts who can help you understand the various sides?
5. What kind of data or other evidence will help resolve this? Who can help you check the methodology of the data collection and reporting for bias? Do the impact statements fit reliable data or follow a bias?
6. Who will oppose your recommendation(s) and what are their points? Can you adjust your resolution to balance senior and taxpayer best interests but also address opposition?

*Note:* With each step, TSHL further validates the initial hypothesis or adjusts it accordingly.

### TSHL Avoids Improper Partisan Collaboration by Researching All Sides

In the resolution research phase, TSHL members avoid partisan collaboration by re-searching and reporting all sides of an issue.

For example, if AARP provides input, TSHL also seeks input from AMAC on the topic.

If the Teacher Retirement System provides input, TSHL also seeks input from taxpayer advocate points of view as well.

If an advocacy friend asks TSHL to find a legislator to carry their bill, TSHL must decline and instead offer to testify in support of the aspects of the bill that also satisfy an adopted TSHL resolution on the same topic in the *TSHL Legislative Report* for the session.

Ethically, TSHL also must advise the advocate of any points in their bill that TSHL would have to oppose and why. This allows the differences to be reconciled in a revision of the bill. It also keeps TSHL from overstepping its authority to seek bill authors for its own duly researched resolutions.

# 15 Legislators Of 86<sup>th</sup> Included TSHL Resolutions In Bills Now Law

Texas Silver-Haired Legislature salutes 15 representatives and senators who included TSHL resolutions in bills they authored that are now law, and a big shout-out to the 21 TSHL authors of the related resolutions.

86 <sup>th</sup> Bill #	Legislator/Author	17 <sup>th</sup> Res #	TSHL Author	Relating To:
SB 12	Sen. Huffman Rep. Bonnen	R 01	Christensen Byler Hubbard	Increasing the financial strength of the Teachers Retirement System pension. (Gov. signed)
SB 500	Sen. Nelson Rep. Zerwas	R 01	Andrews Borchart Stempko	Supplemental funding, actuarial soundness & TRS 13 <sup>th</sup> check. (Gov. signed)
SB 2428	Sen. Bettencourt	R 02	Same as R 01	Maintaining defined benefits to teachers. Defeat is victory. (Died in committee)
HB 1	Rep. Zerwas Sen. Nelson	R 03	Same as R 01	Increasing TRS Care by increasing state's contribution, no premium increases. (Gov. signed)
HB 1848	Rep. Klick Sen. Buckingham	R 05	Parrish	Increasing funding for "Adult Safety Net Flu Immunization." (Gov. signed)
SB 14	Sen. Nichols Rep. Kuempe	R 08	Merrick	Expanding opportunities for Texas rural electric cooperatives to add broadband services. (Gov. signed)
HB 883	Rep. Thierry Sen. Zaffirini	R 12	Peters Buttler Saenz Wilson	Using the internet to obtain information about elderly person for fraudulent purposes. Increases fines. (Gov. signed)
HB 3703	Rep. Klick Sen. Campbell	R 24	Streckfuss Stempko Wilson Smith	Allowing physicians to prescribe low-dose Cannabis for certain conditions in addition to Epilepsy (Gov, signed)
HB 1	Rep. Zerwas Sen. Nelson	R 29	Parrish Smith	Supporting Medicaid Community Attendants by increasing wages to \$8.10/hr from the previous \$8.00/hr. (Gov. signed)
SB 31	Sen. Zaffirini Rep. Smithee	R 38	Parrish	Establishing a guardianship abuse, fraud & exploitation deterrent program. (Gov. signed)
HB 1	Rep. Zerwas Sen. Nelson	R 40	Abraham Smith	Continuing line-item funding for Seni. signedor Corps. (Gov. signed)
HB 278	Rep. Sheffield Sen. Buckingham	R 42	Abraham, Aydlett, Roberts Smith Streckfuss	Streamlining physician licensing, requirements for Advanced Practice Registered Nurses. Partial success. (Gov. signed)
HB 871	Rep. Price Sen. Perry	R 43	Shabaaz	Establishing use of telemedicine by certain trauma facilities. (Gov. signed)
HB 1848	Rep. Klick Sen. Buckingham	R 44	Graham	Reporting communicable diseases in certain long-term facilities. (Gov. signed)

# Research Underway on Issues TSHL Will Present To 87<sup>th</sup> Legislature

The Texas Silver-Haired Legislature holds three sessions of the entire 100+ member body per biennium in Austin.

