



**OFFICE OF THE LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR  
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**Lt. Governor Dewhurst Issues Select Interim Charges  
Focusing on Drought and Wildfire Preparedness**

AUSTIN—Today, Lt. Governor David Dewhurst issued select Interim Charges to six Senate Committees and one Subcommittee focusing on the extreme drought conditions and destructive wildfires that have burned across Texas this year.

"Texas is currently facing an unprecedented wildfire season compounded by one of the worst droughts in our state's history," said Lt. Governor Dewhurst. "The drought has had a devastating and far-reaching impact across the entire state, and the legislature must use all of the resources at our disposal to prepare and respond in the event these severe drought conditions persist."

The past twelve months – from October 2010 through September 2011 – have been the driest in Texas since 1895, when the state first began keeping rainfall records. Over roughly the same time period, Texas responded to more than 24,000 fires, burning over 3.8 million acres and destroying more than 7,000 homes and businesses.

Lt. Governor Dewhurst tasked Senate committees with the following:

**Natural Resources Committee**

- Review water resources and conservation measures included in the State Water Plan
- Evaluate methods to enhance existing water resources and promote water conservation across the state at all times, not just in case of severe drought conditions

**Agriculture & Rural Affairs Committee**

- Review the impact of the drought on the Texas agricultural and ranching industry
- Develop methods and legislative recommendations to minimize the effects of drought and respond to the challenges for farmers and ranchers

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### **Economic Development Committee**

- Assess the economic impact of long-term drought on all sectors of the Texas economy
- Include additional analysis of economic consequences of wildland fires
- Develop a compendium of federal, state, and local funding and other assistance alternatives for reducing the long-term economic consequences of the drought

### **Intergovernmental Relations Committee**

- Analyze ways to better coordinate existing federal, state and local housing resources to increase access to affordable housing following a disaster
- Review best practices for fulfilling emergency short-term housing needs and developing long-term housing opportunities using existing tools, such as land trusts, land banks and other available incentives
- Review housing and development codes, and guidelines for structures in areas prone to natural disasters, and make recommendations on how these structures can be "hardened" to avoid loss
- Make recommendations to educate and enable private landowners to use best practices in fire risk mitigation, fuel reduction and urban forest management to reduce exposure to wildland fires

### **Subcommittee on Flooding & Evacuations**

- Investigate and evaluate communication options during evacuations and make recommendations for legislative action

### **Business & Commerce Committee**

- Assess the impact of extreme drought conditions on electric generation capacity
- Identify those regions of Texas that will be most affected by a lack of capacity
- Analyze response plans and make recommendations to improve and expedite those plans

### **Transportation & Homeland Security Committee**

- Review state, local and federal emergency preparation and response efforts as they pertain to protecting lives, property and natural resources from wildland fire
- Consider ways to facilitate better communication, collaboration and response between all state agencies and stakeholders involved in wildfire prevention, mitigation and control
- Review training of emergency responders to ensure that they have the appropriate skills to respond to wildfire events
- Review best practices in urban forest management and fuel reduction policies, both regulatory as well as voluntary, to promote safe firefighting operations

Additional Interim Charges will be released later this fall. A full list of Interim Charges relating to the drought and wildfires is available for public viewing at: <http://www.lt.gov.state.tx.us>

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