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**Sunset Advisory Commission
Information Packet**

Ken Levine

SUNSET ADVISORY COMMISSION

INFORMATION PACKET

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Sunset in Texas

In 1977, the Texas Legislature enacted the Sunset law to provide for the periodic review of the efficiency and effectiveness of state agency operations and policies. The basic elements of the Sunset process are described below.

What is Sunset?

Sunset is the regular assessment of the continuing need for a state agency to exist. While standard legislative oversight is concerned with agency compliance with legislative policies, Sunset asks a more basic question: Do the agency's functions continue to be needed? The Sunset process works by setting a date on which an agency will be abolished unless legislation is passed to continue its functions. This creates a unique opportunity for the Legislature to look closely at each agency and make fundamental changes to an agency's mission or operations if needed.

How Is an Agency Scheduled for Review Under Sunset?

About 130 state agencies are subject to the Texas Sunset Act. Each agency's enabling statute specifies the date upon which the agency is abolished, unless continued by legislation. Agencies under Sunset typically undergo review once every 12 years, and about 20 to 30 agencies go through the Sunset process each legislative session.

What Changes Can Be Made Through Sunset?

The Sunset Commission's report on an agency must include a recommendation to abolish or continue the agency and may also contain other recommendations to improve an agency's operations. The Commission may also consider combining functions of two or more agencies to streamline state government.

How Can the Public Participate in Sunset?

Members of the public who participate in the review process can provide valuable information to the Sunset Commission about how well or poorly an agency performs its functions. Individuals and organizations usually participate by identifying potential issues for study and by commenting on proposed changes to the agency. The easiest way to follow the Sunset process and begin participating in the process is through the Sunset Commission website, www.sunset.texas.gov. The following points illustrate the significant ways the public can participate in the Sunset review of an agency.

- ***Input with Staff.*** Sunset staff actively seeks input during the review, at which time interested persons and organizations may voice their concerns or ideas about the agency.
- ***Reviewing Sunset Reports.*** Sunset reports, including agency Self-Evaluation Reports and Sunset staff reports, are available to the public through the Sunset website or in hard copy upon request.
- ***Testifying at Public Hearings.*** The Commission holds public hearings on each agency under review. These hearings offer the public an opportunity to testify about an agency and comment on the Sunset staff's recommendations.
- ***Taking Part in the Legislative Session.*** Generally, if an agency is to be continued, a bill must be passed by the Legislature. Members of the public can participate in the legislative process as they would with any other legislation.

Sunset Commission General Schedule

January – December 2016

Sunset Commission receives staff reports on agencies under review, conducts public hearings, decides on formal recommendations to the Legislature, and drafts legislation.

January – May 2017

The 85th Legislature acts on agencies under Sunset review and Sunset Commission recommendations.

Organization of the Sunset Commission

The 12-member Sunset Commission has five members of the Senate and one public member appointed by the Lieutenant Governor, and five members of the House and one public member appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives. Senate and House members serve four-year terms and public members serve two-year terms. The chairmanship rotates between the Senate and the House every two years and is assigned to a House member for the 2016–2017 biennium. The Sunset Commission appoints a director who employs staff to carry out the Commission's responsibilities.

Impact of Sunset

On the Structure of State Government

- 38 agencies abolished
- 47 agencies abolished and functions transferred
- Eliminated overlap and duplication among agencies

On State Agency Boards and Commissions

- Increased public participation in agency decisions
- Inclusion of public members on governing boards
- Stronger prohibitions against conflicts of interest of board members

For the Public

- Greater accountability of state agencies to the public
- Improved delivery of services through streamlining of state agency processes
- More than \$977 million in savings and increased revenues

Website

For further information about the Sunset Commission, visit our website at www.sunset.texas.gov.

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Title search: Sunset Advisory Commission Information Packet

Also available as part of the eCourse

[2015 Legislative Update and Sunset Legislation](#)

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