

Water planning legislation dies

[As time expires, measure never gets its day in the House.](#)

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Senate Bill 3, the massive state water-planning measure launched with such fanfare seven weeks ago, died the most dreary of deaths early Wednesday morning.

The measure, a favorite of Lt. Gov. David Dewhurst's, was one of dozens of pieces of legislation that failed to get a vote on the floor of the House of Representatives when the clock struck midnight. Tuesday was the last day for the House to give Senate legislation preliminary approval on the floor.

Rep. Robert Puente, D-San Antonio and chairman of the House Natural Resources Committee, said some pieces of the proposal might survive through other measures that the Senate and the House have approved but are still tinkering with.

He's particularly hopeful for the so-called environmental flows provisions that would help guarantee fresh water for bays and estuaries, along with the plants and animals that populate them.

Senate Bill 3 would have created a commission that, along with the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality, would have determined how much water should be set aside for such environmentally sensitive areas.

"There are still a lot of avenues," Puente said. "A lot of work was put into it by a lot of people." Puente blamed the measure's demise on the Senate's timing. The upper chamber sent the legislation to the House less than a month ago — not enough time, Puente said, for lawmakers to consider its implications.

"There wasn't a full debate here. We didn't get a chance to float ideas, to make compromises," he said.

"The ultimate control was to bury it deep in the (House) calendar."

Dewhurst pledged to get Senate Bill 3's most important provisions into other pieces of legislation in a last-ditch effort to make them law. But he added that the state would have been better-served if the bill hadn't died.

'This was a missed opportunity for the people of Texas,' Dewhurst said.