

State Representative Jim Keffer
House District 60



State Senator Brian Birdwell
Senate District 22

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
February 11, 2015

Contact: Adam Haynes / Ben Stratmann
(512) 463-0656 / (512) 463-0122

BIRDWELL, KEFFER FILE BILLS TO EXPAND OVERSIGHT OF STATE WATER

AUSTIN—State Senator Brian Birdwell (R-Granbury) and State Representative Jim Keffer (R-Eastland) filed legislation Tuesday to increase oversight of Texas' most precious resource—water—and the entities charged with managing that resource. Senate Bill 523 and House Bill 1290 require the review of all Texas river authorities by the Sunset Advisory Commission, analyzing specifically each entity's governance, management, operating structure, and compliance with legislative requirements.

The Sunset Advisory Commission, guided by a 12-member body as appointed by the Lt. Governor and Speaker of the House, works to identify and eliminate waste, duplication and inefficiency within state government. SB 523 and HB 1290 ensure the same stringent review process will be applied to river authorities on a recurring basis. Under the 'Sunset' process, the legislature may require the authority to make specific changes as recommended by the Commission, but the companion bills provide that a river authority cannot be eliminated in order to preserve the bond and credit ratings of the various authorities. River authorities will be reviewed at a rate of 3-4 per biennium and in alphabetical order, beginning immediately with the Bandera, Brazos and Central Colorado River Authorities.

"The Texas Legislature has created—and given significant power to—a growing number of river authorities over the years, yet we have failed to establish an ongoing, citizen-centric mechanism for reviewing and evaluating these entities," Birdwell said. "Especially in a drastic era of drought such as this, it is imperative that the people's elected representatives have explicit oversight of the river authorities and their management of Texas water. This is about good governance, and it's long overdue."

"Ensuring legislative oversight of river authorities increases accountability and transparency of entities created by the Legislature," said Keffer. "The efficient use of our water resources is critical to our state's continued economic growth and quality of life. The Sunset review process will aid in that effort and will help keep Texas working for generations to come."

Senators Craig Estes (R-Wichita Falls), Troy Fraser (R-Horseshoe Bay), Lois Kolkhorst (R-Brenham) and Charles Perry (R-Lubbock) jointly-authored the bill with Senator Birdwell. Similar support has come from key members of the Texas House.

###