Oversight in the News

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- Texas legislative committee to investigate cause of Panhandle wildfires (Texas Tribune, 3/12/2024)
  - Texas House Speaker Dade Phelan has initiated a legislative committee to investigate the Texas Panhandle wildfires for future disaster preparedness. The committee, comprising three lawmakers and two residents, will explore the causes of the wildfires, resource allocation, and the effectiveness of wildfire disaster preparedness. Recent investigations pointed to power lines as the cause of the Smokehouse Creek fire, leading to lawsuits against utility company Xcel Energy, with extensive damage to homes, livestock, and crops in the region.

- Public blasts Texas agencies, regulators for poor communication, oversight at wildfire hearings (Yahoo News, 4/4/2024)
  - The Texas legislative committee investigating the Panhandle wildfires criticized state agencies and regulators for poor communication and oversight during the public hearings. The hearings exposed a lack of trust between Panhandle residents and state entities, with concerns raised about utility companies' responsibilities and inspection practices. Landowners, volunteer firefighters, and officials from state agencies testified, highlighting frustrations over past incidents and the need for potential legal changes following the wildfires.

- Texas House panel subpoenas death row inmate Robert Roberson a second time (Texas Tribune, 12/17/2024)
  - A bipartisan Texas House committee has issued a new subpoena requiring death row inmate Robert Roberson to testify in person about his 2003 capital murder conviction, which some legislators believe was based on discredited "junk science." The committee's previous efforts were reportedly stalled by Attorney General Ken Paxton's office, leading to this renewed attempt to hear Roberson's testimony before the committee disbands next year. Roberson's execution, initially scheduled for October 17, was delayed, and a new date has not been set. The Texas Supreme Court ruled that while a legislative subpoena cannot block an execution, it can be issued as long as it doesn't interfere with a scheduled execution.

- Texas should close prisons and jails with staffing challenges, state oversight panel says (Texas Public Radio, 1/16/2025)
  - The Texas Sunset Advisory Commission, a state oversight panel, has recommended closing prisons and jails with severe staffing shortages to address operational inefficiencies and safety concerns. The panel's report highlighted that understaffed facilities strain state resources and negatively impact staff and inmate safety. The recommendations will be considered by the Texas Legislature during its next session.

- Texas House discusses putting guardrails on Artificial Intelligence (CW39 Houston, 3/26/2025)
  - The Texas House Committee on the Delivery of Government Efficiency (Texas DOGE) held a hearing to explore potential regulations for artificial intelligence, focusing on privacy, security, and transparency concerns. Lawmakers heard testimony from experts and industry representatives about the risks of AI in areas such as facial recognition and algorithmic decision-making. The discussion is part of a broader legislative effort to establish oversight mechanisms for emerging technologies.

- Texas flooding: Texas House, Senate launch special legislative investigation committees (Fox7 Austin, 10/14/2025)
  - Texas House and Senate leaders have formed special legislative investigative committees to examine the state's response to recent widespread flooding. The committees will assess preparedness, emergency management actions, and coordination among agencies during the disaster. According to legislative leaders, the goal is to identify potential improvements to

protect residents and infrastructure in future emergencies.

- Texas Legislature Sets Its Sights on Data Centers and AI: What You Need to Know (National Law Review, 4/3/2026)
  - Texas lawmakers are considering legislation that would increase oversight of data centers and artificial intelligence, including proposals related to energy use, consumer protections, and disclosure requirements. Several bills would regulate how AI systems are used, require notice when consumers interact with AI, and address risks such as bias and misuse of personal data. Lawmakers are also examining how the rapid growth of data centers could affect the state's electric grid and water resources.

- Texas Speaker assigns panel to look into Uvalde shooting Roblox simulation (NBCDFW, 4/21/2026)
  - Texas House Speaker Dustin Burrows assigned lawmakers to examine Roblox and consider new regulations after a game on the platform allowed users to simulate the Robb Elementary shooting, playing as the gunman. According to Burrows and members of the House State Affairs Committee, lawmakers may pursue measures next session such as age verification, parental consent requirements, stronger content moderation, and potential civil or criminal penalties for companies that fail to prevent harmful content. Roblox said it removed the content, bans users who upload similar material, and is strengthening safety systems as it faces lawsuits and settlements related to child safety concerns.

- State legislative investigation: Camp Mystic created 'complacent flood culture' (The Center Square, 4/28/2026)
  - A Texas joint Senate–House committee opened its first hearing into last summer's Camp Mystic tragedy, with investigator Casey Garrett presenting early findings focused on what the camp knew about flood risks and how it responded as waters rose. Garrett detailed extensive historical evidence showing that the camp's owners had long been aware of severe flood risks, while also highlighting systemic safety failures, including a lack of emergency training, equipment, and evacuation planning for counselors and campers. The investigation—running alongside criminal probes, licensing reviews, and multiple lawsuits—continues, with a full report due to the legislature in May.

- Camp Mystic had no emergency plan for July 4 flood, report finds (USA Today, 6/23/2026)

- According to a joint Texas House and Senate investigation, Camp Mystic failed to comply with state emergency planning requirements, was inadequately prepared for the July 4, 2025, flood, did not timely evacuate despite weather warnings, and managed reunification efforts chaotically after the disaster that killed 28 people. The report found that the camp lacked written flood evacuation procedures; many staff were unaware of escalating National Weather Service alerts; evacuation responsibilities were not clearly assigned; and leadership did not use available emergency communication systems or contact 911 during the flood. The investigation also identified shortcomings in a state health inspection conducted before the flood and documented communication failures with families in the aftermath.

- Texas youth prison lockdown criticized in state oversight report (Denton Record-Chronicle, 11/14/2026)
  - The Texas Sunset Advisory Commission found that an August lockdown at all five state youth prisons led to more self-harm, delayed treatment for young people on suicide alert, and increased use of force by staff. The Texas Juvenile Justice Department imposed the lockdown after assaults on staff, saying it was needed to improve safety. The report also found that county juvenile probation departments and juvenile judges went five days without being informed about conditions inside the facilities.