

Oppose Prescriptive Utility Pole Requirements

HB 2216 by Rep. Pierson

AECT Position: Oppose

Proposal

- HB 2216 would require the Public Utility Commission of Texas (PUC) to develop a rule specific to electric and telecommunications utilities to maintain utility poles at an angle that varies no more than 30 percent from a line that is perpendicular to the ground.
- The bill would also allow for oversight by municipalities and counties.

AECT Position

- AECT believes HB 2216 will add considerable costs to be borne by ratepayers, for utilities to inspect, measure and monitor the aesthetics of poles well beyond what is necessary to maintain a safe and reliable utility system.
- Electric utility poles are straightened or replaced today where a safety or reliability concern is identified.
- Electric utility poles lean for a variety of reasons, including appropriate engineering design to support guyed angle poles and dead end pole structures where a guy wire must be extended across a street or obstacle.
- Many poles are installed on slanted land. Thus, the requirement that the measurement be relative to the ground is problematic.
- Designing new facilities to meet the level of aesthetics prescribed by HB 2216 could necessitate a greater number of poles to be installed to shorten the span between poles. This creates unnecessary costs for consumers.
- There is no timeline for compliance or response for a pole that, due to reasons beyond the utility's control, fails to comply with the requirements of the bill. This is problematic in the event of a hurricane, tornado or other significant natural disaster.
- The PUC has sufficient regulatory authority over utilities to ensure a safe and reliable utility system without the need for such specific legislation.