Marijuana, equal pay and voting rights among first bills filed in Texas for 2019

BY ANNA M. TINSLEY

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The 86th Legislature will soon be at work inside the Texas Capitol.

ANNA M. TINSLEY ATINSLEY@STAR-TELEGRAM.COM

Less than a week after the midterm election, Texas lawmakers are getting back to work and focusing on the issues they want to take on in the Legislature next year.
More than 450 bills were filed at the Texas Capitol by mid-afternoon Monday for the next session, focusing on issues ranging from equal pay and marijuana use to teacher pay and voting changes.

“The bills that are filed now oftentimes are pet peeves or pet projects introduced by legislators who have no inkling of whether they will pass,” said Jim Riddlesperger, a political science professor at TCU.

Once the Texas House formally chooses a Speaker on the first day of the upcoming legislative session, Jan. 8, 2019, leadership will indicate what their top priorities are.

“Then we will see bills introduced that are likely to see some action,” Riddlesperger said. “Right now, some of the bills could be serious. Some may be largely symbolic. And some are serious but may never really be considered.”

Here's a look at some of the hundreds of bills pre-filed on Monday, the first day possible to file legislation.

Texas Legislative proposals

**Saving time** State Rep. Lyle Larson, R-San Antonio, wants to end daylight-saving time once for all in Texas. House Bill 49 would formally exempt Texas from the federal laws that create daylight-saving time.

**Equal pay** State Sen. Jose Menendez, D-San Antonio, said he wants to make sure men and women are paid the same for doing the same job. “We must address the toxic and inequitable conditions that many women have in the workplace,” he said in a statement. Menendez also filed proposals to raise the minimum wage to $10. Senate Bill 112, SB 113, Senate Joint Resolution 5

**Student athletes** State Rep. Dan Huberty, R-Houston, wants school districts to make sure high school athletes not only have a physical but also a cardiac assessment before they play sports. Student athletes would have to have an electrocardiogram or echocardiogram before being allowed to play school sports. HB 76
**Provisional driver permits** State Rep. Ramon Romero Jr., D-Fort Worth, proposes that non-citizens who have jobs and no criminal record be allowed to get a provisional driver’s permit. “Folks who have skills don’t necessarily want to be in Texas if they feel if they get pulled over that they could get arrested,” said Romero, who has unsuccessfully filed this bill in the past. “You have to be paying taxes and you have to have a clean record. This may not be the year for this, but at some point I hope this happens.” [HB 35](#)

**Sick leave** State Rep. Matt Krause, R-Fort Worth, wants to prevent cities from requiring employers to provide paid sick leave to employees. Earlier this year, Austin and San Antonio approved paid sick leave measures. [HB 222](#)

**Marijuana use** State Rep. Joe Moody, D-El Paso, wants to decriminalize cannabis by eliminating the threat of arrest and jail time for Texans who possess less than one ounce or marijuana. “I’m optimistic that this will be the session we finally see smarter, fairer marijuana laws in Texas,” he said in a statement. Menendez also filed a bill to let more Texans use medical cannabis under the already existing Texas Compassionate Use Program. “Doctors, not politicians, should determine what is best for Texas patients,” Menendez said in a statement. “Studies have proven that cannabis is a legitimate medicine that can help a of variety Texans including, individuals suffering from opioid addiction, veterans coping with PTSD, cancer patients, and people on the Autism spectrum.” [HB 63](#), [SB 90](#)

**State taxes** State Sen. Jane Nelson, a Flower Mound Republican who serves as the dean of the Tarrant County delegation, wants to reduce and eliminate the state’s franchise tax. [SB 66](#)

**Voting** State Rep. Eric Johnson, D-Dallas, is calling on Congress to make Election Day a national holiday and he wants to let Texans register to vote online. [House Concurrent Resolution 12](#), [HB 79](#)
Teacher pay raise Menendez also proposes giving every Texas teacher a $4,000 pay raise. “We cannot recruit or retain the best and brightest to educate our children if we continue to pay teachers less than other states,” he said. SB 95

Student assistance State Sen. Judith Zaffirini, D-Laredo, want to make sure Texas students who earn less than $100,000 a year can go to college for free. And she also wants to create tuition-free access for Texans at community colleges. SB 32, SB 33

Homosexual conduct Moody also filed a measure to remove the part of the state’s penal code that states “homosexual conduct” is a crime. HB 84

The next legislative session begins Jan. 8. Lawmakers have until March 8 to file any bills they want to file.

Filed Bills

To look at an updated list of bills being filed for the 85th Legislature, go online to the Texas Legislature Online at capitol.state.tx.us.

Anna Tinsley: 817-390-7610, @annatinsley