**18<sup>th</sup> TSHL's Orientation Session** convened July 14-18. "We recapped the 2019 Texas Legislative Session, welcomed newly elected TSHL members, conducted orientation training, elected officers and committee chairs, and launched into the business of the 18<sup>th</sup> TSHL," says TSHL Speaker Rhonda Rogers (Ark – Tex AAA 5).

"We then went back to our AAA districts, gave public talks about the 86<sup>th</sup> Legislature's progress for

seniors, conducted town hall meetings for feedback directly from seniors, and started preliminary research on issues seniors raised that call for resolution in 2021."

**18<sup>th</sup> TSHL's Training Session** convened October 20-23. "In the second session," Rogers says, "we developed the first draft of resolutions from our preliminary research and planned further research and refinement of resolutions." Following that session TSHL delegates continue to conduct more public talks and town hall meetings with civic groups, caregivers, and seniors and to share information with the AAAs, the

With the AAAs, the Joint Committee on Aging, key committees of the Texas Legislature, and various state agencies

**18<sup>th</sup> TSHL's General Session** will convene May 3-7, 2020. "In May, we'll meet in Texas House Chambers to deliberate and vote on the final resolutions. We'll compile the ones that pass in *The 18<sup>th</sup> Texas Silver-Haired Legislature 2019-2021 Legislative Report*," Rogers says. "In third quarter of 2020, we will hand-deliver the report to each Texas Legislator and the Joint Committee on Aging and continue efforts to recruit bill authors, for 2021, who can turn the resolutions into law."

## JLCOA Nov. 2018 Report Guided 2019 Aging Research, Policy

TSHL applauds the 85<sup>th</sup> Joint Legislative Committee on Aging (JLCOA), chaired by Sen. Donna Campbell (SD 25 New Braunfels). The committee and its Nov. 2018 report recommended the 86<sup>th</sup> Legislature address the following 2019 Aging issues:

- Examine and support public-private efforts to raise awareness of the signs of Alzheimer's and how to prevent it.
- Continue and maintain funding for university affiliated institutions conducting research on Alzheimer's disease and related disorders.
- Encourage research institutions across the state to share data and work together to avoid duplication of research efforts.
- Examine restoration of funding for respite care programs.
- Expand current initiatives with state, federal, and municipal agencies, non-profit and faith-based organizations, public-private partnerships, and other interested entities to support programs for aging veterans.
- Provide greater access to care throughout the state.
- Support measures to increase gerontology practitioners across Texas.

- Ensure that universities are not penalized in formula funding for rural health graduate medical education programs.
- Decrease barriers for the use of telemedicine across the State.

The 81<sup>st</sup> Texas Legislature created JLCOA at TSHL's request by resolution, which became HB 610 in the 2009 Legislative session. Betty Streckfuss, TSHL (Houston-Galveston AAA), was appointed to JLCOA by Gov. Perry in 2009 to represent TSHL and has been reappointed every biennium since then.

To gain efficiencies in state government, the Governor and 78<sup>th</sup> Texas Legislature (2003) combined 14 departments and created the Department of Aging and Disability Services, which was subsequently moved under the Health and Human Services umbrella in 2017.

"We (TSHL) felt Aging and Disability issues were approaching critical mass," Streckfuss says. "The State Demographer's office was projecting that the number of Texans 65 or older would triple between 2000

and 2040. Of course, so would their cost to Texas taxpayers.

By 2009, TSHL had an excellent case for requesting the JLCOA be established to recommend state agency research on Aging issues and report findings to the legislature.

"I consider it my responsibility to the JLCOA to present the committee members with the Silver-Haired Legislature's top-10 Aging and issues for further research by state agencies and universities and consideration by the legislature. "Since its start, the JLCOA has been wonderful," says Streckfuss.

In addition to Dr. Campbell and Streckfuss, the 86<sup>th</sup> Legislature JLCOA members were Sen. Eddie Lucio (SD 27, Brownsville), Rep. Toni Rose (HD 110, Dallas), Rep. JD Sheffield (HD 59, Gatesville), and Dr. Ben Dickerson (Dallas area).

TSHL looks forward to presenting its top 10 resolutions for the 87<sup>th</sup> Texas Legislature (2021) to the JLCOA after TSHL's General Session on the Texas House Floor of the Capitol in May 2020.