2021 ENGINEERING EXCELLENCE AWARDS

Plus!

THE LATEST ON THE 87TH LEGISLATIVE SESSION
ACEC TEXAS
MEMBER FIRMS

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ACEC Texas is the business association of Texas engineering firms. The organization is committed to advancing the private practice of consulting engineering, enhancing markets for private engineering services, educating the public on the importance of infrastructure investment, and promoting sound business practices within the industry and across its client base. We are committed to aggressive involvement in legislative and public sector decision-making, with a focus on the protection of qualifications-based selection of engineering services, transportation and water resources investment, expanded project delivery options, and appropriate legal and liability systems affecting the industry.

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THE LATEST ON THE 87TH LEGISLATIVE SESSION
Welcome to the summer 2021 issue of Engineering Texas, a publication of the American Council of Engineering Companies of Texas (ACEC Texas).

In this edition, we feature the award-winning projects from the 2021 ACEC Texas Engineering Excellence Awards (EEA). Although our EEA Gala celebrating these projects was scrapped due to COVID-19, the contest was as competitive as ever. Entries ranged from flood protection to roadways; from modern building architecture to environmental solutions; and from recreation to water treatment. Some are visually appealing works of art, and some are workhorses meant never to be seen – but all are projects that improve the everyday life of Texans.

Each year, these projects showcase just a small portion of the talent of the more than 450 Texas engineering firms that comprise the membership of ACEC Texas. And we are pleased to share them with you.

This edition also includes a brief summary and selected highlights of the recently completed 87th Texas Legislative Session. While it was a unique and challenging session for everyone involved, there were several positive outcomes for the engineering industry.
Texas. A place where communities and businesses prosper. Where the best of the best practice their trade to create and advance the Texas experience. A land of opportunity.

The following pages of this edition feature the ACEC Texas 2021 Engineering Excellence Award-winning projects, curated by the Texas engineering community with exquisite style and utility. We honor and celebrate those who are among the elite in their fields who are shaping how we view infrastructure challenges and realize solutions that blend purpose with the unexpected. And the results are simply remarkable.

A prominent collective of judges from around the state reviewed 34 entries with the task of selecting the most advanced and notable project work. Examined for uniqueness, originality, technical prowess, value to the engineering community, complexity, and how successfully their efforts met the needs of the client, nine projects were identified as Gold Medal winners, and eight received Silver Medal accolades.

ACEC Texas is proud of its member firms and the important role they play in evolving our transportation systems, water resources, structures, and community places that keep our state in the forefront of transformative engineering solutions.

Created in Texas, by the minds of advancement
The Able Pump Station, a project for Dallas Water Utilities, took top honors in the ACEC Texas Engineering Excellence Awards.

This impressive infrastructure project utilizes concrete volute pumps offering sustainable efficiency, corrosion resistance, vibration reduction, and lower maintenance costs due to less frequent servicing required by conventional medal pumps.

This water resources marvel protects community assets along Trinity River.
The Able Pump Station is designed to provide 100-year flood protection to approximately three square miles. The sump complex includes nine separate and interconnected ponds that store stormwater, as well as two existing pump stations, with a previous combined capacity of 220,000 gallons per minute. The City of Dallas hired HDR to design the new Able Pump Station, which now increases the pumping capacity nearly fourfold, to 880,000 gallons per minute. The new pump station utilizes 4,000 HP concrete volute pumps, the largest in the United States. Dallas’ pump stations protect $13.7 billion worth of homes and businesses along the Trinity River.

Completed in April 2019, the new Able No. 3 is capable of pumping nearly 1.3 billion gallons per day. This $74 million project, with concrete volute pumps as the centerpiece, provides operational efficiency for years to come.

Concrete volute pumps (pictured lower right) are reliable mechanically. A survey of 23 pump stations around the world, with 59 pumps and 1,461 pump years of operation, revealed one unplanned mechanical failure. That was during startup and, after correction, the pump then operated with no problem.

Normally, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers prohibits penetrating Corps-owned levees. However, due to the size and weight of Able’s discharge pipes, the Corps requested that the pipes be supported on drilled shafts through the levee, pictured above.
Freese and Nichols’ Hydraulic Modeling and Planning Team developed a dynamic CIP Prioritization Tool to update Dallas’ wastewater collection system master plan, which incorporates hydraulic components and facilitates proactive decision-making. Moving beyond traditional master planning, the resulting tool gives Dallas the ability to select projects established on relevant data combined, with future updates based on new developments.

