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Haywood Agriculture Policy Bill To Become Law

Austin, Texas--The Agriculture Policy bill authored by State Senator Tom Haywood, R-Wichita Falls, today unanimously passed the House and will become law upon the signature of Gov. Rick Perry. The measure, Senate Bill 331, addressed the need for a comprehensive agriculture policy for the state, based on the findings of an interim study conducted by Haywood and the Joint Interim Committee on Agricultural Policy during the past year and a half. Its companion, House Bill 499 was authored by the joint committee co-chairman Rep. David Swinford, R-Dumas.

"Agriculture has been a key part of our state's history, heritage and economy," Haywood said. "It has been a critical element in our economic, cultural and historical development as well as a vital component of a diversified state economy and a self-renewing natural resource."

The 16 areas dealt with in the bill are as follows: water availability issues, transportation issues, state regulatory issues, state tax policy, the availability of capital, including state loans and grants, the promotion of Texas agriculture products, eradication or control of injurious pests and diseases, research and education efforts, promotion of efficient utilization of soil and water resources, rural economic and infrastructure development, preservation of farmland, food safety, efforts to participate in the formulation of federal programs and policies, promotion of rural fire service and the promotion of value-added agricultural enterprises.

"Our goal was to formulate a statewide policy to ensure that it continues to be all those things to Texas and to our nation. This bill goes a long way in doing just that," Haywood said. "With agriculture having an \$80 billion annual impact on the state's economy, a comprehensive agricultural policy is vital for the continued health of the industry."

Agriculture Commissioner Susan Combs applauded the bill's passage, adding that Haywood and Swinford developed a policy that will greatly benefit the state's agriculture producers.

"Today's overwhelming vote is an indication that our state's policymakers strongly support agriculture and rural Texas," Susan Combs said.

"Each and every Texan has a vital stake in agriculture, our state's second-largest industry with an economic impact of \$80 billion. Today's vote was not only important for agriculture, but also for rural communities that depend upon this dynamic industry."

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