

January 10, 2019

Yesterday afternoon, the Texas Sunset Commission voted to support the staff's recommendation to move the Texas State Board of Plumbing Examiners over to the Texas Department of Licensing and Regulation, better known as TDLR.

You could have heard a pin drop as the votes were tabulated and the final numbers reported: 7 to move the agency and 5 to keep it stand-alone with a 4-year time frame before being reviewed once again. A collective round of sighs filled the room. To say that a sinking feeling was felt inside me is not even adequate to describe the thoughts going on.

The proceedings went quickly given the amount of ground that was to be covered. The overarching sentiment was that the state plumbing board has had since their 2002 Sunset review to fix several items and yet they remain on the recent 2018 report! This did not bode well for the those on the Commission that felt TSBPE was derelict in their duties as a state board to oversee the changes required by the last sunset review.

I would like to send a huge shout out to Representative Senfronia Thompson and Senator Kirk Watson who brought forth modification proposals asking for TSBPE to be given 4 years to make necessary changes. Their arguments were strong and their respect for the plumbers in Texas was evident, but it wasn't enough. Their peers were concerned that an agency with as many problems it is currently experiencing would be hard pressed to fix them with the status quo.

Where do we go from here? WE FIGHT! Our plumbing lobby is strong. With over 56,000 licensed plumbers and registered apprentices in Texas, our State Legislature knows who we are. We can make a difference if we continue to put our efforts into making the importance of plumbing and a stand-alone agency known. What work will we do?

- We will visit key legislators asking for their support as we move our agenda forward
- We will ask plumbers, like yourselves to make those important phone calls and visits

- We will be tapping on the resources of our lobby team, three of them, to continue to reach out to every single legislative office in Austin to let them know the plumbers are here and we want to be a part of the process

I have already been asked as to what our chances are in fighting the decisions made yesterday. I am not one who usually likes to give odds on things like this, but my gut is telling me that with a 7-5 vote from the legislators who make up the Sunset Commission, we would have those odds across the full legislature.

Doable? You bet!

As this message comes to a close, I would be remiss if I didn't stress that the commission members understand the value of what you do. Do they need further education? Absolutely! Plumbers do protect the health and safety of this state and yes, the nation! What you do is important and the availability of safe drinking water and protection from faulty gas and sewer lines is a must.

We here at the Plumbing-Heating-Cooling Contractors will continue the fight. We will stand strong with other stakeholders in this industry and lobby to protect those licenses and registrations you hold. We are not going away. We are fighters. You are fighters. Let's finish this fight together and look back on our experience with pride. Pride in serving those we represent.

President Theodore Roosevelt once said:

"It is hard to fail, but it is worse never to have tried to succeed.

And so, we carry on! Stay tuned. There is more to come.