Dallas now has a dynamic resource for wastewater-collection system planning and improvements, plus the ability to evaluate and budget for the most critical system needs to serve a population of 1.5 million customers over the next 25 years and beyond.
To update the heating and cooling systems at the Hondo Pass Readiness Center, Freese and Nichols developed a geothermal-based mechanical design by combining two technologies into a fine-tuned system. As a result of this innovative combination of Variable Refrigerant Flow (VRF) and geothermal-based systems, the military training facility is now experiencing an impressive savings of 88 percent of its annual gas usage and 25 percent of its annual electricity usage.

The design fit with the Texas Military Department’s mission of increased sustainability, resiliency, and Anti-Terrorist Force Protection initiatives to serve Texas’ Army National Guard and successfully respond to state and federal government needs.

Pictured above, the team’s fine-tuned solution included indoor Variable Refrigerant Flow (VRF) heat pumps and circulating pumps combined with an exterior geothermal ground loop installed underground. With the new system, the facility is estimated to save 50,000-kWh of electricity, 28-kW of electricity demand and 479-MCF of gas per year.

Below, the inset photo shows remaining installation of the geothermal wellfield that took place in a green space behind the facility.

The team’s solution included installing a portion of the geothermal wellfield under an existing parking lot following the land sale of the previously identified installation location. Since the Texas Municipal Department had already planned to renovate the parking lot, Freese and Nichols’ team coordinated wellfield installation prior to repaving to new lot, pictured below.
Walter P Moore provided structural, civil, traffic, and parking engineering for Bank of America Tower in Houston.

The firm created a cost-efficient structural frame for the 35-story tower that offers spacious column-free floorplates with up to eight column-free corner offices per floor. As civil engineer, the firm created a water-harvesting system that provides irrigation for an urban rooftop oasis, pictured left, the only amenity of its type in Houston.

Walter P Moore also pioneered a new environmental accounting method to quantify and achieve reductions in embodied carbon. In addition to achieving LEED v4 Platinum certification, the tower earned a three-star Fitwel rating.
Waste generated by booming fossil-fuel exploration and production (E&P) in the Permian Basin is managed by Oilfield Water Logistics (OWL), which Parkhill supports to protect local residents and the environment. Based on extensive Part 36 Rule experience in New Mexico, Parkhill provided site identification, permitting, facility design, technical specifications, construction plans, and more in a seamless environmental experience for OWL. The innovation involved, as well as the environmental and cost-effective benefits, resulted in an immediate rush of customers upon the facility's opening. The facility's functionality and success exceeded OWL's expectations, providing much-needed support for E&P in the Permian Basin.
The Trinity River Main Stem Pump Station and Pipeline Project consists of a 100 MGD capacity pump station and 16 miles of 72-inch transmission pipeline. This project bridged the gap for needed water supplies and secured another long-term water-supply source for the North Texas Municipal Water District.

The Main Stem Pump Station uses a gravity-fed sediment-capturing forebay to eliminate the low-head pump station. Examination of the forebay, intake box, and pump intakes led to a modified design and resulted in capital cost savings, less maintenance, and improved pump life. An innovative combination of modeling during pump-station design also led to significant cost savings.

Many river intake pump stations include two pump stations: a low-head pump station into a sedimentation basin and a high-head pump station to send the water through the pipeline. Main Stem’s innovative design uses a gravity-fed forebay (pictured middle right) to settle out sediment particles, eliminating the need for a low-head pump station.

Main Stem’s large-diameter pipeline (pictured below), conveys treated wastewater effluent 17 miles to the East Fork wetlands, where it is polished via naturally occurring processes. The pipeline route was selected to reduce impacts to environmentally sensitive areas.

The Main Stem Pump Station (pictured above), can convey up to 100 million gallons of water per day. The pumps were sized and selected to minimize power consumption.
The Hemphill-Lamar Connector, between downtown Fort Worth and the Near Southside, has greatly improved connectivity between the Central Business District of Fort Worth to the Near Southside District by extending Hemphill Street as a four-lane divided roadway via a new 400-foot tunnel constructed beneath the United Pacific Railroad tracks and Interstate Highway 30.

