

Texas Legislature May Be Staying Late

The collective patience of more than 750 pastors in Texas has nearly run out, but they still have a champion on their side in Austin.

The legislative session ends May 29, but the House of Representatives—under the leadership of Speaker Joe Straus, who is feeling pressure from a small number of business leaders and LGBT activists—still refuses to take up either of the “bathroom bills” that have been offered this year. The Senate, led by Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick, passed Senate Bill 6 weeks ago.

“People elect us to come here and get the job done—not to pass a budget and go home, call it a day,” Patrick said in a press conference Wednesday. “The people elected me to be bold and move this legislation forward.”

Bold fails to adequately describe his plan. Patrick is willing to shut down the state government if Straus fails to adopt two bills he has labeled as priorities for the current session, one of which is SB 6.

Without a budget, and without a stopgap measure—called a “sunset safety net bill”—enacted, that’s exactly what will happen. Patrick made it clear he would like to avoid a special session, but said the legislature has a responsibility to the constituents who voted them into office.

“I agree with the speaker that it would be good to avoid a special session,” he said. “But I do not agree with the speaker that we can just pass the budget and a sunset bill and call it a day.”

Rev. Dave Welch, president of the Texas Pastor Council,

agreed. In a statement to the press, he said:

In response to Lt. Governor Dan Patrick's press conference today declaring his commitment to fulfilling promises to the people even if a special session is required, House Speaker Joe Straus complained that, "Governor Patrick's threat to force a special session unless he gets everything his way is regrettable, and I hope that he reconsiders."

On behalf of the 750 pastors who signed our open letter to the governor and legislature and hundreds more pastors across Texas who have expended an extraordinary amount of time, energy, resources, personal commitment and leadership of their congregations, our response to you, Mr. Speaker is this:

You singlehandedly decided at the beginning of the 2017 Texas Legislative Session that regardless of the clear and evident reality of the rising threat to privacy and safety of women and children in Texas through the indefensible ordinances passing around the state that allow biological males into their private facilities, you were personally going to silence the voice of the people.

You decided that you were not speaker but rather a monarch who has abused the position of speaker to intimidate and punish any state representative who dared oppose you, particularly who dared declare that women and children were more important than corporate checkbooks.

You well knew that if SB 6 were put in committee, allowed a hearing and a vote, sent to the floor of the House, that it would pass with 95 Republicans even if a few caved in to the LGBTQ bullying. You did all you could to assure that neither the legislators nor the people had a chance to pass these protections.

Now that your leadership is crumbling around you because you have been exposed as an amoral bully who—in spite of your

words to the contrary—completely disregard and disrespect your peers who actually adhere to the Republican Party Platform, you dare complain about Lt. Governor Dan Patrick actually being a principled leader of character, courage and integrity because he won't abdicate his promises and principles?

Speaker Straus, it is your poor leadership and dismal record that is regrettable and our call to you is to own up to your mistakes, let SB 6 through the House this week and do your part to avoid a special session or the reality is very simple.

A special session is all about whether you continue to fail in your role or step up and be Speaker, not tyrant. As for the pastors of churches from 50 to 50,000 we serve, we stand one hundred percent behind Gov. Patrick and Gov. Abbott's call for either HB 2899 or SB 6 to pass, even if it takes all summer.

The women and children as well as the blessing and posterity of Texas deserve it.