Legislative Workgroups and Relevant Interim Charges

Workgroup Topic Area	Legislative Committee	Relevant Interim Charge
Appellate Courts and Judicial Compensation	Senate State Affairs	Analyze the advantages and disadvantages of phasing in a defined-contribution pension for future employees versus the existing defined-benefit pension plan. Study options for transition or implementation issues and how the phase-in could be structured. Evaluate the possibility of requiring the state employee contribution rate to meet the annually required contribution for the statewide retirement funds each biennium in order to prevent unfunded liabilities.
Emergency Preparedness	Senate Business and Commerce	 Study a building code specific to coastal properties to mitigate hurricane damage Examine statutory changes needed to maintain affordable and available homeowner's insurance and industry reinsurance following a natural disaster in Texas.
	Senate Health and Human Services	 Study and address the ethical issues surrounding the impact of a pandemic influenza in this state, particularly focusing on the following: the availability of human and material resources the benefits and burdens of mass evacuation plans the involvement of private sector professional organizations and businesses in the state's pandemic influenza preparedness and response plans; and development and implementation of communication plans that will inform and prepare the public on risk reduction behaviors and local/state preparedness and response.
	Senate Subcommittee on Flooding and Evacuations	 Monitor the implementation of priority legislation addressed by the Subcommittee on Flooding and Evacuations, 80th Legislature, Regular Session, and make recommendations for any legislation needed to improve or enhance and complete implementation. Report on the implementation of SB 1436, which transferred the National Flood Insurance Program from the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality to the Texas Water Development Board. Make recommendations for improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the program.
	Senate Jurisprudence	> Study the management and storage of adoption records, including the costs and benefits

	Senate Transportation and Homeland Security	 of converting records into digital format. Study ways to increase access by adopted persons and their children and spouses to important family medical history information and ensure that medical history information is updated, while maintaining privacy and anonymity of records. Examine the roles and best practices among individuals, state and local governments, hospitals and other health care providers, and the insurance industry for disaster planning and first response efforts. Explore what changes are needed to better prepare for natural disasters to mitigate claims and losses. Include an assessment of the state's implementation of recent recommendations for evacuations, including movement of medically fragile populations. Study the level of preparedness among critical infrastructure entities in both the public and private sector, the effectiveness of state disaster relief policies relating to this infrastructure and the sufficiency of personnel needed to restore this infrastructure. Assess the state's preparedness to handle a public health emergency. Examine the challenges of interoperability of communications technologies to improve coordination of different plans across jurisdictions.
	House Defense Affairs and State-Federal Relations	 Study and make recommendations to address the need to identify essential personnel necessary to enter a disaster area to restore critical infrastructure. Examine Chapter 431, Government Code, Chapter 431, to determine the feasibility of the Texas State Guard and Texas National Guard, while designated on state active duty, to assist in interagency planning and operational coordination under the Governor's Division of Emergency Management and the Texas Secretary of State. Examine the State of Texas' preparedness level to handle a public health emergency. (Joint Interim Charge with the House Committee on Public Health)
	House Committee on Public Health	 Examine the State of Texas' preparedness level to handle a public health emergency. (Joint Interim Charge with the House Committee on Defense Affairs and State-Federal Relations)
Civil and Family Law	Senate Criminal Justice	Study and recommend best practices for reducing re-victimization of child abuse victims associated with delay in resolution of criminal cases. Recommend options for reducing the time lapse between child victimization and criminal hearings.
	Senate Health and	Monitor the implementation of the Department of Family and Protective Services'