This connection provides a safe, multi-modal option that can accommodate vehicular traffic, pedestrians, and bicyclists traveling between the communities, while promoting economic growth and community cohesion. It is more than just a foundational piece of infrastructure – it is considered a “gateway” to the communities it serves.

The underpass includes two, 10-foot pedestrian and cyclist paths that are fully protected and separated from traffic where people can safely and easily walk or bike to either side of the area.

The Hemphill-Lamar Connector in Fort Worth, Texas, located between Downtown and Near Southside, has improved connectivity between the Central Business District of Fort Worth to the Near Southside District by connecting Hemphill and Lamar streets between Vickery Boulevard and Lancaster Avenue (pictured above).

To create this new connection between the two districts (pictured lower right), the project started in downtown with extensive bridge design and construction sequencing to support four existing Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR) lines that run between Davidson Yard (busiest UPRR yard in US) and Tower 55 Rail, which is one of the nation’s busiest and most congested rail intersections with over 100 trains passing through each day. The proposed connection continued under Interstate Highway 30 to connect the Near Southside. This new connection was the first of its kind in almost 100 years in Fort Worth.
Walter P Moore served as prime consultant providing project management, civil, traffic, and water resources services for the development of 800 acres for the Boy Scouts of America's new Camp Strake in Coldspring, Texas.

The largest camp of any local Boy Scout council in America, Camp Strake is an outdoor-adventure experience; it includes a new dam that created a 28-acre lake.

Walter P Moore was responsible for designing all infrastructure, including a new county road for campsite access, an internal connecting road and trails, stormwater drainage design, lake and earthen dam designs, utility layouts, and water- and wastewater-treatment plant designs.

A new entry road was required to provide access to Camp Strake. Walter P Moore worked with the County officials to establish a new County Road to the area as part of the camp design. The road provides a beautiful view of the lake as campers arrive at the new camp facilities.

An important attraction at the camp was the forest and water features. Walter P Moore developed an App for use first as a marketing tool to show the stakeholders what the camp would look like, and then as a tool to identify camp elements in the field so that important decisions could be made about saving trees, locating the water’s edge, and creating spaces for the various camp facilities, pictured left.

As the camp was developed, tree removal was carefully studied with a goal of protecting as much of the nature condition of the property as possible. The campsites are embedded in the forested area for the campers to enjoy.
JQ Engineering provided structural engineering services on the repair of the east wall of the spring-fed San Solomon pool within Balmorhea State Park.

The wall failed in the area supporting the diving platform and pool deck. Over 15 million gallons of water swirls through the pool daily. Once water was diverted, a void under the pool deck was revealed. This was filled with gabion wall baskets packed with rock; upon those, the east wall was rebuilt of aggregate faced with cement. JQ’s scope included replacing the existing terrace slab, walls, and foundations that form the eastern wall of the San Solomon Spring pool.
The Texas Department of Transportation’s (TxDOT) North Houston Highway Improvement Project (NHHIP) is a proposed mobility project that will manage congestion, enhance safety, and improve mobility and operational efficiency in downtown Houston. Added value of the project includes reduction in flood risk and enhancement in flood resiliency within the city, provides green-space potential for multi-use facilities, and offers potential for extension of greenways along bayous. CivilTech was tasked with preparing drainage studies and preliminary drainage designs for Segment 2. This included developing a complex dynamic flood-planning HEC-RAS model that encompassed an approximate 73-square-mile area within the city.
Structural Systems

**TEXAS SILVER** | State Highway 114, Irving Signature Bridge
Bridgefarmer & Associates

The Irving Signature Bridge is a state-of-the-art 660-foot-long bridge extending over State Highway 114 in Irving, Texas. The $39.5 million bridge appears to be one single structure; however, the main truss bridge is composed of five individual bridges, including two ramps. A pair of steel pylons supports the massive steel truss that hangs above the bridge.

The 10,000-square-foot pedestrian area features a pair of canopies, constructed of aluminum with translucent fiberglass panels, to encourage foot traffic. The Texas Department of Transportation project was built in coordination with the City of Irving. The result is an aesthetically dynamic structure that offers practical transportation solutions for the area.

