

Dear GEAA members and friends,

Today's alert is of special interest to rural GEAA members.

[SB 957 \(Fraser\)](#) is being considered by the [Senate Natural Resources Committee](#). This bill could curtail access to [Contested Case Hearings](#) for air quality, water quality, and waste permits. SB 957 represents a massive reworking of the permitting process in Texas, and would stack the deck against property owners, local governments, and small businesses.

Because Texas does not empower land use or zoning authority at the County level, contesting TCEQ permits is often the only recourse available to citizens residing outside of municipalities. Even the simple powers of governing incompatible land uses are currently denied Texas Counties. The Contested Case Hearing process can serve to protect county residents from projects that would negatively impact the value of their homes and properties, and their health and well being.

All too often, GEAA, our member groups, and individual citizens have been required to contest permits for projects that probably should not have been granted in the first place. We have seen TCEQ issue permits based upon faulty modeling and false information submitted by the applicant. TCEQ is underfunded, understaffed, and under pressure to grant permits in compliance with a timeframe that does not favor thorough review. Mistakes do happen. Texans rely on the right to contest permits that impact their property and well being.

Please, ask the members of the Senate Committee on Natural Resources not to compromise or deny them this right by opposing SB 957.

[Senator Troy Fraser, Chair](#)
[Senator Craig Estes, Vice Chair](#)
[Senator Bob Deuell](#)
[Senator Robert Duncan](#)
[Senator Rodney Ellis](#)
[Senator Kevin Eltife](#)
[Senator Glenn Hegar](#)
[Senator Juan Hinojosa](#)
[Senator Robert Nichols](#)
[Senator Kel Seliger](#)
[Senator Carlos Uresti](#)

You can tell them: "A fair and accessible contested case hearing process is a venue of last resort for thousands of Texans who oppose ventures that would degrade their water supplies, expose them to air pollution, and/or negatively impact their properties in other ways. We always hear that Texas is a property rights state. But, individual property owners are extremely disadvantaged under state law when it comes to asserting their rights as property owners. Please do not curtail their rights further by adopting changes to the contested case hearing process as SB 957 calls on you to do."

Please call your [State Senator](#) and [State Representative](#) to let them know you oppose SB 957 and [HB 2082 - Ritter](#).

CHEAP TESTING OF YOUR WELL: Private water well testing should be done at least once a year - especially if you drink, cook with, or bathe in the water and live near an area where development is occurring. Disturbing the soil to build water and wastewater pipes, and roads can spread bacteria in the cracks and crannies of the porous aquifer limestone that then can spread very quickly to your well water. Contamination in the Edwards can spread very quickly for surprisingly long distances.

For those of you who live in Blanco and Hays counties, a well screening day will be held on April 17th. **DO TAKE ADVANTAGE** of this \$10 test for fecal coli form, nitrates and high salinity. Call 512-393-2120 in San Marcos or 830-868-7167 in Blanco to get directions to the Agrilife Extension offices and times to pick up your sample bags and instructions for sampling. You can get a sample bag any day; their bags must be used to get this \$10 test. Samples have to be turned in by 10 a.m. on April 17th and usually these have to be fresh, filled that morning, following their instructions to get accurate results. The results will be given to you at 6:30 p.m. on April 18th at a meeting at the Extension Office in San Marcos. You will be advised on ways to correct any problems found and will learn more about managing your private well.

Have a great weekend!

Annalisa Peace
Executive Director