

Prather quoted in Houston Chronicle about Pending Legislation Veto

June 18, 2017 Laura Prather

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Gov. Greg Abbott's veto of a bill giving judges the option of reimbursing attorney fees to requestors of public information was a disappointing end to a legislative session where few improvements to open government laws were passed, open records activists say.

"There was a noticeable, anti-transparency mood at the Texas Capitol this session," said Kelley Shannon, executive director of the nonprofit Freedom of Information Foundation of Texas. "So several of our major initiatives passed in the Senate but died in the last stages of the session, and this bill dealing with attorney's fees for information requestors was the final blow."

At least 10 House and Senate bills that dealt with open records died during the recent legislative session, Shannon said.

The "final blow" was a reference to House Bill 2783, by Rep. John Smithee, R-Amarillo, that Abbot vetoed Thursday after claiming paying requestors' legal fees would encourage lawsuits against government. The law would give a judge the option to award attorney fees to requestors in lawsuits where the governmental agency ultimately decided to hand over the documents before a trial was held...

Austin attorney [Laura Prather](#), co-chair of the FOI legislative committee, agreed there was little good news.

"Despite efforts to work on agreed-upon legislation for more than a year with governmental entities, the Attorney General's Office and open records advocates, we were not successful in getting any of the bills that would have increased transparency for Texas citizens ultimately enacted into law," said Prather. "With the governor's veto of HB 2783, that sealed the fate of the only measure we had been able to get out of the Legislature."

Excerpted from *The Houston Chronicle*. To read the full article, click [here](#).