

# CLEAR LAKE TEA PARTY



## “WatchDog”

### Basic Training



### “Getting Started”

[www.clearlaketeaparty.com](http://www.clearlaketeaparty.com)

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SPECIAL THANKS

TO

CHERYL JOHNSON  
GALVESTON COUNTY TAX ASSESSOR

WHO WAS TEACHING TEXAS CITIZENS HOW TO  
TRACK, INFLUENCE, AND HOLD  
ACCOUNTABLE THE TEXAS STATE LEGISLATURE  
BEFORE THERE WAS A TEA PARTY MOVEMENT

ALSO

MARY HULS  
CLEAR LAKE TEA PARTY EXECUTIVE BOARD

WHO INSISTED THAT WE DO MORE THAN  
MERELY ACCEPT WHAT THE POLITICIANS TELL  
US AND TO DEVELOP A “WATCHDOG”

COMPONENT TO THE TEA PARTY AGENDA TO  
FIND OUT FOR OURSELVES

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## Introduction

The **Texas Legislature** is the state legislature of Texas. It is composed of an upper chamber, the Texas State Senate, and a lower chamber, the Texas House of Representatives. In Texas, the Legislature is considered the most powerful branch of state government because of its aggressive use of the power of the purse to control and direct the activities of state government. Every two years the **Texas Legislature** assembles to perform the duties of State Government. Our tradition of part time Government is a source of pride for Texans with a deep respect for individual liberty and limited government.

On November 2, 2010, the citizens of Texas overwhelmingly voted to send a conservative dominated State legislature to Austin with a strong expectation that the legislators would pass bills to protect Texas citizens from an increasingly oppressive Federal Government whose laws, regulations, and mandates threaten the liberty and prosperity of all Texans, to provide a climate for business that would increase economic prosperity and jobs, address the looming budget shortfall by cutting spending and not raising taxes, to ensure that elections in Texas are fair and free of fraud, and to generally shrink government and increase the liberty of the people.

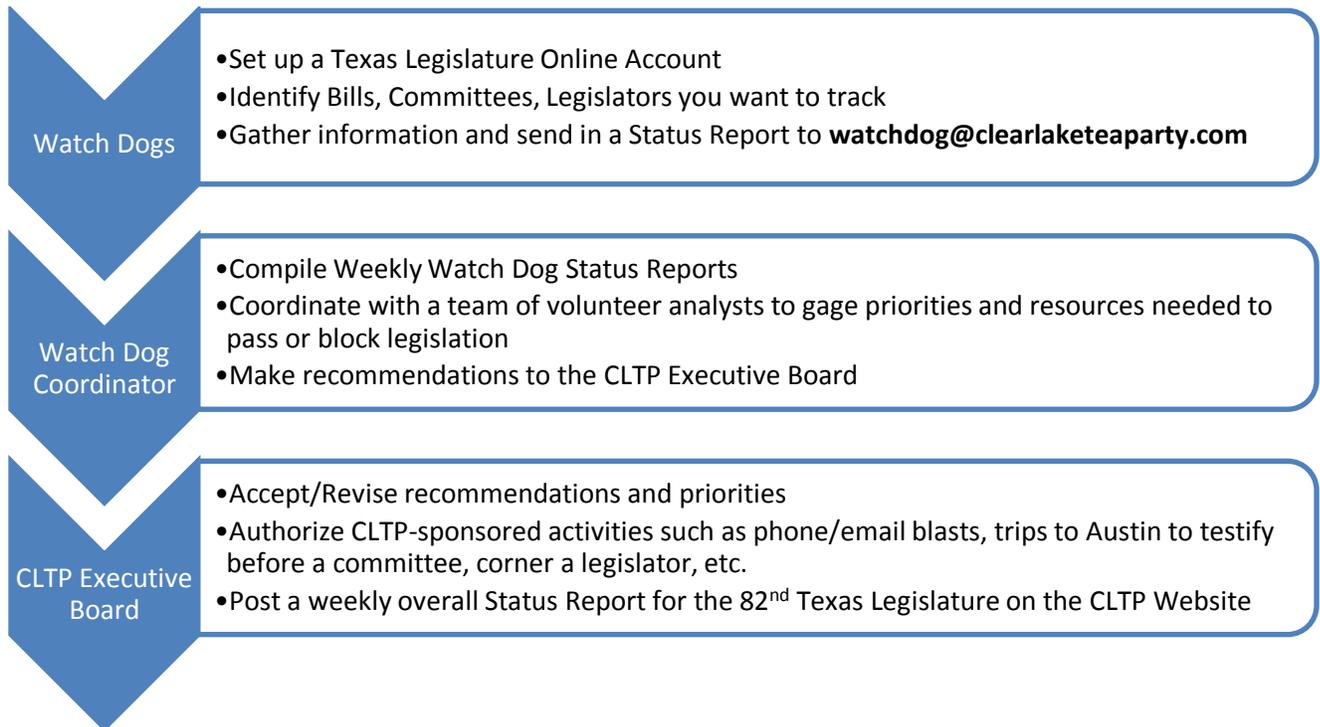
With these thoughts in mind, the Clear Lake Tea Party (CLTP) has begun an initiative to hold accountable the legislators who campaigned on the above principles and issues and the bills they have submitted. The CLTP Watchdog program is designed to allow the CLTP membership to decide what bills, Committees, and/or Legislators to track and follow through the 140 day session. Unlike other groups that promote citizen tracking of the Texas Legislature, the CLTP has added a closed-loop component that ensures that the information each watchdog gathers is returned to a central coordinating function for consolidation and analysis leading to proper prioritization of issues, application of resources, and calls for action by the CLTP Executive Board. This is a watchdog driven activity. The freedom to pick and choose legislation, committees, or individual legislators that interest the individual CLTP watchdogs and to know that their research and effort will be realized into concrete action will be key to continued engagement by the watchdogs during the legislative session.

