

Texas Legislative Update

April 23, 2019

With the May 27th end date fast approaching, we are working tirelessly to keep up with and respond to all the legislation that may be affecting the plumbing and hvac industry.

The most preeminent piece is of course HB 1670/SB 621. These two bills were what came from the Sunset Commission recommendations to move the oversight of the Texas State Board of Plumbing Examiners over to the Texas Department of Licensing & Regulation. SB 621 passed in the Senate with a few amendments added. That version of the bill was sent over to the House. They are now set to vote it out of the House Licensing Committee as early as this week. We have asked for several more amendments to be added to this version of the bill. We have not yet heard back from the bill sponsor, Rep. Lambert. Our hope is that he will allow for our amendment requests to be considered. A couple that we feel key cover the following:

- Remove the mention of “plumbing contractor” from the entire bill and substitute in “master plumber”
- Add a definition of “direct supervision” and remove verbiage that was originally proposed that lessens oversight;
- Add verbiage that will address the current and any possible future testing backlog for licensing;

These issues are felt to be of much importance as we work to make sure that a vote to go to TDLR leaves the plumbers in a better position with licensing issues.

There are two bills that would make the IPC the ONLY code across Texas. The senate version has been referred to the Senate Business & Commerce committee with no hearing date set. The house version was heard earlier this month and has been left pending in committee. PHCC Texas worked hard to inform the sponsors and committee members of this bill the implications of picking “winners and losers” and “booksellers” by eliminating the options for two code choices. We will continue to monitor the process.

The other issue that PHCC is closely monitoring is that which would allow utility contractors to perform plumbing work up to within 5 feet of a commercial property without the services of a licensed plumber. We have testified on these bills. The house version has yet to be voted out of committee. The senate version; SB 1034, has been sent to the intent calendar and may be heard on the senate floor as early as this week. We are contacting all the Texas senators of our desire to vote NO!

Rep. Matt Schaefer sponsored a bill (HB 4296) that would help high school plumbing programs transition students to a tradesman license more readily. Several of our PHCC Texas members worked with the Representative to add language to the bill to increase the requirements of the school programs. This bill was voted out of committee and can be placed on the House floor calendar for possible hearing at any time.

Other items we have been watching have to do with CSST products, a possible trades board, lien laws, retainage, and school defects. Using social media and other “call to action” software, we have been able to bring you letter writing campaigns to weigh in on these very important issues.

2019 has proven to be one of the toughest legislative years ever! We appreciate your ongoing support of our efforts.

Please contact me should you have any questions or concerns: Alicia Dover, Executive Director, alicia@phcc-tx.org