Unmon C	vices improvement plan to reduce caseloads for Child Protective Service asserverizers and to
Human S	 improvement plan to reduce caseloads for Child Protective Service caseworkers, and to provide family-based safety services and ongoing substitute care services. Evaluate the efficiency of Child Protective Services "functional units," and determine if other organizational models would allow for a reduction in caseworkers' caseloads, without increasing other administrative costs. Develop recommendations aimed at lowering individual caseloads, making casework more efficient, and improving the retention of caseworkers. Assess the viability of caseworker reimbursement as a manner to lower caseworker turnover. Monitor the implementation of the Department of Family and Protective Services' plan t stabilize the foster care system and increase permanency options for children. Study placement capacity to determine how Child Protective Services can better develop the necessary adoptions or foster homes to meet the needs of children and families by increasing foster care capacity, recruiting and retaining more foster and adoptive parents increasing the use of relative care, and developing best practices for reducing foster care placement breakdowns. This includes studying innovative ways to promote adoption and kinship care in Texas and best practices for foster/adoptive parents to improve their ability to care for abused and neglected children. Explore potential improvements and enhancements in the Preparation for Adult Living (PAL) program to increase successful
	 transitioning from foster care to adult living. Study current death review processes for children who die while in state care. Examine Texas' current strategies for preventing child abuse. Specifically study the effectiveness of current programs and how these programs compare to other state efforts Identify national research-based solutions, including best practices and programs addressing sexual abuse. Explore promising existing and emerging approaches to child abuse and neglect prevention, especially those with a strong evidence base. Identify additional funding sources for increased child abuse prevention activities by the state.
Senate Juris	 nonparents, including suits for possession of or access to a child by a grandparent, and make recommendations for providing the best care and protection for the children involved. Provide an assessment of the constitutional issues involved with these suits. Identify and study best practices for representation of children in child abuse and neglec
	cases and determine whether to implement further training, oversight, or other requirements for judges, attorneys, and others responsible for child abuse and neglect

	 cases, including child sexual abuse cases. Develop and implement tools for children's advocacy centers (CACs) and prosecutors to successfully investigate and prosecute child abusers. Include the following: Explore changes to the rules of evidence that could facilitate the presentation of child testimony in court; Explore making prior extraneous sex offenses admissible during determination of guilt, as has been adopted in the federal court system; and Explore possible expansion of the rules regarding how cases are consolidated and punishments are stacked in a single trial involving a crime committed against a child.
Senate State Affairs	 Study the economic impact of recent civil justice reform legislation in Texas. Study whether Texas should adopt the Restatement 2nd of Torts Sec. 674 (Wrongful use of Civil Proceedings) and whether a person should be allowed to recover court and attorneys fees when he has been forced to defend a lawsuit filed without probable cause or for intimidation purposes.
House Civil Practices	 Study the cumulative effects of Texas civil justice reforms enacted since 2003, with particular attention toward effects on Texas job creation, judicial efficiency, medical access, and medical malpractice insurance rates. Examine the effect on our tort system of meritless litigation filed in Texas, especially meritless litigation designed to harass Texans or intimidate Texans from exercising their rights. Consider the law in other states and consider whether Texas law should be amended to allow greater recourse, such as recovery of costs and other financial penalties, to reduce such litigation. Monitor the effect of multiple plaintiff trials in tort cases, other than those concerning asbestos and silica, and recommend any statutory changes needed to increase judicial efficiency and ensure access to the courts for all plaintiffs.
House Human Services	 Research strategies to promote permanency and stability for children and families involved with Child Protective Services. Identify any priorities that would approve the adoption process. Evaluate Prevention and Early Intervention programs at the Department of Family and Protective Services that have been funded by the Texas Legislature for the prevention of

		 child abuse and neglect. Consider if higher priority for selection should be given to child or family mentoring or other support services, such as foster grandparents and efforts that assist mothers. > Evaluate existing and past efforts by the state for Youth Transitions in Independent Living. Recommend improvements to educational, occupational, health, and life skills components of preparation of foster children for adult living.
Criminal Law and Indigent Defense	Senate Criminal Justice	 Components of preparation of roser climater for adult frying. Study the issue of criminal asset seizure and the use of seized and forfeiture funds by district attorneys and law enforcement agencies. Review the oversight of these matters by the Texas Attorney General and provide recommendations to improve the dissemination of information concerning these funds. Ensure that these funds have the appropriate accountability and fiscal controls required for public funds. Study the system of deferred adjudication in Texas courts and make recommendations for resolving any problems and reducing the potential for release of dangerous criminals. Monitor the implementation of Senate Bill 103 and the continuing reforms to the Texas Youth Commission and the juvenile criminal justice system. Monitor the implementation of the new and expanded programs provided to the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) within the Fiscal Year 2008 and 2009 budget, and identify their impact on the criminal offenders into communities. Identify barriers to the successful return to law-abiding behavior, including the absence of employment opportunities created by restriction on obtaining certain state occupational licenses. Provide recommendations for improvements to our current statutes governing this matter. Study whether Articles 36.09 (relating to trying multiple defendants from the same transaction either separately or jointly) and 36.10 (relating to severing defendants that show prejudice from a joint trial) of the Texas Code of Criminal Procedure provide sufficient safeguards to ensure fair and reliable trial results in capital cases with multiple defendants. Determine whether the articles provide trial judges with sufficient instruction regarding joinder or severance of defendants and, if not, make recommendations to improve procedures.
	Senate Government Organization	Examine criminal background check requirements across Texas health and human service, law enforcement, and education agencies, as well as other licensed professionals. Determine best practices, develop cross-agency standards, and make recommendations

