

**SUBJECT:** Authorizing the issuance of certain vehicle permits during an emergency

**COMMITTEE:** Agriculture & Livestock — favorable, without amendment

**VOTE:** 7 ayes — Cain, Anderson, Goodwin, Cody Harris, Rosenthal, Thimesch, Wilson

0 nays

2 absent — Bernal, Kitzman

**WITNESSES:** For — (*Registered, but did not testify*: Judith McGeary, Farm and Ranch Freedom Alliance; Charles Maley, South Texans Property Rights Association; Darren Turley, Texas Association of Dairymen; Josh Winegarner, Texas Cattle Feeders Association; Joy Davis, Texas Farm Bureau; Rob Hughes, Texas Forestry Association; Ryan Skrobarczyk, Texas Nursery & Landscape Association)

Against — (*Registered, but did not testify*: Lindsay Mullins, BNSF Railway; Myra Leo, Kansas City Southern; John Wilkerson, Texas Municipal Police Association; Dennis Kearns, Texas Railroad Association; Richard Zientek, Union Pacific Railroad)

On — (*Registered, but did not testify*: Dan Hunter, Texas Department of Agriculture; Jimmy Archer, Texas Department of Motor Vehicles)

**BACKGROUND:** Concerns have been raised that the current vehicle weight limits may cause difficulties in providing adequate disaster relief during an emergency.

**DIGEST:** HB 2684 would authorize the Texas Department of Motor Vehicles (TxDMV) to issue a special permit for an oversize or overweight vehicle or load that could be easily dismantled or divided and would be used only to deliver agricultural commodities under the following circumstances:

- during an emergency or major disaster as declared by the U.S.

president or following a declaration of a state disaster by the governor; or

- preceding an event that could result in a declaration of a state disaster, if the Texas Division of Emergency Management (TDEM) authorized the issuance of the permit for such an event.

The bill would establish certain provisions under which a person could apply for and receive a special permit from TDEM preceding an emergency event. A permit issued during an emergency event would expire by the 120<sup>th</sup> day after the emergency was declared, while a permit issued preceding such an event would expire by the 120th day after TDEM notified TxDMV of the authorization for such a permit.

The bill would authorize TxDMV's board to adopt the necessary rules to implement the bill's provisions. TxDMV could impose certain safety conditions on a permit holder regarding the operation of a permitted vehicle.

The bill would not authorize the operation of a vehicle that exceeded the size or weight requirements under federal law on the national system of interstate and defense highways or on the federal aid primary highway system. If the United States did authorize the operation of such a vehicle on either of those highway systems on September 1, 2023, the new limit would automatically take effect on the applicable highway systems.

The bill would take effect September 1, 2023.