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Property Tax Reform Committee “Road Show” Begins

Late last year, Lt. Governor Dan Patrick [announced](#) his appointment of seven senators to serve on a new [Select Committee on Property Tax Reform and Relief](#). The select Committee will hold public hearings across the state to determine how to "improve the property tax process as well as reduce the burden on property owners." It is widely believed that one goal of these hearings is to begin the push for harmful revenue caps heading into the 2017 legislative session.

The Committee will have the first of its on-location meetings at the University of Texas at San Antonio Main Campus on Wednesday, January 27, 2016. The agenda is available [here](#).

The Committee will hear invited, resource, and public testimony on the following interim charges: (1) study the property tax process, including the appraisal system; (2) recommend ways to promote transparency, simplicity, and accountability by all taxing entities; and (3) examine and develop options to further reduce the tax burden on property owners.

The League encourages all concerned city officials to testify because it is imperative that the Committee hear about the detrimental effects of revenue caps. We will continue our information outreach as new dates and locations are announced. The League has prepared [talking points](#) to assist city officials with their preparation.

Please contact Shanna Igo, the League's Director of Legislative Services, at 512-750-8718 or sigo@tml.org if you plan to testify and/or have questions.

MS4 Stormwater Regulations: EPA Solicits Comments

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is seeking comments on proposed rule updates to its National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) [Phase II stormwater rules](#).

The purpose of the proposed [NPDES Stormwater MS4 General Permit Remand Rule](#) is to fix certain perceived deficiencies (the lack of permitting authority review and the lack of public participation in the permitting process) found in the permitting process for small MS4s covered under general permits. The proposed rulemaking applies to operators of a “regulated small MS4,” which are permitted in Texas by the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ).

The rule proposes three different options for revising the current Phase II rules:

- Option 1 (EPA’s proposed approach) – A traditional general permit approach whereby the general permit includes clear, specific, and measurable provisions, and the permittee is required to submit a Notice of Intent that the requirements will be met.
- Option 2 – A procedural approach whereby the permit authority establishes a mechanism to approve individual MS4 programs.
- Option 3 – A state choice approach whereby the permit authority can choose to follow either option one or two or a hybrid of the two.

All of the options above would represent substantial changes to how small MS4 general permits are issued and renewed. Under option 1, the “traditional approach,” Texas MS4s could experience substantial changes to the current permitting process. That approach would likely result in significantly more prescriptive permit terms, with less flexibility provided to each small MS4. Under the “procedural approach,” which most closely resembles Texas’ current approach, an MS4 would likely retain the current level of involvement in shaping the terms of its permit. This approach allows for flexibility in a general permitting scheme, but it may require some changes to the current noticing and comment procedures. Under the third option, the State Choice Approach, EPA would provide a hybrid approach the details of which are not clear.

EPA is accepting comments on the rulemaking through **March 21, 2016**. To submit comments online, visit the [Federal eRulemaking Portal](#) and follow the online instructions for submitting comments on Docket ID No. EPA–HQ–OW–2015–0671.

The League will continue to monitor this rulemaking process. If you have specific questions, please contact Heather Lockhart at 512-231-7400 or heather@tml.org.

Interim Hearing: Cities and Cybersecurity

The House Committee on Urban Affairs met last Wednesday to discuss the following interim charge:

Identify and address potential gaps in cities' cybersecurity policy and ensure that personal information held by cities and other municipal entities is secure.

The Committee heard invited testimony from the Cities of Austin and Houston relating to those cities' cybersecurity practices. The subject is relatively new to governmental entities, and the League will monitor and report on the committee's recommendations.

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