



This year's legislative session reinforced the unpredictability of what takes place at our state Capitol. It also underscored how critical it is for our industry to be engaged and united.

As we all know, the Legislature was unable to resolve a debate about how the state will license and regulate plumbers into the future. This sent a shock wave through the state as the prospect of deregulation or patchwork oversight raised the concerns of everyone from elected officials to consumers. Thanks to action taken by Gov. Abbott, the Texas State Board of Plumbing Examiners will continue to oversee statewide licensure of plumbing until the issue can be addressed again when the Legislature convenes for its next session in January of 2021. The governor has said he does not intend to call a special session on the issue.

The failure of legislation to continue statewide licensure of plumbing was a surprise to most everyone. While unexpected, the good news is it gives us another opportunity to convince legislators about the importance of maintaining expertise in the oversight and regulation of a trade industry such as plumbing.

Since the legislative session ended, PHCC has been involved in countless meetings, conferences and conversations with our membership, state officials, industry leaders and other stakeholder organizations on the appropriate next steps in this debate. The fact that plumbing licensure will continue as usual gives us time to use the interim months leading up to the next session to identify the best path forward for plumbers, consumers and all trade professions affected by this issue.

Your role in this process will be critical to our ultimate success. In the coming months, we will be asking that you help amplify the voice of plumbers by letting your legislators know where you stand. We will continue to keep you informed of key developments that will impact the debate and eventual resolution.

We know that many still have questions about how all of this happened. To help provide answers, we're enclosing an overview that you can share with anyone interested in the issue, from your co-workers to interested businesses and friends.

PHCC will continue to be at the forefront of any discussions that will influence the ultimate outcome of the plumbing licensure debate. Your participation with PHCC is essential to our effectiveness in preserving statewide oversight of the plumbing industry in Texas.

Thank you for your continued support for PHCC. We will continue to fight for you in Austin. Stay tuned for updates.

Sincerely,

Randy Hunter
PHCC Texas President
R.E.C. Industries – San Antonio

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Executive Director
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Licensure and Regulation of Plumbers by the State Board of Plumbing Examiners Will Continue

WHAT HAPPENED?

Every 12 years, state agencies must undergo review and, in effect, be renewed by the Texas Legislature. If that doesn't happen, the law authorizing that state agency goes away, and, therefore, so does the agency.

This year, the Texas State Board of Plumbing Examiners was up for this sunset review and faced several hurdles early, not the least of which was pressure to move the regulation of the industry under the umbrella of the Texas Department of Licensing and Regulation. This was part of an ongoing movement to consolidate the state's licensing in one department. While streamlined government is generally embraced, in this instance such a move would take regulation of our industry out of the hands of the tradespeople who understand its intricacies and practices.

While the attempt to make this change was successfully battled back, "safety net" legislation that would have extended the plumbing board — which is routine to the process — surprisingly did not pass before the end of the session. Technically, that meant the board would cease to exist in September.

Action was taken, however, to prevent that from happening.

WHERE THINGS STAND:

The plumbing board will conduct business as usual until at least 2021.

That's because, after the session, Gov. Greg Abbott recognized that having unlicensed, unregulated individuals doing potentially substandard plumbing work across the state would be a major problem — particularly in parts of the state still rebuilding from Hurricane Harvey — and he signed an executive order extending the board for two years.

This gives the industry, stakeholders and legislators two years to address important issues raised during the sunset process and find a lasting solution that can be passed into law the next time the legislature convenes.

To be clear, nothing has changed. The plumbing board continues to regulate plumbers in Texas and will do so until the Legislature changes that. Gov. Abbott's action helped us avoid a "Wild West" scenario with no state regulation of plumbers, whatsoever.

WHAT'S NEXT?

This will be continued in the next legislative session in 2021.

PHCC continues to be at the center of discussions about a range of options on the table for a permanent solution. PHCC will continue to fight for industry oversight that includes the expertise and experience to ensure safe, quality work across the state. Plumbers have a strong voice in Austin that reflects the impact of our industry on the safety and quality of life of all Texans, and we intend to have a say in charting the path forward on licensure.

Toward that goal, PHCC will remain in constant touch with industry and state leaders, legislators and especially our members in the months ahead. We are already working to lay the groundwork that will position us to be effective in influencing this debate when legislators convene again in January 2021.

Until then, it's business as usual. The State Board of Plumbing Examiners will continue to enforce regulations and licensure for our industry.



Key Messages on State Regulation of Plumbing

Appropriate licensing and oversight of the plumbing industry in Texas is necessary to preserve the health, safety and well-being of all Texans. This is a public health and safety issue.

Effective oversight of the industry by tradespeople who understand it is valued by responsible plumbers within the industry and is relied upon by the Texans that utilize our services.

Strong licensure and oversight provide peace of mind to families in their homes. It ensures safety in our schools, hospitals and businesses.

Strong and uniform licensure enforcement holds plumbers accountable and protects consumers.

These key messages may be helpful in guiding discussions on the importance of continuing state regulation of plumbing.