Water & Wastewater

**TEXAS SILVER** | CRMWA High Capacity, Deep Well, Pumping Unit Replacements
Parkhill

Following the Great Dust Bowl era, 11 cities in West Texas and the Panhandle created the Canadian River Municipal Water Authority (CRMWA), which has been providing wholesale water to more than 500,000 people since 1968. Parkhill provided professional engineering services to construct the John C. Williams (JCW) Wellfield, which can produce 81.5 million gallons per day of potable water, allowing for an 80 percent service factor when maximizing the pipeline. To ensure the best service, CRMWA and Parkhill collaborated to find superior options that utilize adaptive technologies for the deep-well pumping equipment, while significantly improving reliability and resiliency of the wellfield.
Water Resources

TEXAS SILVER | Clay Family Eastern Glades at Houston’s Memorial Park

Walter P Moore

Walter P Moore provided civil, traffic, and water-resources engineering for Clay Family Eastern Glades. Eastern Glades took 34.9 acres of unused parkland and employed delightful master-planned enhancements to create a broader park experience for patrons. Walter P Moore assisted with the civil and traffic design of Phase I to improve the park entrance and provide more sustainable parklike parking. The firm served as lead civil and water-resources engineer for Phase II, including design for a gathering lawn, picnic facilities, and the creation of Hines Lake. The Eastern Glades Hines Lake provides recreation, stormwater treatment, and water collection for irrigation.

Transportation

TEXAS SILVER | Mansfield Road Improvements

Jacobs

The City of Cedar Hill completed a successful collaboration with Jacobs and Dallas County to widen 2.2 miles of Mansfield Road from a two-lane rural roadway to a four-lane divided urban roadway with a raised median. The design complements the scenic landscape along the rolling terrain of the area, using native landscape and swale features, eliminating large sections of curb and gutter, and providing an alternative drainage collection feature that filters stormwater prior to discharge into Joe Pool Lake in Cedar Hill State Park. This project provides increased roadway mobility and safety, two bicycle lanes, and a hike-and-bike trail.
Special Projects

TEXAS SILVER | Dallas City Hall Parking Garage Repairs
JQ Engineering

After failure of a large section of concrete slab, JQ was retained to conduct a structural assessment of the two-level, 600,000-square-foot below-grade parking structure serving Dallas City Hall. This included visual observations, destructive and non-destructive testing of the structural framing, and analysis of the structure. The assessment determined that the structural failures were the result of an overload of the top-level slab due to excessive amounts of soil on the garage. Repairs were developed to strengthen the existing slab and supporting columns and to repair cracking and delaminations caused by the overloaded conditions. Sequencing the repair work allowed for continued operation of the garage.

Small Projects

TEXAS SILVER | Minimally Invasive Sewer Line Replacement
RPS

The Valley View Branch Interceptor, constructed in 1971, was deteriorated. Groundwater infiltration and stormwater inflows were creating substantive overflows, which would spill into the adjacent concrete drainage channel during heavy rain events. This resulted in safety and environmental concerns. In addition to these issues, the existing pipeline capacity was insufficient to handle the future wastewater-flow projections. RPS identified a unique design and construction process that replaced the wastewater line with a quicker, less environmentally intrusive solution than traditional construction methods; the design also reduced impacts to the community. This project was awarded funding from the Texas Water Development Board Green Project Reserve.
Texas lawmakers gavelled in for the 87th Legislative Session in January to an unprecedented state of affairs. The months before had been marred by economic and public health concerns as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and downturn in the oil and gas markets that left state leaders speculating on how severe the fiscal impacts to the state budget would be when the legislature convened. The United States and Texas economies demonstrated strength throughout the pandemic, however, performing better than expected with strong consumer spending and rebounding oil and gas prices that erased budget shortfalls.

With an optimistic budget outlook, Texas was dealt an additional setback in late February from the catastrophic effects of Winter Storm Uri, which resulted in our state’s power grid becoming compromised, leaving millions of residents in the dark for days of record-low temperatures.

With health and safety protocols strictly enforced for the majority of the 2021 Legislative Session, legislators were faced with the difficult task of addressing several legislative issues to aid in the recovery process for both communities and businesses across Texas.
LEGISLATIVE EMERGENCY ITEMS: Texas and the nation were arriving at a pivotal moment when the 87th Legislature convened. State leaders approached the session with recovery and stability as the focal points, concentrating on the recent economic uncertainties and newsworthy nationwide social matters.

Gov. Greg Abbott initially outlined five emergency items as priorities for the legislature to begin working on immediately, which included: expanding broadband internet access; punishing local governments that defund their local police department; reforming the bail system; reforming the state’s election protocols and procedures; and civil liability protections for people and businesses during a pandemic. Following the devastation to life and property from Winter Storm Uri, the governor added reforms to the Electric Reliability Council of Texas (ERCOT) as well as weatherizing and stabilizing the power grid.