	for reducing costs and streamlining the process.
Senate Transportation and Homeland Security	 Evaluate the state's homeland security efforts and the state's recent \$140 million investment in law enforcement to help secure the border and study and make recommendations to deter transnational and drug-related gang violence and crime, including the use of injunctions and any possible improvements to Chapter 125 of the Civil Practices and Remedies Code, relating to membership in street gangs. Monitor urban crime laboratories and their compliance with state laws regulating their functions and make recommendations to restore public trust in their functions and to ensure full compliance with federal Homeland Security reporting requirements. Specifically, review the report issued by the Independent Investigator for the Houston Police Department Crime Laboratory and Property Room, the independent panel review of certain criminal convictions prompted by the conclusions of this report, and the implementation by the City of Houston of any reforms recommended in this report.
House Appropriations	 Monitor and examine the implementation of funding appropriated during the 80th Legislature to the Texas Youth Commission, Juvenile Probation Commission, Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ), and Correctional Managed Health Care Committee. Review and research the availability, coordination, efficiency, and allocation of substance abuse treatment resources for probationers, pretrial defendants, people in the custody of the TDCJ, and parolees. This review should include methods to reduce and improve current assessments, training, and referring protocols and the identification of any barriers that may be impeding all of the above. (Joint Interim Charge with the House Committee on Corrections)
House Corrections	 Consider new strategies for meeting prisoner reentry challenges in Texas, including the evaluation of programs with documented success. This review should include the availability of housing and occupational barriers. Study the organizational structure of the Texas Youth Commission and the Texas Juvenile Probation Commission to determine if the current system is effectively and efficiently addressing the needs of the juvenile justice system in conjunction with the sunset review of these agencies. (Joint Interim Charge with the House Committee on Juvenile Justice and Family Issues)

	House Criminal Jurisprudence	 Examine problems associated with the current system of deferred adjudication in Texas. Study the need to add salvia divinorum to the list of controlled substances regulated under the Texas Controlled Substance Act. Examine the criminal trespass statute in the Penal Code and propose needed amendments or reorganization. Study the prosecution and effectiveness of current drunk driving laws in Texas and recommend any legislative changes needed to further combat the problem. Research the problems associated with human trafficking and determine the need for additional penalties. Examine the current Texas law allowing dual trials for capital murder defendants.
	House Juvenile Justice and Family Issues	 Study the use of police diversion under Chapter 52 of the Family Code for youth who are referred to the juvenile justice system, including those there as a result of incidents in school. Study victim offender mediation and neighborhood restorative justice penals.
		Study victim-offender mediation and neighborhood restorative justice panels.
	House Urban Affairs	Monitor the report issued by the Independent Investigator for the Houston Police Department Crime Laboratory and Property Room, the independent panel review of certain criminal convictions prompted by the conclusions of this report, and the implementation by the City of Houston of any reforms recommended in this report. Also monitor other urban crime laboratories and their compliance with state laws regulating their functions. (Joint Interim Charge with the House Committee on Law Enforcement)
Justice and Municipal Courts		
Judicial Administration/OCA		
Information Technology		

