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For Immediate Release
Tuesday, July 25, 2017

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Texas Senate Preliminarily Passes Senate Bill 1, Property Tax Reform, by a vote of 19-12
Texans from all over the State have all made clear that property tax reform is a top priority

AUSTIN - Answering the call of hard-pressed Texans from the panhandle, to Houston, to the I-35 corridor, from big towns and small towns, the Texas Senate yesterday preliminarily passed Senate Bill 1, by Senator Paul Bettencourt (R-Houston) to bring about property tax reform and relief for all Texas home and business owners. The bill, a top priority of both Governor Abbott and Lt. Governor Patrick, will head to the Texas House after one final vote.

“Texans are crying out for property tax relief as home and business owners are seeing city, county, and special district property tax levies which have gone up twice as fast as ISD property tax levies from 2005 to 2015,” said Senator Bettencourt. **“That is an astonishing amount of money flowing from Texans’ checkbooks into government’s pocketbook.”**

Over the last three years in Harris County, property tax bills have increased 36% for the average home for just the county portion of the bill. Dallas County and Tarrant County have seen similar increases, with property tax bill increases of roughly 25% and 19% respectively. Notably, Travis County offers an example of how SB 1 can work, with the average home seeing a 0.7% reduction on the county portion of their property tax bills, due to property tax rate cuts, despite an appraisal increase of roughly 28%. **“The real problem is that when appraised values go up, tax rates never come down,”** added Senator Bettencourt. **“When homeowners in the State’s largest county are seeing a 36% increase in average tax bills in just three years it is time to act!”**

Senate Bill 1 will lower the current rollback rate from 8% to 4%, and bring added transparency to the property tax process and eliminate confusion surrounding multiple protest deadlines. It would additionally create an automatic election provision in November in a taxing entity exceeds the rollback rate, and also establishes an office in the Comptroller’s office for oversight and complaint resolution. Echoing testimony heard before the Senate Select Committee on Government Reform, chaired by Senator Bettencourt, which said **“let the people vote”**, and **“trust in the people’s vote”**, Senate Bill 1 will bring the public back into the process and allow them a vote in a November election on their property tax rates. An amendment added by Senator Perry (R-Lubbock) was enacted that exempts taxing entities with under \$20 million in tax revenue from the legislation, however, an amendment from Senator Buckingham (R-Lakeway) allows voters in exempt taxing entities to opt in to the legislation. Senator Birdwell (R-Granbury) eliminated all petition requirements for rollback elections which prevented taxpayers from rolling back their property tax bills due to the higher number of required petition signatures.

Senator Bettencourt highlighted why the property tax reform opposition’s arguments surrounding how local ISD property tax bill revenue is used are misguided when he declared, **“regardless of what the tax split is on a property tax bill, the taxpayer has to pay 100% of it.”**

After one final vote in the Senate, Senate Bill 1 will head to the Texas House of Representatives. Property tax reform is the top priority of Governor Abbott in the special session and it will now be up to the Texas House to pass.

Senator Bettencourt concluded, **“Texans expect their elected representatives to show up and vote on the important issues that they face every day. The Texas Senate will continue to fight for the ordinary Texans who are bearing the brunt of these property tax increases.”**

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