

# Government Affairs Committee Update

## 4th Quarter Government Affairs Report

By Mance Zachary

During the 4th quarter of 2020, many factors took place that will set the stage for TMRA activity in 2021.

First of all, Texas Railroad Commissioner Christi Craddick was once again elected to chairman of the RRC. Commissioner Craddick has displayed outstanding leadership and is a voice of reason for business as we enter the next legislative session. She will be joined by incumbent Railroad Commissioner Wayne Christian and newly elected Commissioner Jim Wright. The Railroad Commission has oversight of the mining interest in Texas including many TMRA members.

Next, the November elections did not bring the “blue” wave that was anticipated. The Republican-Democratic breakdown in the House remained the same (83-67). Democrats did pick up a seat in the Senate with Republicans holding a 18-13 majority. Rep. Roland Gutierrez (D-San Antonio) defeating Sen. Pete Flores (R-Pleasanton) was a major Democratic pickup because in the Senate a bill must have a 3/5 majority in order to move. With Rep. Gutierrez’s victory Republicans numbers do not meet that threshold.

With the announced retirement of Speaker Dennis Bonnen (R-Angleton) a Speaker’s race took place. After seven candidates on both side of the aisle declared their intentions to run for Speaker Rep. Dade Phelan (R-Nederland) secured over one hundred pledges and is the presumptive Speaker-Elect. He assembled a staff and will be officially sworn in as Speaker on January 12th, which is the first day of the legislative session.

The 2021 legislative session is less than a month away and the members will be faced with many issues including: COVID response, deficit budget, redistricting, broadband access statewide, and general Capitol access navigation for members, staffs, visitors.

The TMRA Government Affairs team stands ready to monitor and act upon bills introduced and effectively convey industry’s message for each. It will be a very challenging session because of limited member/staff access, and we ask our industry partners to stay engaged by joining us in watching out for TMRA’s interest.