The basic online tools needed to accomplish the task of researching the legislation and tracking the individual bills, committee actions, and legislator votes is available courtesy of the Texas Legislature itself. The Texas Legislature Online website (<http://www.capitol.state.tx.us/Home>) was developed specifically with the Texas citizen in mind. It offers comprehensive service and functionality and is very easy to use. This tool alone allows the citizens to follow their Senators and Representatives, gather information through an automatic notification function, and report out that information throughout the legislative session. This unprecedented tool allows the people to truly be the “Eyes of Texas” and is a tribute to open government.

Additionally, the CLTP is providing a standard reporting format to all watchdogs to provide a consistent set of data to be collated and analyzed through a central clearinghouse. The CLTP

has also set up a dedicated email address for watchdogs to send their reports in on a weekly basis or, as necessary, should events warrant. The CLTP will begin posting a comprehensive weekly status report on its main website for dissemination to the CLTP membership and the public.

The basic CLTP Watchdog Program is shown on the following graphic:



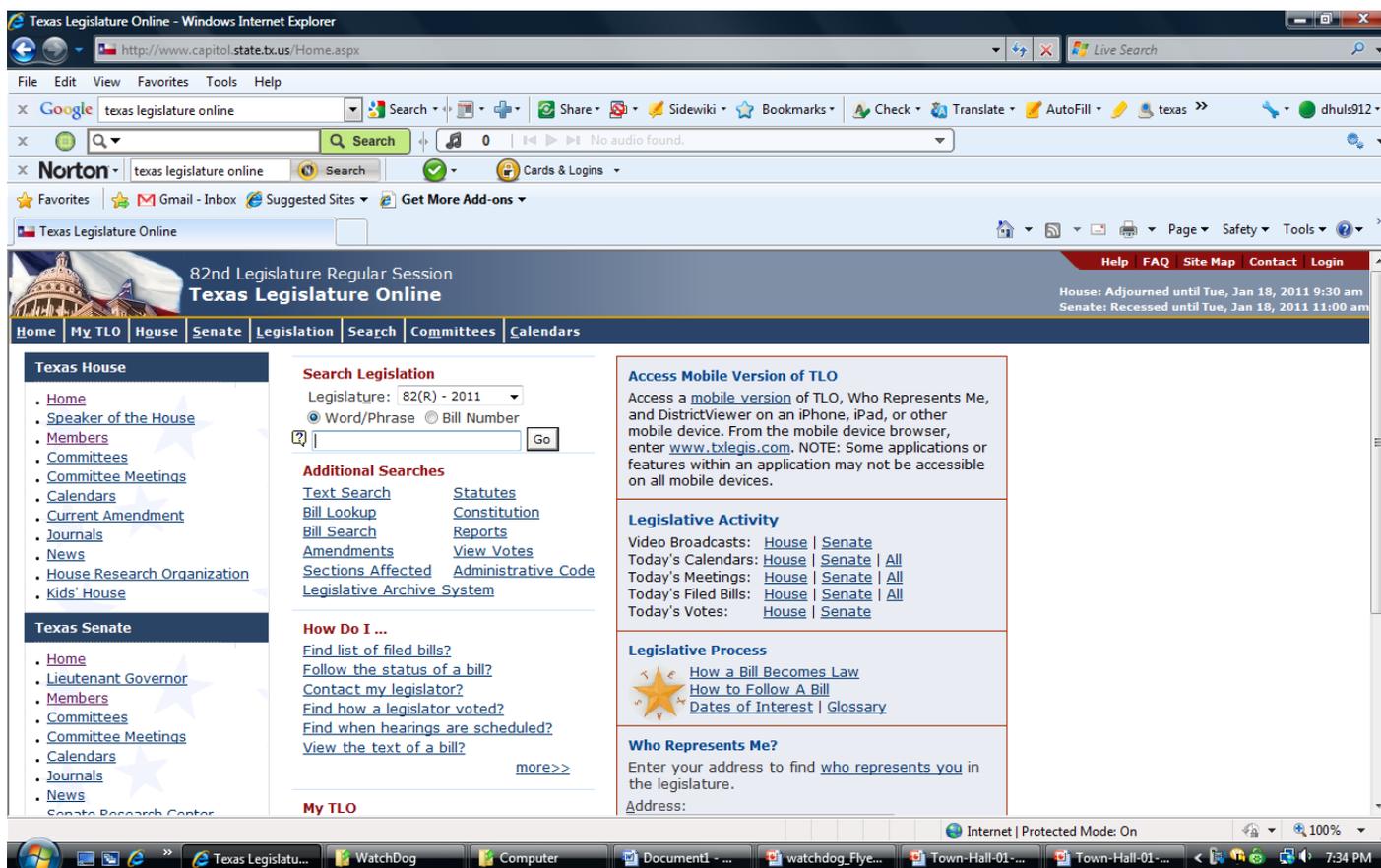
### CLTP Watchdog Program Flow

The easy to use online tools and the simple procedural flow will allow for an efficient process the CLTP can use to make a real difference in the upcoming legislative session.

This training is intended to merely cover the basics of getting started using the online tools to set up an account, login, do basic searches, setup automatic notifications, and generate/submit a weekly status report. This training guide was developed to provide a quick desk reference for watchdogs until they become more proficient. It is expected that as watchdogs use the tools and explore the capabilities and functions of the Texas Legislature Online, they will be far more knowledgeable in tracking the legislature than this training will provide. Good luck and good hunting!

## How Do I Get Started?

The first thing a CLTP Watchdog needs to do is to get to the Texas Legislature Online (TLO) website. In your internet browser, type in the address <http://www.capitol.state.tx.us/> and go to the TLO homepage. The following picture shows what the website will look like:



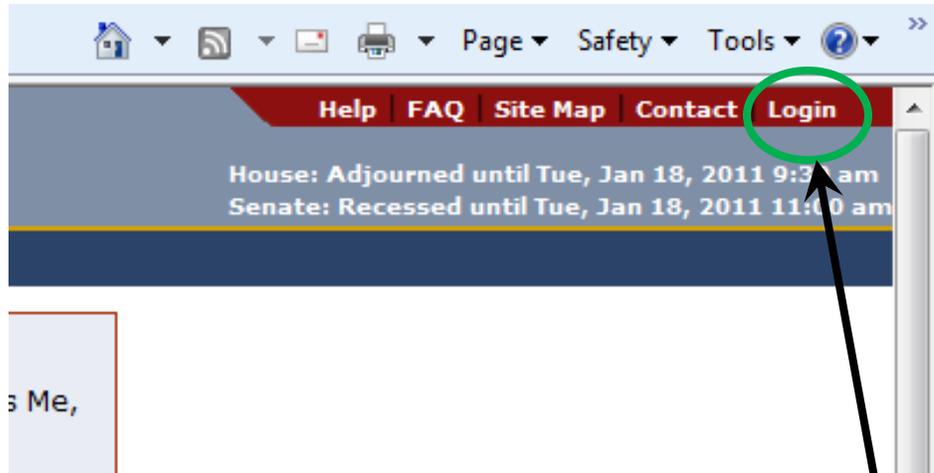
### Texas Legislature Online Homepage

From here is where the watchdog begins his or her work to hold their elected representatives accountable.

