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To the members of the House Committee on State Affairs.
Via hand delivery.

March 20, 2019

Re: HB 1876 (Davis), ethics reform, supporting testimony by Public Citizen

Dear Chairman Phelan and members of the committee:

Public Citizen appreciates the opportunity to testify for HB 1876. This bill includes ethics reform measures that have been recommended by the Texas Ethics Commission (TEC) and/or previously passed the House or the General Investigating and Ethics Committee in previous sessions. In a 2015 assessment of ethics laws across the nation by the Center for Public Integrity, Texas received a D-.¹ Because Public Citizen supports strengthening our state's weak ethics laws, we support HB 1876.

Sections 1 and 2 of the bill prevent political contributions during special legislative sessions. This measure passed the General Investigation and Ethics Committee with 6 Ayes and 1 Absent as HB 19 during the 85th special session.

Section 3 permits the use of blue ink for certain political reports. This was recommendation 9 from the TEC in its report to the 86th legislature.²

Section 5 permit a person filing a non-electronic statement, registration, or report, with the TEC to use an unsworn declaration. This was recommendation 8 from the TEC's report to the 86th legislature.³

Section 6 closes the "revolving door" by preventing a former legislator or statewide office holder from registering as a lobbyist for one year. This measure passed the General Investigation and Ethics Committee with 6 Ayes and 1 Absent as HB 15 during the 85th special session.

Section 7 requires disclosure of conflicts of interest by to include members of a state agency governing board. This measure passed the General Investigation and Ethics Committee with 6 Ayes and 1 Absent as HB 18 during the 85th special session.

¹ See <https://publicintegrity.org/accountability/texas-gets-d-grade-in-2015-state-integrity-investigation/>.

² See "Texas Ethics Commission: Recommendations for Statutory Changes" (Dec 2018) at p. 4, available at https://www.ethics.state.tx.us/tec/Rec_Statutory_Change_2018.pdf.

³ *Id.*



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Because each provision of this bill is either a TEC recommendation or a measure previously passed through the General Investigating and Ethics Committee, and because these provisions strengthen Texas ethics law, we support HB 1876.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony, if you wish to discuss our position further, I can be reached by email at ashelley@citizen.org or by phone at 512-477-1155.

Respectfully,

Adrian Shelley, Texas Office Director
Public Citizen

CC: Rep. Ana Hernandez, Rep. Joe Deshotel, Rep. R. D. "Bobby" Guerra, Rep. Sam Harless, Rep. Justin Holland, Rep. Todd Hunter, Rep. Phil King, Rep. Tan Parker, Rep. Richard Peña Raymond, Rep. Eddie Rodriguez, Rep. John T. Smithee, Rep. Drew Springer