
Vote approaches on protection of property rights

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Published: Wednesday, June 17, 2009

Updated: Wednesday, June 17, 2009

Gov. Rick Perry signed a resolution Monday which will allow Texas landowners to vote on a constitutional amendment strengthening property rights.

The resolution is a response to what some landowners call the abuse of eminent domain, which allows the government or third parties to claim private property for public use or economic development. Texas residents will be able to vote on the amendment in November.

Perry assured landowners in a press release that the protection of their rights was a top priority.

“Land ownership is an essential part of Texas’ culture,” Perry said.

While Perry and lawmakers feel the resolution is a step toward enhancing the protection of private property, many organizations protecting the rights of landowners feel the issue is more complicated.

Bill Peacock, vice president of administration and director for the Center of Economic Freedom at the Texas Public Policy Foundation, said that the challenges that property owners face in Texas go back a long way.

“Property rights are no longer property rights — it’s a grant from the state, and the state can take it back if they feel they have a better use for it,” Peacock said.

The Texas Landowners Council shares the same sentiments as the Texas Public Policy Foundation, saying that the resolution is only a small step toward addressing the major problems property owners face.

“[The resolution] is not addressing the widespread abuse of property rights in Texas,” said James Gaines, president of Texas Landowners Council and owner of a ranch near Dripping Springs.


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