



SIERRA CLUB

LONE STAR CHAPTER

To: The Honorable Brian Birdwell, Chair
Members, Senate Committee on Natural Resources

Re: SB 1302 (Geren/Zaffarini), Relating to inspections and examinations by the Railroad Commission of Texas of certain sites and facilities conducted using unmanned aircraft.

May 17, 2023

The Lone Star Chapter of the Sierra Club is supportive of HB 1302 by Geren/Zaffarini, which would allow the RRC to conduct inspections of oil and gas and associated facilities through the use of unmanned aerial drones.

Evidence suggests that such technology could be an important asset in the RRC's enforcement regime to find illegal flaring, venting, spills, or other issues at facilities that can pollute the environment, hurt workers and communities, and lead to air and water pollution. This bill is tied to a specific request from the RRC that would clarify their authority.

There is widespread information that a relatively few bad actors in the oil and gas industry are responsible for the vast majority of methane emissions. In other words, the vast majority of oil and gas companies either comply with no flaring and venting principles, or at least meet the terms of their permit exceptions, but there are some that either through an accident or because of bad operator practices disregard those practices.

It is very important to the Sierra Club that the bill proceed as allowing the RRC to use this technology for surprise inspections, or as the result of complaints from community members.

We appreciate the filing of this bill and hope the intent of the bill can remain clean as it hopefully moves to the Senate.