

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **Sierra Club Releases 2017 Texas Legislative Scorecard**

Austin, Texas – Today, the Sierra Club released its 2017 Legislative Scorecard for the 85th Texas Legislature including the Special Session. This is the first scorecard from the environmental non-profit organization since 2013, and it comes on the heels of one of the most divisive and discriminatory sessions in decades.

The Sierra Club decided to create the scorecard, which ranks each State Representative and State Senator on an A-to-F scale, to draw attention to the chronic failure of the Texas Legislature to pass bills that protect the environment and public health.

“The people of Texas need to know what these lawmakers are doing in their name,” said Cyrus Reed, Conservation Director of the Sierra Club’s Lone Star Chapter. “We are shining a light on the bad and good votes so that Texans will be more informed about the actions of their elected officials. Our lawmakers too often obscure their record with official positions and talking points, but what matters is action. What matters is votes.”

The scores were generated from 10 distinct votes in the House and 11 in the Senate that represented the legislative priorities of the Sierra Club. The Senate scorecard included an extra vote from the Special Session related to a particularly bad version of HB 7, aka the “tree bill,” that would have impacted local ordinances protecting heritage trees. The final letter grade corresponded to the number of votes that each legislator made in line with the Sierra Club’s position.

Only nine members of the 150-member Texas House earned a perfect score, voting right 10 out of 10 times on bills and amendments that represent a diverse spectrum of issues, including clean energy, air pollution, water conservation, and more. By contrast, 75 House members earned an F, with three members voting wrong 10 out of 10 times. On the Senate side, six members earned an A+ or A, while 15 members of the 31 seat chamber earned an F or F-.

The Texas Railroad Commission Sunset Bill (HB 1818) illustrated the Sierra Club’s grievances with the current influences at work at the Legislature. The bill reauthorized the oil and gas regulatory agency for another 12 years, and passed without a proposed amendment to increase transparency by making enforcement data available online and searchable by the general public. Several good amendments, including one proposed by Sen. José Rodriguez (D-El Paso), were rejected.

“It comes as no surprise that the oil and gas industry controls too much at the Legislature, but with so many uncompetitive districts due to gerrymandering and other factors, the few good environmentally minded legislators left are less likely to carry good bills because they do not stand a chance of passing,” said Matt Johnson, Communications Manager for the Sierra Club’s Lone Star Chapter. “We hope that this scorecard fuels more constituent pressure on lawmakers to change their ways or get out of the way for new lawmakers who will work for all Texans.”

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### **About the Sierra Club**

The Sierra Club is America’s largest and most influential grassroots environmental organization, with more than 3 million members and supporters. In addition to helping people from all backgrounds explore nature and our outdoor heritage, the Sierra Club works to promote clean energy, safeguard the health of our communities, protect wildlife, and preserve our remaining wild places through grassroots activism, public education, lobbying, and legal action. For more information, visit [www.sierraclub.org](http://www.sierraclub.org).