

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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### **Sierra Club Urges House Democrats to Hold the Line**

**Austin, TX** -- On Friday, the Texas House of Representatives claimed there was a quorum after three additional Democrats returned to the Capitol. Speaker of the House Dade Phelan proceeded to refer the special session's voter suppression bill to committee immediately and a hearing was held early Monday morning, giving the public approximately 72 hours to travel to Austin. SB 1 has already been approved by the Senate. The hearing is occurring in the middle of an outbreak of the Delta variant in Austin, and there is no provision for providing virtual testimony. A copy of the Sierra Club's written testimony can be found [here](#).

If passed and signed into law, SB 1 would:

- Prohibit election officials from distributing or soliciting absentee ballot applications, in fact adding criminal penalties for sending unsolicited ballot request forms.
- Create problematic video surveillance provisions.
- Ban drive-through voting (except for voters eligible for curbside voting due to disability)
- Ban early voting sites not located inside buildings except in the event of storms or fires or exceptional events
- Ban 24 hour early voting, and sets permissible uniform early voting hours that may impact some local government's ability to encourage more voter participation
- Require voters to supply their driver license number or SSN4 on mail ballot applications and mail ballot envelopes, which must match the corresponding identification number on file
- Give partisan "watchers" special rights to intimidate voters and disrupt polling places
- Create a vague criminal penalty against "vote harvesting" that could encompass ordinary interactions between campaigns and voters
- Require voter assistants to complete additional forms and oaths under penalty of perjury, and in general makes it harder to assist those with physical limitations to vote, potentially impacting their voting rights.
- Lead to Costly, Retributive Post Election Lawsuits as the bill provides for expanded post-election litigation regarding ballot harvesting or election contests, with provisions for money damages and attorney's fees.

**In response, Lone Star Interim Chapter Director Cyrus Reed released the following statement:**

“Rather than focusing on issues of most importance to Texans -- like fixing our grid or protecting Texans ravaged by the ongoing COVID-19 crisis - Governor Abbott and Speaker Phelan have shown their cards by immediately scheduling a hearing on one of the worst voter suppression laws in the country. We must hope that the 38 days that the brave Texas House Democrats prevented a quorum had raised enough attention to lead to the only fail-safe solution to protect voter rights - federal legislation by passing the For the People Act and John Lewis Voter Protection Act. We call on the US Senate and US Congress to protect the voters of Texas by passing these two landmark pieces of legislation.”