Process Servers	House Government Reform	Study and review current laws regarding licensing and regulation of professionals, as well as current laws regarding practice acts, and make recommendations on creating limitations and streamlining of licensure requirements, such as the public policy implications of decriminalization of license-related violations.
Court Reporters	House Government Reform	Study and review current laws regarding licensing and regulation of professionals, as well as current laws regarding practice acts, and make recommendations on creating limitations and streamlining of licensure requirements, such as the public policy implications of decriminalization of license-related violations.
Guardians	House Government Reform	Study and review current laws regarding licensing and regulation of professionals, as well as current laws regarding practice acts, and make recommendations on creating limitations and streamlining of licensure requirements, such as the public policy implications of decriminalization of license-related violations.
Judicial Conduct		
Mental Health & Probate	Senate Criminal Justice	Study the relationship between the public mental health system and the criminal justice and civil courts systems, including the identification and sharing of information regarding mentally ill offenders, including minors, among criminal justice and mental health agencies, the courts, state hospitals, and the Veterans Administration. Study how current confidentiality laws impact the exchange of information among groups described above. Study the sentencing of mentally ill offenders compared to non-mentally ill offenders, including minors, and the affect that has on statewide prison capacity and on the health care provided to mentally ill offenders. (Joint Charge with Senate State Affairs Committee)
	Senate Health and Human Services	 Monitor the Department of Aging and Disability Services' improvement plan for the system of care for individuals with developmental disabilities, focusing on efforts to improve state schools and provide more community care options Study the effectiveness of the Resiliency and Disease Management (RDM) program in the mental health service delivery system, implementation of changes to the crisis care program, and recommendations for appropriate use of the mental health transformation grant. Identify strategies to increase access to services and meet future demand for services. Examine resource allocation and opportunities to maximize funding. Policy

	Senate Jurisprudence	 recommendations should maximize the number of inpatient psychiatric acute care beds, enhance access to outpatient services, promote the use of recovery-based services, and enhance access to community-based services. Examine the role of heir finders in Texas and make recommendations regarding professional standards and fees for heir finders. Study and make recommendations relating to the jurisdiction, authority, power and discretion of probate judges in Texas, including the authority of a probate judge to intervene in a non-probate case.
	House Appropriations	Assess the relationship between mental illness and criminal behavior and offer reforms needed to address the proliferation of mental illness in the adult and juvenile criminal justice systems. This review should include an examination of data sharing between criminal justice and health and human services agencies, proper screening, assessments, treatment, discharge planning, post-release supervision, and community services. (Joint Interim Charge with the House Committee on Corrections)
	House Juvenile Justice and Family Issues	Determine whether current mental health practices followed by the Texas Youth Commission are adequate or appropriate, and make recommendations for any needed changes.
Court Cost Collections/Fees		
Associate Judges/Specialty Courts		
New Courts/Weighted Caseload Study		

Judicial	Senate Government	> Study the economic and security costs and benefits, both short-term and long-term, of
Administration/Court	Organization	adoption of an open document format for state-created documents.
Clerks/ Juries/Access		Study options for developing a new master-planned campus to serve the needs of state
to Justice/SBOT		government and provide for future growth. Consider locations accessible to the
Court Administration		government center, as well as relative property values and lease rates. Consider
Task Force/Court		divestiture of certain real estate assets within Travis County to take advantage of
Security		favorable market conditions and the cost and benefits of reducing reliance on leased
		facilities. Coordinate activities with the Texas Facility Commission and the General Land Office.
	Senate Jurisprudence	> Study the management and storage of adoption records, including the costs and benefits
		of converting records into digital format. Study ways to increase access by adopted
		persons and their children and spouses to important family medical history information
		and ensure that medical history information is updated, while maintaining privacy and anonymity of records.
		Study practices intended to enhance the jury experience and increase jury participation,
		including:
		 allowing jurors to ask questions of witnesses by submitting them to the judge in writing;
		 allowing lawyers to periodically summarize testimony for the jury;
		 allowing jurors to take notes during trial; and
		 allowing jurors to discuss evidence among themselves during trial.
	House Business and	> Study the problem of identity theft and the impact of identity theft legislation enacted in
	Industry	recent legislative sessions. Examine the problem of electronic data breaches, as well as
		the feasibility of requiring periodic destruction of records for businesses and state entities
		to limit exposure to identity theft. Examine the issue of personal information contained in
		publicly available government records. Recommend any legislative changes needed to
		combat the problem.
	House Elections	Consider the need for modifications to judicial districts in Texas.
	House Government	> Research, investigate, and make recommendations on how electronic documents can be
	Reform	created, maintained, exchanged, and preserved by the state in a manner that encourages

House Judiciary	 appropriate government control, access, choice, interoperability, and vendor neutrality. The committee shall consider, but not be limited to, public access to information, expected storage life of electronic documents, costs of implementation, and savings. Examine the current Texas jury system. Consider possible changes to enhance the jury experience and increase citizen participation on juries. Examine the current Texas court system, including its complex layers of trial courts with overlapping and varying jurisdiction. Consider whether the system needs modernization to improve judicial efficiency.