

## Lawmakers seek to help the disabled get state contracts

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### Bill aims to assist businesses owned by people with disabilities

Several state lawmakers are seeking to add people with disabilities to the list of Texans whose businesses can qualify for designation as a historically underutilized business when pursuing state contracts.

Texas law requires state agencies "to make a good faith effort" to contract with the group for goods and services. Minority- and woman-owned businesses are now eligible for the designation.

House Bill 970 by Democrats Eddie Lucio III of San Benito, Eddie Rodriguez of Austin and Rafael Anchía of Dallas seeks to expand that to include businesses owned by people with disabilities. That's something that at least one state, North Carolina, already does.

### Measure targets sexual predators

Texas Attorney General Greg Abbott joined U.S. Sen. John Cornyn and U.S. Rep. Lamar Smith on Thursday to applaud state and federal legislative efforts to protect children from sexual predators.

Abbott backed legislation by state Sen. Florence Shapiro, R-Plano, and Rep. Aaron Peña, D-Edinburg, that would update state sex offender registration laws to reflect technological innovations and new communications platforms.

Sex offenders would be required to provide their e-mail addresses, mobile telephone numbers and electronic identification information to the Department of Public Safety's sex offender registry.

### A step up for Van de Putte?

Sen. Leticia Van de Putte, a San Antonio Democrat, says she might run for governor or U.S. senator. But for now she's concentrating on the legislative session. She told The Associated Press that she probably won't announce a decision on her political future until after the session ends in June.

"People are asking, and have been, 'What's the next step for you?' " Van de Putte said. "I can honestly say I don't know."

Over the past few months she has been mentioned as a potential U.S. Senate candidate, and lately talk has turned to a possible run for governor.

### Expanding school breakfasts

Sen. Eddie Lucio Jr., D-Brownsville, said Thursday that he has filed legislation to boost the number of kids getting meals in the national school breakfast program and summer food program.

One proposal would provide school breakfast to all students in districts where 60 percent or more of children qualify for free or reduced meals.

Another would require school districts participating in the breakfast program to provide the meal free to elementary, middle or junior high school students who are eligible for reduced-price breakfasts. Lucio said eliminating the family co-pay for children who already qualify for reduced-price breakfast relieves a school's administrative burden and has successfully increased participation by up to 40 percent in other states.

### **Texas may let non-professionals hunt pigs from choppers**

Millions of wild pigs weighing up to 300 pounds have been tearing up crops, trampling fences and eating just about anything in their path. But now a state lawmaker is proposing to allow ordinary Texans with rifles and shotguns to shoot the voracious, tusked animals from helicopters.

For years, ranchers have hired professional hunters in choppers to thin the hogs' fast-multiplying ranks. Rep. Sid Miller, R-Stephenville, wants to bring more firepower to the task by issuing permits to sportsmen.

If approved, it could be the first program of its kind in the nation.

An estimated 2 million wild hogs are causing \$52 million a year in crop damage in Texas, according to agricultural experts.