

TEXAS PENSION PLANS

Texas Legislature Advances Bills to Shield Oil and Gas from Climate Initiatives

May 3, 2021, By Erin Douglas

“The House on Tuesday gave its final approval to Senate Bill 13, which would require state entities — including state pension funds and Texas’ massive K-12 school endowment — to divest from companies that cut ties with or “boycott” fossil fuel companies.”

“Texas state funds identified in the bill include the \$46 billion Texas Permanent School Fund, the largest such K-12 fund in the U.S; the Teacher Retirement System of Texas, which manages nearly \$165 billion in investments; and the Employees Retirement System of Texas and Texas Municipal Retirement System of Texas, which each manage \$31 billion.”

[Texas Tribune](#)

Texas Bill Puts State Pension Funds at Odds with Fossil-Fuel Divestment

May 4, 2021, By Rob Kozlowski

“The bill calls for the state's comptroller to “prepare and maintain, and provide to each state governmental entity, a list of all companies that boycott energy companies.” The state's asset owners would be required to notify those companies of their inclusion on the list and given 90 days to amend their positions...If those opinions are not changed in 90 days, the state funds would ‘shall sell, redeem, divest, or withdraw all publicly traded securities of the company.’”

[Pensions & Investments](#)

Opinion: A Historic Chance to Protect Our Public Pension

May 5, 2021, By Luther Elmore

“Last week, the Senate approved Senate Bill 321, a transformational proposal that would protect the stable and secure pension on which so many public employees have come to rely...The bill, sponsored by Sen. Joan Huffman, commits \$510 million a year moving forward to pay the Employees Retirement System’s ballooning unfunded liability. Under this schedule, ERS would be actuarially sound in just three years. Lawmakers would then be able to consider a cost-of-living adjustment for retirees at that time — the first since 2001.

" Over the past decade, new employees have been asked to increase their contributions from 6 percent to 9.5 percent of their salaries. Even with that extra contribution, ERS is now \$15 billion short of what it would need to fund all its pension commitments today (called the unfunded liability) and on track to run out of money by 2061.”

[Austin American Statesman](#)

TEXAS ECONOMIC INDICATORS

Texas Eyes a Rebound in Travel for 2021 in Time for National Tourism and Travel Week May 2-8

May 3, 2021, By Travel Texas

“Texas has already started to see a strong rebound in demand relating to hotel bookings, with statewide hotel occupancies over spring break (3/14-3/20) the highest of the pandemic at 71.6%. Additionally, hotel revenues over spring break (3/14-3/20) amounted to \$234 million - nearly 2019 levels.

“In March, the leisure and hospitality sector added 23,100 jobs. Businesses are beginning to recover with roughly 380,000 jobs added to the sector since a low point in April 2020. Prior to the pandemic, 1 in 10 Texas jobs were created by travel, and the travel industry was responsible for a \$169.8 billion economic impact to the Texas Economy.”

[Tyler Morning Telegraph](#)

Texas Economy Has ‘Accelerated,’ Prompting Comptroller Glenn Hegar to Sweeten his Revenue Outlook

May 3, 2021, By Robert T. Garrett

“Comptroller Glenn Hegar on Monday issued a revised revenue estimate that gives lawmakers several billion more dollars to spend as they wrap up the next state budget this month. Hegar cited improved performance of the state economy, as COVID-19 restrictions began to be lifted over the past two months and immunizations improved consumer confidence.

“Under the state Constitution, the budget is the only bill the Legislature must pass before the session ends May 31. And a “pay as you go” provision, approved by voters in the 1940s, limits lawmakers to spending only those revenues forecast by the comptroller.”

[The Dallas Morning News](#)

Enel Announces Three Major Texas Renewable Energy Projects, Including its Largest US Solar Farm

May 4, 2021, By Ross Ramsey

“Enel Green Power said Wednesday that it plans to build its largest solar farm in North America just southeast of Waco, another solar project in Grimes County, northwest of Houston, and a wind project near Abilene.”

“The Italian renewable energy company projects the three projects would have the combined capacity to generate nearly 1,200 megawatts of electricity, enough to power about 240,000 Texas homes on a hot summer day. The new projects would boost Enel’s generating capacity in Texas to about 2,000 megawatts, or enough for power about 400,000 homes in Texas.”

[Houston Chronicle](#)

NATIONAL PENSION, INVESTMENTS & LEGAL

BlackRock Starts to Use Voting Power More Aggressively

April 30, 2021, By Dawn Lim

“BlackRock Inc. has so far increased its support for shareholder-led environmental, social and governance proposals...The firm votes on behalf of the investors in its many funds...BlackRock backed 91% of environmental proposals, 23% of social proposals and 26% of corporate-governance proposals.

“The money manager has been previously attacked for being all talk and no action on its loud calls for companies to focus on ESG issues. Whether the firm overseeing \$9 trillion in assets will wield votes it controls for investors more aggressively for the rest of the shareholder voting year remains to be seen.”

[The Wall Street Journal](#)

The Pandemic Hit Public Pension Funds Hard—But Now They’re Better Funded Than They’ve Been in Years

May 3, 2021, By Jessica Hamlin

“Funds that were in the best financial health at the start of the pandemic took the hardest hit to their funded statuses over the course of the past year — but they’ve also benefitted most from the speedy recovery over the past 12 months, according to Goldman Sachs Asset Management’s public pension fund report for the first quarter of 2021.”

[Institutional Investor](#)

Members of Teacher Pension Fund Planning Lawsuit to Force Transparency

May 3, 2021, By Jim Provance

“About 1,000 current and retired Ohio educators skeptical of the true financial shape of their \$90 billion state pension fund are preparing to sue to force greater cooperation with a \$75,000 self-funded investigation of its books....The public records lawsuit will ask the Ohio Supreme Court to force the State Teachers Retirement System...to release information that investment firms have claimed is proprietary or a trade secret.

[The Philadelphia Inquirer](#)

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