



November 16, 2015

The Honorable Sid Miller
Commissioner, Texas Department of Agriculture
PO Box 12847
Austin, Texas 78711-12847

Dear Commissioner Miller,

We urge you to delay the implementation of the fee increases that were recently proposed by the Department of Agriculture (TDA). We believe that greater scrutiny of the proposed fee increases is necessary in order to fully assess the impact that the increases will have on Texas farmers, ranchers, and the rest of our state's agricultural economy.

As you may know, Texas has almost a quarter of a million individual farms and ranches, and one in seven Texas jobs are directly related to agriculture. As a result, Texas agriculture sector has an economic impact of more than \$100 billion each year across a variety of sectors. However, it is unknown how TDA's proposed fee increases might affect the prosperity of Texas' agricultural sector. As the Texas Farm Bureau noted in asking for a delay in the implementation of the fee increases: "Due to the significance of these fee increases we feel it is important that TDA provide an analysis demonstrating that the increases will not negatively impact the Texas Agricultural economy." We join the Farm Bureau in these concerns.

As conservatives, we must ensure that government has the lightest possible footprint. A critical component of that philosophy is to ensure that fee increases are a last resort that should only be explored when all other avenues have been exhausted.


In that vein, we acknowledge TDA's contention in its fee proposal analysis that "recent budget rules [have] placed restrictions on the movement of funds within TDA and across fiscal years ... fees collected in the first year are swept into the general revenue fund before the baseline program needs in the

second (or fifth) year are met.” In the last two sessions, we have worked diligently to correct the use of dedicated funds for budget certification and have made progress to using those funds for their intended purpose only. We will continue to press for change to ensure that fees collected by TDA are retained at the Department and are used for their intended purpose.


Thank you in advance for your attention to our concerns and for your outstanding service to the State of Texas.


Sincerely,



Representative Geanie Morrison, TCC Board President



Representative Jodie Laubenberg, TCC Secretary


Representative Jason Isaac, TCC Treasurer


Representative Tom Craddick, TCC Past President


Representative Greg Bonnen, M.D., TCC Board Member


Representative Dan Flynn, TCC Board Member


Representative Craig Goldman, TCC Board Member


Representative Phil King, TCC Board Member



Representative Jim Murphy, TCC Board Member



Representative Tan Parker, TCC Board Member



Representative Larry Phillips, TCC Board Member



Representative Ron Simmons, TCC Board Member