A priority for ACEC Texas, Senate Bill 6, by Sen. Kelly Hancock (R-North Richland Hills), was passed to provide civil liability protections for Texas businesses for injury or death caused by exposing an individual to a pandemic disease if the business followed health and safety guidance.

Legislative reforms were made to the processes and protocols of our state’s power grid to aid stability and endurance through major weather events. Reforms were also enacted to provide efficiency in the governance system of the grid.

The legislature, however, was unsuccessful in passing legislation on bail system and election reforms, which has prompted the governor to call a special session to address those two and other issues.

TRANSPORTATION FUNDING: During the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, it was clear that state budget shortfalls and constraints were forthcoming. Infrastructure funding, notably financing for transportation projects due to the structure of the funding formula by the state, would most likely be a casualty. As such, educating lawmakers and protecting existing transportation funding streams became a top priority for ACEC Texas. To help with this advocacy effort, all lawmakers and statewide elected officials received an educational document, “Recovery for Texas is Job #1,” developed and published by ACEC Texas, on the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and oil and gas market decline on transportation funding and the importance of exploring additional methods of financing. In early January, Texas Comptroller Glenn Hegar released the Biennial Revenue Estimate, which showed an upward trend for state revenue collections. This improved outlook on the budget shifted ACEC Texas’ focus from funding protection, to investigating new ideas for additional transportation revenue.

The Texas Mobility Fund, approved by Texas voters in 2001, was established as a revolving fund to issue bonds for transportation projects. In 2015, however, the legislature ended the Texas Transportation Commission’s ability to issue bonds from the fund. During this session, the legislature passed House Bill 2219, by Rep. Terry Canales (D-Edinburg) and sponsored by Sen. Robert Nichols (R-Jacksonville), to once again allow the Texas Transportation Commission to use over $3 billion available in the Texas Mobility Fund to issue obligations for transportation projects.

Additionally, the legislature passed House Bill 4472, by Rep. Brooks Landgraf (R-Odessa) and sponsored by Sen. Brian Birdwell (R-Granbury), to allow for an average of $93 million per year, beginning in fiscal year 2022, to be transferred to the State Highway Fund from revenue collected under the Texas Emissions Reduction Plan’s congestion mitigation and air quality improvement projects in areas of non-attainment in the state.

Finally, the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT), in conjunction with the Texas A&M Transportation Institute and the University of Texas Center for Transportation research, will be required to conduct a roadway impact study. The goal of the study, approved under House Bill 2223 by Rep. Canales and Sen. Nichols, would be to assess roadway congestion and impacts and to determine the necessary financial recommendations to construct and maintain Texas highways.

There was much discussion during the session regarding the use and extension of Comprehensive Development Agreements (CDA’s), also known as Public Private Partnerships, for funding transportation projects, and many bills were filed seeking to create new CDA’s. The legislature, however, failed to pass any CDA bills.

The legislature was also unable to pass an additional fee for electric vehicle users, who do not currently pay to use Texas roads.

FLOOD INFRASTRUCTURE: For the better part of the past decade, state and academic leaders have been working determinedly with the United States Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) and the Federal government to develop and construct a comprehensive Gulf Coast protection system, commonly referred to as the “Ike Dike,” following Hurricane Ike in 2008. Texas’ Gulf Coast region is home to the largest collection of petrochemical and energy facilities in the world, and they are vulnerable to hurricanes and storm surge. Attempts at funding and obtaining priority from the Corps for such a large, complicated project had fallen short, so state legislative actions were identified to move the project forward.

One of the initial steps was to create an entity that would have the authority to impose an operations and maintenance property tax assessment and to oversee the system. The legislature passed Senate Bill 1160, by Sen. Larry Taylor (R-Friendswood) and sponsored by Rep. Dennis Paul (R-Houston), to establish the Gulf Coast Protection District so that the state and the Corps could enter into a project partnership agreement for the construction and operation of a coastal barrier system.
CIVIL JUSTICE: Promoting a fair, business-friendly environment in Texas has been of utmost importance for the design industry. The focus has been on reducing frivolous lawsuits against design professionals while ensuring a level playing field for firms to prosper and compete for business.

