



**RYAN GUILLEN**  
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TEXAS STATE REPRESENTATIVE

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
MARCH 18, 2017

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## **HEARING SCHEDULED TO PROTECT OYSTER INDUSTRY**

### *Bill Creates an Oyster License Buyback Program for Texas*

**AUSTIN** - Early this session, State Representative Ryan Guillen (D-Rural South Texas) filed HB 51, a bill to create an oyster license buyback program that would eliminate extra licenses not currently in use and protect oyster fisheries from overfishing. A public hearing on HB 51 has been scheduled for **Tuesday, March 21**.

**"Just like shrimp, lobster, and finfish have license buyback programs, the oyster industry needs one too," said Guillen. "Buyback programs are structured to support and stabilize the commercial fishing industries, while simultaneously ensuring Texas' coastal ecosystems remain healthy and productive."**

Reef damage caused by natural disasters and the overfishing of oyster fisheries led to a moratorium being established by the 78th Legislature in 2005. However, in the three-month period following the passage of the bill before the moratorium went into effect, the number of licenses skyrocketed from 350 licenses to 775 licenses, deepening concerns about overfishing.

HB 51 is scheduled for a hearing in the Culture, Recreation, and Tourism Committee. The measure creates a voluntary oyster license buyback program designed to stabilize harvesting activity and allow fisheries time to adapt, similar to what the very successful shrimp license buyback program has done over the past two decades.

**"Over the past 18 years, the shrimp buyback program has protected the industry by decreasing the number of licenses by 66% and by allowing for the continued success of the shrimp fishing industry, " said Guillen. "Oysters play an important role in the ecosystem of Texas waters. It is important that we find a balance to protect their ecosystem so that we can continue to enjoy them on our plates."**

Representative Ryan Guillen serves ten rural South Texas counties in the Texas House of Representatives, including Atascosa, Brooks, Duval, Jim Hogg, Kenedy, La Salle, Live Oak, McMullen, Starr, and Willacy.

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