## Setting Up a Texas Legislature Online Account

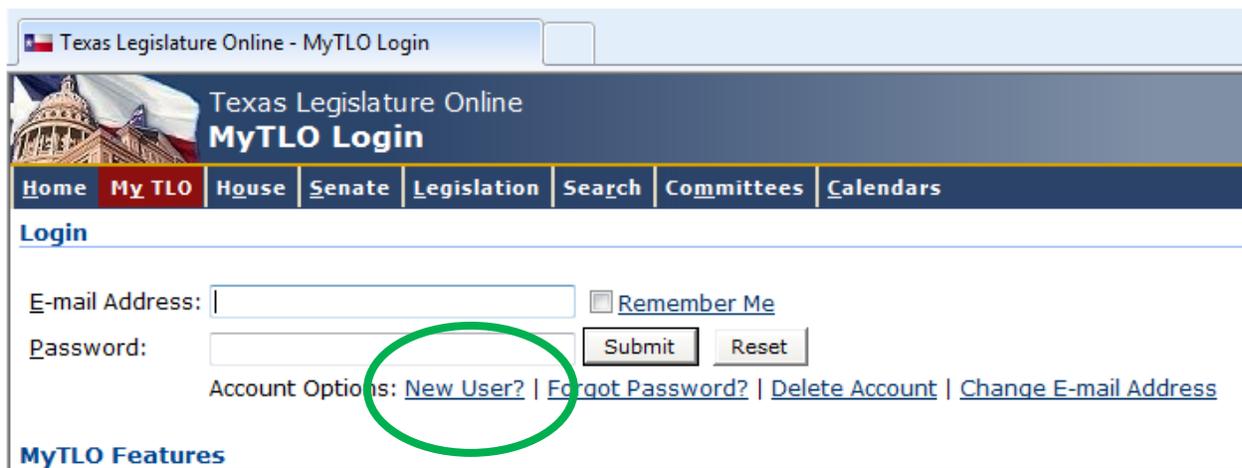
Complete the following steps to create your TLO account.

1. From the TLO Homepage, select [Login] from the upper right-hand corner.



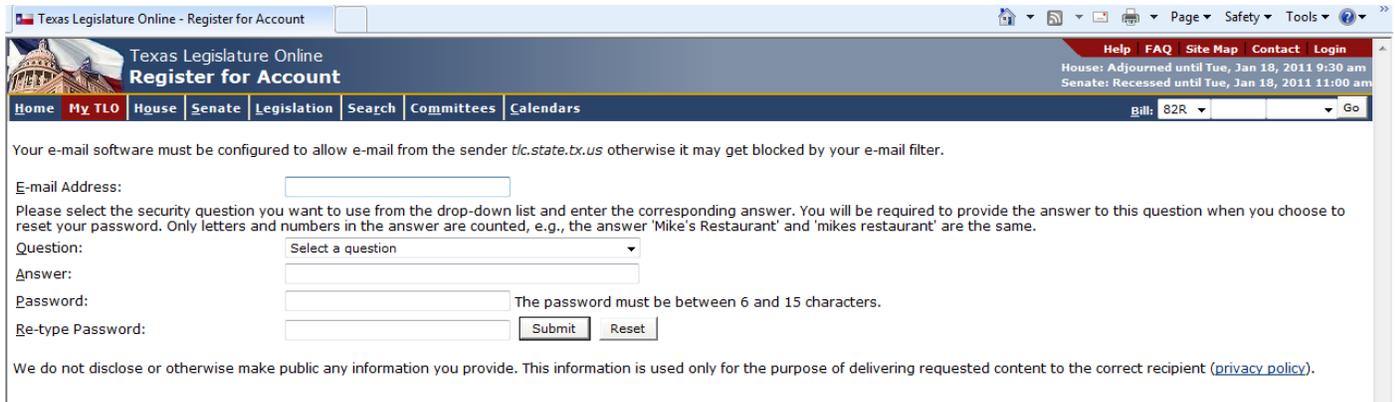
This will bring up the MyTLO Login Page.

2. From the MyTLO Login Page select from Account Options: [New User](#) (Circled in green below).



The REGISTER FOR ACCOUNT page will then come up. You may want to open up a separate gmail, yahoo, or other email account specifically for the watchdog traffic. Automatic notifications could be extremely numerous during the session.

3. Fill out the information requested on the REGISTER FOR ACCOUNT page and hit [Submit].



Texas Legislature Online - Register for Account

Texas Legislature Online  
Register for Account

Home My TLO House Senate Legislation Search Committees Calendars

Help FAQ Site Map Contact Login

House: Adjourned until Tue, Jan 18, 2011 9:30 am  
Senate: Recessed until Tue, Jan 18, 2011 11:00 am

Bill: 82R Go

Your e-mail software must be configured to allow e-mail from the sender *tlc.state.tx.us* otherwise it may get blocked by your e-mail filter.

