

Farm Bureau supports eminent domain reform

(AUSTIN, Texas)—Calling eminent domain reform “the property rights issue of our time,” Texas Farm Bureau President Russell Boening joined State Rep. DeWayne Burns (R-Cleburne) today in Austin to roll out the reform bill, HB 991.

Burns is the House sponsor of eminent domain reform. Sen. Lois Kolkhorst (R-Brenham) introduced SB 421.

“We understand the rapid growth of our state will call for sacrifice, careful planning and yes, eminent domain,” Boening said in a statement. “However, Texas farmers, ranchers and rural property holders have a constitutional right to fair treatment and just compensation.”

Farmers, ranchers and rural landowners continue to complain of property takings for pipelines, utilities and other uses that do not treat property owners fairly. Complaints of “lowball” offers and land not restored in a satisfactory way are common. Often, landowners subject to takings report they are unsure of their rights.

“It’s time for transparency in all property takings, with landowners clearly understanding their rights,” Boening said. “There must be true good faith offers and consequences if that does not occur.”

Boening is a farmer, rancher and dairy producer in Poth, Texas, near Floresville. He said the need for eminent domain for public projects and infrastructure is not in question. Fairness, he said, is the issue.

“When the law allows private entities to take private property, it should also protect the rights of those property owners,” Boening said. “They cannot walk away from the table. They only have two options—accept an offer or get taken to court.”