

Texans For Clean Water
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The Texas Legislature has decided to hand out a little poetic justice to those caught littering or illegally dumping trash after this session.

House Bill 1884, authored by Representative Charles “Doc” Anderson (R – Waco) and sponsored by Senator Lois Kolkhorst (R – Brenham) is on Governor Greg Abbott’s desk for signing, a bill’s last stage before it becomes law.

House Bill 1884 allows judges to sentence convicted litterers to up to 60 hours of community service picking up litter or working in a recycling facility in their county of residence.

"We think this legislation will help teach people a lesson they won't quickly forget and help communities clean up, especially needed to keep the state's natural beauty in our rural counties where there are limited funds for cleaning up roadsides and waterways. God Bless the beautiful State of Texas." Representative Anderson said.

A longtime veterinarian, “Doc” Anderson is also very familiar with the detrimental effects of litter on livestock. Cattle or horses often fatally ingest windblown trash caught on fences or brush.

According to the Texas Department of Transportation, the Lone Star State has seen an 81 percent increase in the amount of litter along farm-to-market roads, which make up more than half of the total distance of roadway in the state at 40,965 centerline miles. Litter was reported to have decreased by 46 percent on interstate and U.S. highways with 15,337-combined centerline miles. Farm-to-market, county roads are mainly in rural areas, where large piles of litter are often dumped on farms and ranches. When trash is dumped without identifiable information or a witness, the crimes are harder to punish and landowners can end up footing hefty cleanup costs.

"Requiring those who litter to pick up trash will not only deter reoffenders, it will help keep our roadways and public spaces clear. Litter costs our state millions of tax dollars each year, and this may be an effective tool to not only beautify our state, but remind people to not mess with Texas. " Said Senator Lois W. Kolkhorst

In a February 2017 study commissioned by Texans For Clean Water, a nonprofit advocacy group, stated the City of Houston (pop. 2.3 million) spent over \$13 million simply cleaning up litter within city limits. For context, Lufkin (pop. 36,000), spent \$149,000 for their litter abatement. These figures don't include enforcement, illegal dumping, prevention and education. When costs were taken together, the nine case study cities – Austin, Corpus Christi, El Paso, Fort Worth, Houston, Laredo, Lufkin, Midland, and San Antonio – spent more than \$50 million per year.

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“The old saying, an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure, holds true in this case as well,” said Mike Garver, founder of Texans for Clean Water “Enforcement, and letting people know we're serious about keeping Texas clean, is definitely key in the fight against litter.”

Texans for Clean Water supported a five-bill legislation package for the prevention of litter and illegal dumping with two passing to the governor.

“That’s a great success rate, especially in such a difficult session, and shows our legislators are taking notice of these issues and the importance to the health, well being and prosperity of all Texans.” Garver continued.

According to a Texas Department of Transportation survey, one in four people have admitted to littering and younger individuals are more likely to toss their trash than older residents.

Once enacted, House Bill 1884 will take effect September 1st.