E-mail Address:

Please select the security question you want to use from the drop-down list and enter the corresponding answer. You will be required to provide the answer to this question when you choose to reset your password. Only letters and numbers in the answer are counted, e.g., the answer 'Mike's Restaurant' and 'mikes restaurant' are the same.

Question:

Answer:

Password:  The password must be between 6 and 15 characters.

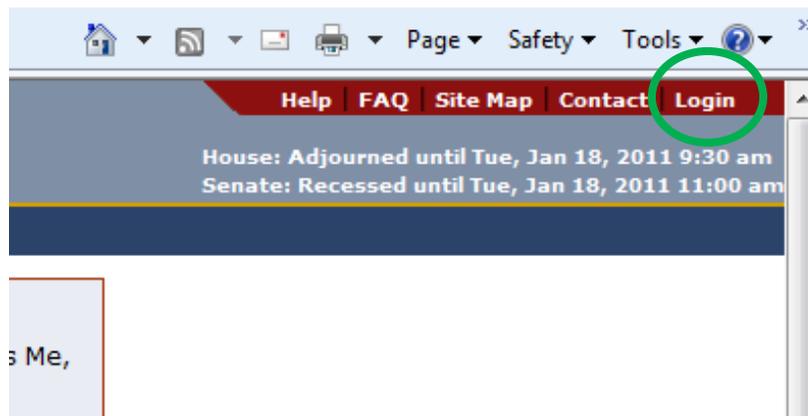
Re-type Password:

We do not disclose or otherwise make public any information you provide. This information is used only for the purpose of delivering requested content to the correct recipient ([privacy policy](#)).

Once you submit your information the following statement will be shown: **“Your account has been created. An e-mail has been sent to the address *Watchdog\_X@gmail.com* containing information on how to activate your account. Your e-mail software must be configured to allow e-mail from the sender *tlc.state.tx.us* otherwise it may get blocked by your e-mail filter.”** You will also receive an email that you must click on the enclosed link to activate your account.

4. Once your account has been set up, go to the TLO webpage and select [Login] from the upper right-hand corner.

5.



6. Again the MyTLO Login page will come up. Enter in your email address and password and select [Submit]. This will take back to the TLO Homepage.

**Congratulations!** You are now logged in and able to utilize the full functionality of the TLO website.

## Searching for a Bill(s)

Before you can track and follow legislation, you need to be able to identify the legislation you want to track. There are many ways to search for specific bills. Some are simple others more complex and sophisticated. This training is to help you start with basic searches. As you

become more familiar with the website, you be able to explore search options that best suit your needs. We will begin with the basic search available on the main TLO Homepage.

1. Enter in a word or phrase to search for a bill that you may wish to track. (Note that this type of search may bring up many bills that may not be relevant to your issues. More sophisticated search options can help you scrub out extraneous bills that may show up in your search.)



2. Select [Go]. A list of bills will come up providing information and links to the legislation. (Note that early in the legislative session, many bills may be filed for a single issue.) You will be able reference bills by number, see the text of the bill, and see other documents like the bill. It is recommended that you print this page or copy the bill numbers as a reference when you create your Bill Watch List. Repeat for different subjects.

In this example we have typed in “voter identification”. As you can see, 10 matches were identified as meeting your search criteria. Each item has a hyperlink to the bill itself, identifies the author of the bill, and may show a caption and/or an excerpt of the legislation depending on which view you select. You may also sort by Bill Number. In some cases, a link to other similar legislation is available.

Texas Legislature Online  
**Text Search**

Home My TLO House Senate Legislation **Search** Committees Calendars

Results View Search Criteria

Bills 1 through 10 out of 10 matches.  
 Show Caption  Show Excerpt  Sort by Bill Number

 [82\(R\) HB 16 - Introduced version - Bill Text](#)  
**Author:** Riddle  
**Caption:** Relating to requiring a voter to present proof of identification.  
**Excerpt:** If the voter's address is omitted from the precinct list under Section 18.005(c), the officer shall as voter under Section 63.001(b) [the voter's voter registration certificate] is current and whether the voter I [Show other documents like this...](#)

