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PRESS RELEASE



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Governor's veto of scrap tire bill endangers health and safety of Texans

Austin – Texas Gov. Greg Abbott today vetoed state Sen. José Rodríguez's S.B. 570, which would have helped communities deal with the problem of scrap tires being illegally dumped, an issue that is particularly troubling for local health authorities trying to prevent the spread of the Zika virus.

“What the governor has done is put the health and safety of Texans at risk by removing a tool that would have reduced illegally dumped tires, which are breeding grounds for mosquitoes that carry Zika and other dangerous illnesses,” Rodríguez said.

The governor vetoed this bill on the basis that Texans would have to regularly consult the Texas Register and the actions of local government to know if they are in violation of the laws related to tire disposal. In fact, under the current status quo, Texans must look to the Texas Register to find existing administrative rules put in place by TCEQ. In contrast, the bill would have put the framework into state statute, clearly delineating requirements for proper disposal of scrap tires.

“It also would have given local governments the same civil and criminal enforcement tools that currently exist for other environmental violations in state law,” Rodríguez said. “That’s why the tire industry - from manufacturers to retailers to processors - supported the bill, which they helped develop as part of a broad coalition that included health officials and local governments.”

More than 36 million tires are discarded each year in Texas, roughly one and a half tires for every person residing in the state. Several million of these tires are illegally dumped each year, creating fire, pollution, and public health and safety risks, such as increases in vector-borne illnesses like Zika, West Nile, and dengue fever.

For all these reasons, stakeholders wrote letters to Gov. Abbott in favor of the bill.

“S.B. 570 aims to address illegal tire dumping while updating and modernizing antiquated laws as was requested by industry participants,” wrote Liberty Tire Recycling and other tire industry stakeholders.

"S.B. 570 is not only negotiated and agreed to legislation but was requested by industry participants who seek to stem this illegal activity."

In another letter to Gov. Abbott, Goodyear Tire and Rubber wrote that S.B. 570 "is not over regulation. At best, it is the minimum regulation required."

The Texas Public Health Coalition, which includes over 30 health-related organizations including the Texas Medical Association, Texas Pediatric Society, and Texas Hospital Association, wrote that S.B. 570 "provides an important opportunity to take proactive steps against dangerous diseases."

Finding ways to deal with the issue has been a long-time top priority for cities, counties, and public health authorities. S.B. 570 was the first significant statewide legislation since the last attempts to deal with the issue, in the 1990s, and was supported by a wide range of industry, health, local government, environmental, and other stakeholders. The list of participants and supports totaled almost 40, split roughly equally among the different categories of stakeholder.

"The goal of S.B. 570 was to guarantee bad actors were stopped without overregulating the many model industry participants across the state," Rodríguez said. "Given the participation and agreement of the many stakeholders and the absence of any opposition, I'm not sure how the governor came to his conclusion."

The stakeholder group included:

Texas Tire & Automotive Association, Liberty Tire, Texas Automotive Recyclers Association, LKQ, Inc., Recycling Council of Texas, Goodyear Tire & Rubber, Rubber Manufacturers Association, State of Texas Alliance for Recycling, Texas Border Coalition, Environmental Defense Fund, Environment Texas, Public Citizen, Sierra Club, City of Brownsville, City of Corpus Christi, City of El Paso, City of Houston, City of Fort Worth, City of Irving, City of Laredo, City of San Antonio, Texas Municipal League, El Paso County, Harris County, Tarrant County, Travis County, Texas Association of Counties, Texas Conference of Urban Counties, County Judges & Commissioners Association of Texas, San Antonio Chamber of Commerce, Bandera County River Authority & Groundwater District, Delta Lake Irrigation District, San Antonio River Authority, Water Environment Association of Texas, Texas Association of Clean Water Agencies, Texans for Clean Water, Texas Heritage Protection, Texas Medical Association, Texas Public Health Coalition

José Rodríguez represents Texas Senate District 29, which includes the counties of El Paso, Hudspeth, Culberson, Jeff Davis, and Presidio. He represents both urban and rural constituencies, and more than 350 miles of the Texas-Mexico border. Senator Rodríguez currently serves as the Chairman of the Texas Senate Democratic Caucus, and is a member of the Senate Committees on Natural Resources and Economic Development; Transportation; Veteran Affairs and Border Security; and Agriculture, Water, and Rural Affairs (Vice Chair).