

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### ***Tree Advocates Applaud Speaker Joe Straus on Sending HB 7 Back to Senate***

On Saturday evening Speaker of the House Joe Straus sent HB 7 back to the State Senate. He said that the tree clear-cutting amendments made by the Senate were not germane.

Supporters of local tree ordinances cheered the decision by Speaker Straus, “We applaud Speaker Joe Straus for stopping the Senate’s attempt to take a benign House bill and turn it into a power grab by developers,” said Andrew Dobbs, Texas Campaign for the Environment Legislative Director. “Speaker Straus defended legislative rules that prohibit these kinds of hijacking attempts and he protected local citizens’ power to protect the health of their communities,” Mr. Dobbs continued.

Alamo Sierra Club leader and longtime tree advocate Richard Alles stated, “Joe Straus is a hero. He stood up to Governor Abbott and potentially prevented clear-cutting of hundreds of thousands of acres of trees. He saved Texas cities from more flooding and deadly ozone pollution. Of course, there are still a few more days until the end of the session, so we will continue to be on guard for attacks on tree ordinances now and in future legislative sessions.”

The Texas House rules require that amendments to bills must be relevant to the original purpose of the bill. HB 7 as passed by the House only addressed credits that builders and developers could get if they planted trees in order to reduce mitigation fees. Pre-emption amendments made by the Senate were off limits according to House rules.

Texas Gov. Greg Abbott called for the special legislative session to consider legislation preempting all local tree ordinances in Texas. At least 110 communities have some sort of ordinance that would be affected. In the wake of the Governor’s announcement, a new coalition Defend Texas Trees came together to support the ability of local governments to preserve their trees. It has become a broad bipartisan coalition of advocates for property rights, tree health, local government rights, and environmental protection.