House Bill 2116, by Rep. Matt Krause (R-Fort Worth) and Sen. Beverly Powell (D-Burleson), was passed to protect engineering and architecture firms from unfair and uninsurable "duty to defend" clauses in contracts with owners. These types of clauses typically require the engineer or architect to defend the owner for the owner's own negligence, thereby asking firms to take on an exorbitant amount of out-of-pocket defense costs for actions they have no control over. HB 2116 also requires an insurable standard of care for engineers and architects.

For firms that perform work on public building projects, House Bill 3069, by Rep. Justin Holland (R-Rockwall), will shorten the time period from ten years to eight years for a public building owner to bring forth a lawsuit against a contractor, engineer, architect, interior designer, or landscape architect for project defects.

Contractor liability has been a contested legislative issue in Texas for the past few sessions. Senate Bill 219, by Sen. Bryan Hughes (R-Mineola) and Rep. Jeff Leach (R-Plano), was passed to remove a contractor from being held liable or responsible for design defects in a construction project. However, the bill provides for several exemptions, including contracts with facilities deemed as critical infrastructure (oil, gas, chemicals, energy), design-build contracts, engineering, procurement, and construction (EPC) contracts, or any contract that the contractor agrees to provide input or guidance on for signed and sealed design documents.

Finally, businesses that utilize company vehicles have been experiencing an increase in the number of collision lawsuits filed against those businesses. Consequently, commercial vehicle insurance rates have increased sharply, and settlements from related lawsuits have become exorbitant. House Bill 19, by Rep. Jeff Leach and Sen. Larry Taylor, ensures that legitimate evidence directly relevant to the causation and injuries arising from a commercial vehicle accident will be presented. Additionally, the bill sets forth specific procedures for presenting facts by plaintiffs and defendants to determine negligence and fair compensation in a lawsuit stemming from a commercial vehicle accident.

PROCUREMENT: Governmental entities in Texas typically use “energy savings performance contracts” (ESPC) for enhancing energy efficiency and water conservation, using money saved through reduced utility expenditures to pay for the improvements.

Recently, however, a few entities had entered into traditional ESPCs but later significantly expanded the scope of the contract through very large change orders that went well beyond the scope of the original contract and the intent of the ESPC statute. Doing so added significant project costs (sometimes as much as three times the original contract price) to the contract, while also not complying with other procurement laws related to public works projects that provide for an open and fair process when awarding those contracts. House Bill 3583, by Rep. Chris Paddie (R-Marshall) and Sen. Juan “Chuy” Hinojosa (D-McAllen), addressed this issue by narrowing the projects that may be procured as true energy-savings projects, tightening laws on ESPC “change orders,” and providing an enforcement mechanism should public entities not follow the law.

FISCAL & TAXES: The COVID-19 pandemic created economic uncertainty for businesses across the state. To help businesses remain operational, the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) introduced the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) as a federally backed loan to assist businesses in keeping their workforces employed during the pandemic. However, PPP loans were not excluded from a business's total revenue when paying state franchise taxes. House Bill 1195 by Rep. Charlie Geren (R-Fort Worth) and Sen. Hancock, was passed with unanimous support to ensure that PPP loans would not be used for calculation of state franchise taxes and that businesses would not be taxed on PPP loans received.

SPECIAL SESSION(S): Legislators adjourned from the 87th Legislative Session at the end of May, leaving two of Gov. Abbott's emergency items unfinished: bail system and election process reforms. The governor announced that the first special legislative session would convene on July 8 to address these issues but also added additional agenda items. These items include legislation on border security funding, social media censorship, legislative branch funding, family violence prevention, transgender students who compete in UIL sports, prohibiting abortion-inducing drugs, providing a 13th check for retired teachers, critical race theory, property-tax relief, enhanced protection for children in Texas' foster-care system, and safeguards from potential cybersecurity threats.

Additionally, states are required to redraw legislative and congressional districts every 10 years, once they receive new census numbers. The Texas Legislature was slated to discuss redistricting during the 2021 Legislative Session. However, federal census population data, which is usually given to states no later than April 1, has been delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. It is expected that the population data will not be available until September or October of 2021, making a special session necessary to tackle redistricting once Texas has received the census data.

A special session can only last for 30 days; however, the governor may call as many special sessions as he sees necessary to address items on his agenda. It remains to be seen if there will be other special sessions called when the current one ends.