 [82\(R\) HB 112 - Introduced version - Bill Text](#)  
**Author:** Harless  
**Caption:** Relating to requiring a voter to present proof of identification.  
**Excerpt:** If the voter's address is omitted from the precinct list under Section 18.005(c), the officer shall as voter under Section 63.001(b) [the voter's voter registration certificate] is current and whether the voter I [Show other documents like this...](#)

 [82\(R\) HB 186 - Introduced version - Bill Text](#)  
**Caption:** Relating to requiring a voter to present proof of identification; creating a penalty.  
**Excerpt:** SECTION 6. Effective January 1, 2012, Section 63.001, Election Code, is amended by amending S (h) On offering to vote, a voter must present one form of identification listed in Section 63.0101 [the voter

- For more sophisticated searches, you may wish to use the [Search] function on the TLO toolbar to do your searches. Place the cursor over the [Search] button on the TLO toolbar and a drop down menu will appear. Select [Text Search].

82nd Legislature Regular Session  
**Texas Legislature Online**

Home My TLO House Senate Legislation **Search** Committees Calendar

**Texas House**

- Home
- Speaker of the House
- Members
- Committees
- Committee Meetings
- Calendars
- Current Amendment
- Journals
- News
- House Research Organization
- Kids' House

**Search**

- Bill Search
- Text Search**
- Legis Amendment Search
- Texas Statutes
- House Journals
- Senate Journals
- Texas Constitution
- Legislative Archive System

**Addit**

**Text**

**Bill Lo**

**Bill Search** **Reports**

**Amendments** **View Votes**

**Sections Affected** **Administrative Cc**

**Legislative Archive System**

4. Next, type in the search criteria and select [Search].

The screenshot shows the Texas Legislature Online Text Search interface. The search criteria 'voter identification' is entered in the 'With the exact phrase' field. The 'Search' button is highlighted with a green circle. The interface includes a navigation menu with 'Home', 'My TLO', 'House', 'Senate', 'Legislation', 'Search', 'Committees', and 'Calendars'. The search results are currently empty.

Again you will get a list of bills associated with your search.

The screenshot shows the Texas Legislature Online Text Search results page. The search results are displayed under the 'Results' tab. The search criteria 'voter identification' is used. The results show three bills: 82(R) HB 16, 82(R) HB 112, and 82(R) HB 186, all related to requiring a voter to present proof of identification. The interface includes a navigation menu with 'Home', 'My TLO', 'House', 'Senate', 'Legislation', 'Search', 'Committees', and 'Calendars'. The search results are displayed under the 'Results' tab.

**Results** [View Search Criteria](#)

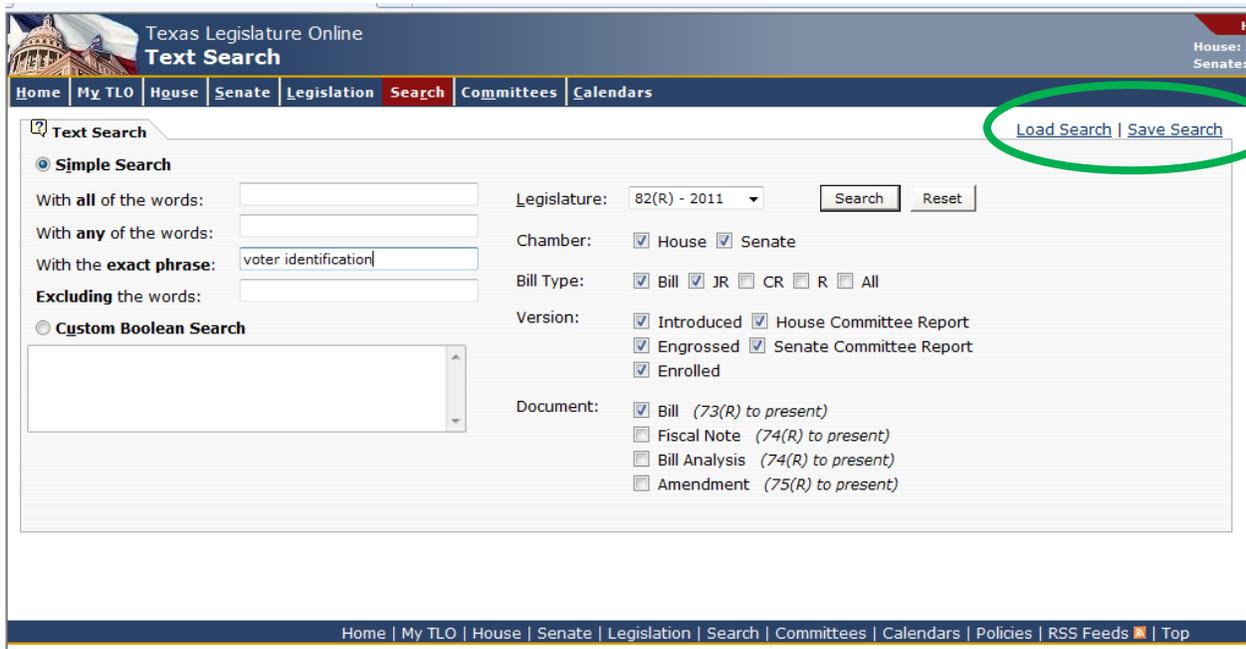
Bills 1 through 10 out of 10 matches.  
 Show Caption  Show Excerpt  Sort by Bill Number

