



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
JOE STRAUS
SPEAKER

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SPEAKER STRAUS ISSUES HARVEY-RELATED INTERIM CHARGES

AUSTIN – Texas House Speaker Joe Straus on Thursday asked three House committees to begin studying issues related to Hurricane Harvey and state preparations for future natural disasters.

In total, Speaker Straus issued five interim charges, which are instructions the Speaker gives House committees to guide their work preparing for the next legislative session. He plans to release a full list of interim charges, including more issues related to Harvey, in the next couple of months.

Speaker Straus announced the following charges Thursday:

- **Committee on Appropriations:** Examine the use of federal funds by state agencies responding to the effects of Harvey and identify opportunities to maximize the use of federal funds to reduce the impact of future natural disasters. Also identify the need for state resources to respond to Hurricane Harvey relief and recovery efforts, as well as opportunities for state investment in infrastructure projects that will reduce the impact of future natural disasters.
- **Committee on Public Education:** Determine, to the extent possible, the scope of financial losses, including facilities, that resulted from Harvey. Recommend possible state actions, such as changes to student counts or property valuation, to mitigate any negative impact on districts and ensure governance structures and parameters allow for effective responses.
- **Committee on Public Education:** Recommend any measures needed at the state level to prevent unintended punitive consequences to both students and districts in the state accountability system as a result of Harvey and its aftermath.
- **Committee on Public Education:** Examine the educational opportunities offered to students displaced by Harvey throughout the state and the process by which districts enroll and serve those students. Recommend any changes that could improve the process for students or help districts serving a disproportionate number of displaced students.
- **Committee on Natural Resources:** Examine the following issues within the committee's jurisdiction regarding Harvey and flooding in general: the role of regional entities in developing projects to control flooding, both through new infrastructure and enhancing existing infrastructure; mitigation efforts that would reduce the impact of future flood events, and strategies to fund those efforts; and the response of public entities that own or operate dams to large-scale rain events, including how such entities make decisions regarding dam and reservoir operations during such events, coordinate with state and local emergency management officials, and communicate with the public.

Speaker Straus announced the charges in a letter asking Members of the House to suggest issues that committees should study leading up to the next regular legislative session, which will begin in 2019.

“The next year will provide a valuable opportunity for committees to listen to the public, research solutions, and recommend action that the House should take in 2019,” Speaker Straus wrote. “However, we know that this is not going to be a normal legislative interim. Hurricane Harvey has devastated our state and upended the lives of millions of Texans. While the state is

taking a number of immediate actions to help Texans begin to recover, and will continue to do so, the Legislature will have a substantial role to play in both the recovery process and in preparation for future storms. The importance of getting these issues right when we meet again demands that we start working on them now.”

Speaker Straus added in his letter, “As we begin a legislative response to this devastating storm and as we look at all of the issues expected to come before the House in the next couple of years, I hope that we will continue to focus on doing what is in the best interest of Texas and the people we represent. I also hope you’ll point us in a direction that will lead to new and innovative solutions, even as we confront familiar challenges.”

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