



CITY OF HOUSTON

Sylvester Turner

Mayor

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May 25, 2021

The Honorable Greg Abbott
Governor
C/O Chris Smith
P.O. Box 12428
Austin, Texas 78711

Dear Governor Abbott,

I write today to express my support for House Bill 914 by Rep. Hernandez relating to the authority of certain municipal employees to request the removal and storage of illegally parked or inoperable vehicles. HB 914 will enhance public safety, neighborhood quality of life, traffic mobility and will help us serve the public more efficiently.

Annually, the City of Houston receives about 9,000 service requests to address parking violations. Over 4,500, or a little more than half of these requests were requests to investigate abandoned vehicles. Our parking compliance officers initially visit the location and mark the vehicles to measure the time they have been parked on the public street without moving. If the car has not moved within 72 hours, it is considered abandoned and should be towed.

Because our officers are not licensed peace officers, they cannot tow the vehicle. To remove the nuisance from a neighborhood, they must coordinate with the police department to have it towed. Neighborhood quality of life is important to the City of Houston, but police often have more urgent public safety needs and may not be available to meet the tow-truck driver and tow the vehicle. This creates a delay in removing the vehicle from the public street. Citizens become frustrated by what they perceive as a lack of responsiveness.

With the passage of House Bill 914, the parking compliance officer would be empowered to request a tow upon verifying that the vehicle is abandoned and is already at the site. This legislation allows municipalities to be more responsive to our citizens and eliminates the need to have two government employees address the same request to tow one vehicle.

In Houston, mobility lanes have been established for the smooth flow of traffic on major thoroughfares. During rush hour, the parking lane is eliminated to provide an extra lane to improve mobility and reduce congestion. One car illegally parked during these times creates a traffic jam and increases the commute time for hundreds of drivers.

To restore the smooth flow of traffic and decrease the congestion during the commute hours, the vehicle must be towed as quickly as possible. Police officers are often addressing moving

violations and accidents during this busy time. The car remains illegally parked and blocks the mobility lane creating additional congestion and traffic hazards during rush hour.

However, Parking Compliance Officers are available to have the vehicle promptly towed and help restore the flow of traffic. These officers already have the authority to tow vehicles parked illegally in residential permit parking areas, and to tow vehicles that have been immobilized due to unpaid citations. Issuing a citation to an illegally parked vehicle addresses the violation but does not fully meet the public safety need in some situations.

Having the ability to tow illegally parked and abandoned vehicles helps mitigate parking issues and truly address the public safety concern. An illegally parked vehicle could be blocking a mobility lane, blocking access to first responders in the case of an emergency or hindering visibility of oncoming traffic. The vehicle needs to be removed expeditiously from the public right-of-way for the safety of the public.

I encourage you to sign this legislation that will enhance quality of life for our constituents.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sylvester Turner". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Sylvester Turner
Mayor