[82\(R\) HB 16 - Introduced version - Bill Text](#)  
**Author:** Riddle  
**Caption:** Relating to requiring a voter to present proof of identification.  
**Excerpt:** If the voter's address is omitted from the precinct list under Section 18.005(c), the officer shall as voter under Section 63.001(b) [the voter's voter registration certificate] is current and whether the voter l [Show other documents like this...](#)

[82\(R\) HB 112 - Introduced version - Bill Text](#)  
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[82\(R\) HB 186 - Introduced version - Bill Text](#)  
**Caption:** Relating to requiring a voter to present proof of identification; creating a penalty.  
**Excerpt:** SECTION 6. Effective January 1, 2012, Section 63.001, Election Code, is amended by amending S (b) On offering to vote, a voter must present one form of identification listed in Section 63.0101 [the voter

- You may also load a saved search or save the current search by selecting one of the following links:



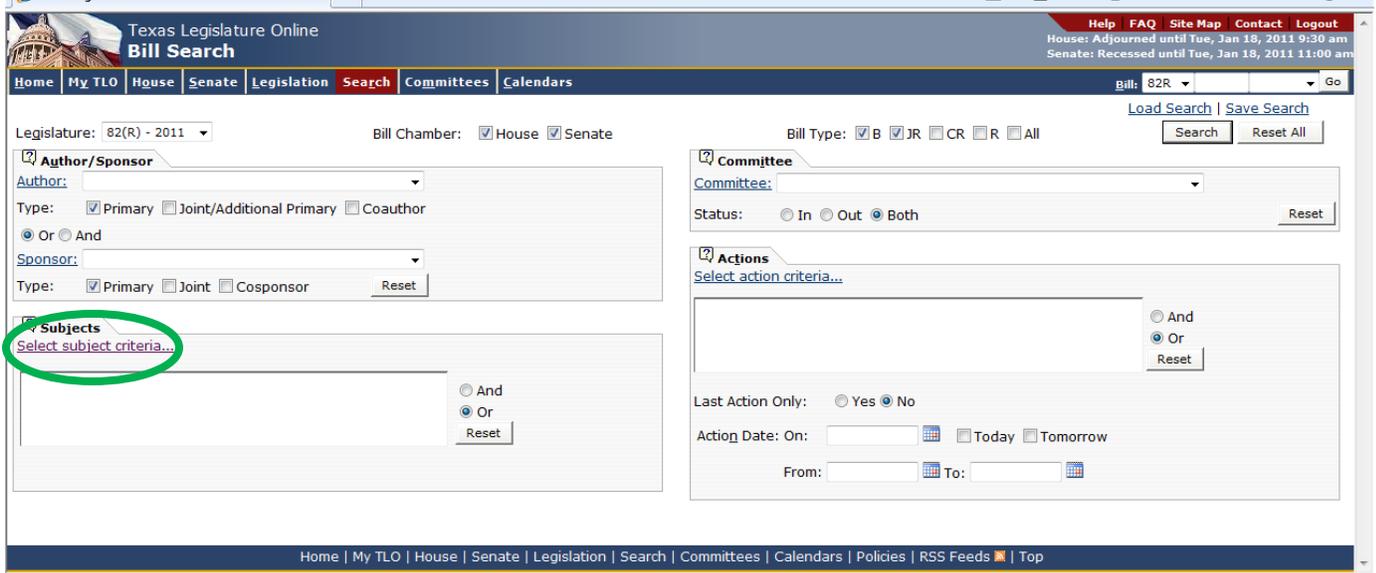
The first two searches you have seen have been based on text searches. These can be tricky because you must find the right keywords to search on or you could miss out on identifying bills that could be important to you. The next search is a Bill Search.

