



RYAN GUILLEN
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TEXAS STATE REPRESENTATIVE

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HEARING EYES BALANCED FUNDING FOR STATE PARKS

Guillen Measure Meets Real Needs of Texas Park & Wildlife Department

AUSTIN - Working closely with the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD), Representative Ryan Guillen (D-Rural South Texas) filed HB 448 to allow balance in TPWD's dedicated account, allowing them to address water safety and enforcement challenges more efficiently and effectively. A public hearing on HB 448 has been scheduled for **Tuesday, March 21**.

"A few years ago, when the State Parks account was low, we started pulling out all the stops to ensure our parks were safe and well-managed. Since then, we've come light-years and the state parks account is flush — but now budget rules have left some of the department's account balances lopsided," explained Guillen. "Similar to HB 78 and HJR 16 [HB 488] is a bill we developed side-by-side with the department, to help TPWD reach a balance between their accounts, enabling them to better address park issues they're facing today."

HB 448 eases the mandate on the percentage of funds transferred from the TPWD's Game, Fish, and Water Safety account to the State Parks account. The Game, Fish, and Water Safety account is a dedicated account in the general revenue fund to fund enforcement of game, fish, and water safety laws, wildlife management, conservation, and research and development. It draws funds from hunting and fishing licensing fees, federal funds received for conservation, fines and penalties for violations in parks, and vessel registration and titling fees, among others.

Current law requires the Texas Parks and Wildlife department to transfer 15% of revenue collected from vessel registration, manufacturer licensing, and vessel titling fees to the State Parks dedicated account. HB 448 would remove this requirement and allow the department to transfer less than 15% of revenue collected from those sources if other park operations need more funds..

On Tuesday, March 21, HB 448 is scheduled for a hearing in the Culture, Recreation, and Tourism Committee. In 2015, the Committee restored funding for state parks and historic sites by dedicating the full amount of sporting goods sales tax revenues, which resulted in a \$100 million funding increase. With the implementation of the 2015 legislation the general parks account is now well-funded, but the game, fish, and water safety account is not.

"It's time to finish what we started. Our children deserve to inherit and enjoy the legacy that generations of Texans carved out for them," said Guillen. "HB 448 would let game, fish, and water safety keep a bit more of the revenue it receives and would ensure our parks are safe and well-managed for future generations of Texans."

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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