



Texas senators propose using half of future rainy day funds on roads

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By ROBERT T. GARRETT

Austin Bureau

rtgarrett@dallasnews.com

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AUSTIN — Two leading Republican senators introduced a constitutional amendment Tuesday that would take half the future money reserved for the state's rainy day fund and dedicate it to highways.

Senate Finance Committee Chairman Tommy Williams, R-The Woodlands, said he and Transportation Committee Chairman Robert Nichols, R-Jacksonville, are urging Gov. Rick Perry to add the subject to the agenda of the special session on redistricting that began late Monday.

"It's a pretty robust funding," Williams said of the idea, noting that more than \$800 million a year would flow to roads. Also, state engineers could plan a lot more highway projects with a stable funding source, he said.

"This is a way to get to existing revenues that doesn't have a negative impact on the budget," Williams said.

Perry, asked Tuesday if he was satisfied with progress on transportation, suggested that more needed to be done. However, he said it's "a little bit premature" to talk about the possibility of adding transportation to the call of the special session.

The Texas Association of Business, the state's leading business group, threw its weight behind the idea. The rainy day fund is expected to have \$8 billion in the bank in 2015, after lawmakers passed bills this year to use about \$3.9 billion.

Efforts in the regular session to provide substantial new money for transportation stalled after Republicans balked at raising vehicle registration fees and Perry warned against raising gasoline taxes.

"We can't get the center office interested in fees," Williams said, referring to Perry.

If Perry agreed to add the topic to the special session, the amendment would need the support of two-thirds of the House and Senate and then approval by voters in a statewide election this fall.

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Julia Wallace 1 hour ago

Great! I just hope that West Texas gets some of those funds sent our direction since we have supplied the majority of the oil and gas, not only to this State, but the Nation, for the last 50+ years. When the Leg starts looking at how to distribute those funds, they always seem to end up east of the I35 corridor. When the Leg starts looking at how to find the funds, they always show up on our doorstep with their hands open.

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Jess Perry 12 hours ago

why don't you take all the illegal aliens about to get papers a little more since if they weren't here we wouldn't need any new roads!!!

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