- Place the cursor over the [Search] button on the TLO toolbar and a drop down menu will appear. Select [Bill Search].

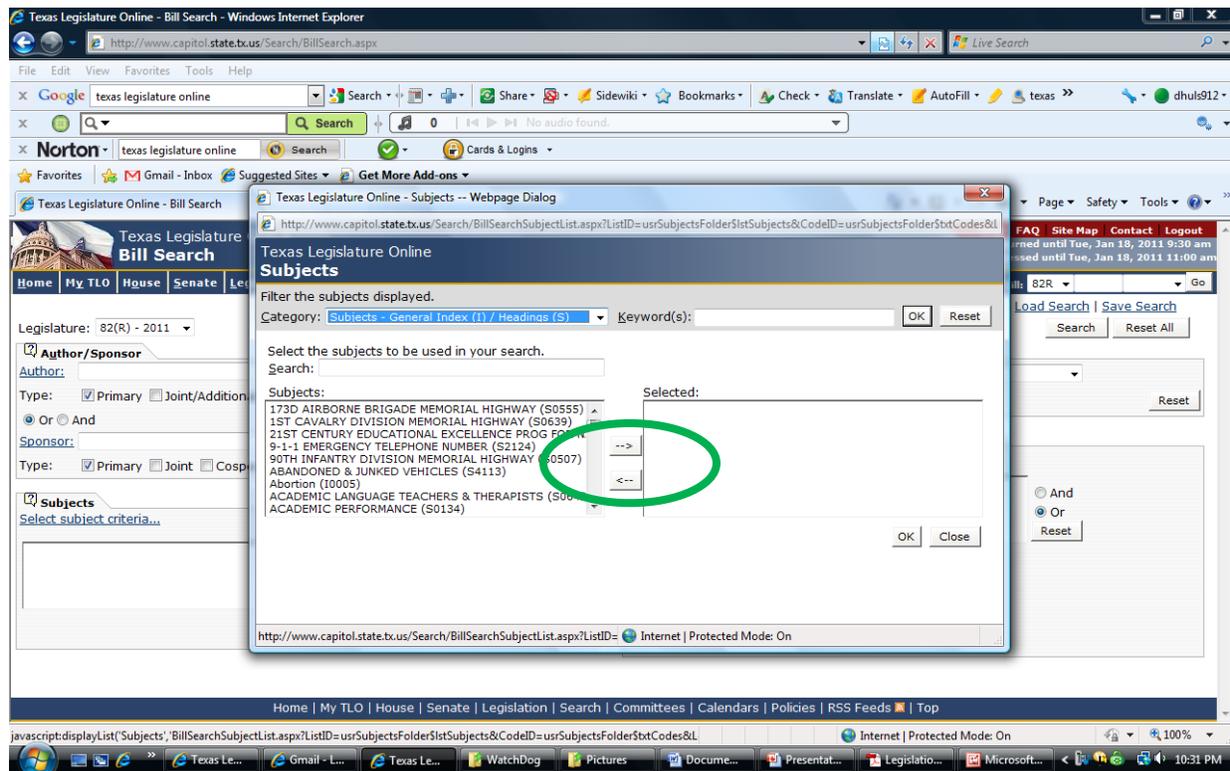


The screen that appears will give you several different search options. The one we will demonstrate is the subject criteria search. In this case we will select several subject areas related to “Elections”.

2. From the Bill Search screen, go to the Subject section and [select subject criteria].



A Subjects screen will appear.



- Place the cursor over the subject topic you wish to search on and click to select. Use the arrow keys in the middle of the screen to select or remove subject topics from the search criteria.
- Select [OK] on the Subjects screen and the Bill Search criteria will automatically populate.

The screenshot shows the Texas Legislature Online Bill Search interface. The 'Subjects' section is highlighted with a green circle, indicating the selection process. The interface includes a navigation bar with 'Search' highlighted, and various search filters for Legislature, Bill Chamber, Author/Sponsor, and Committee.

- Select [Search] and you will get a list of bills associated with your subject area(s).

Now you have enough information to create a watch list.

## Creating a Bill Watch List

If you are looking to track and follow certain bills, please perform the following steps:

- Place the cursor over [MyTLO] on the TLO toolbar and a drop down menu will appear. Select [Bill Lists].



2. Enter in a Bill that you wish to follow, add a description that makes sense to you and select [Create].



3. Repeat process and Add/Delete bills from list. As you can see you may edit your list once you have created it. You may insert new bills into your list and arrange them to whatever order suits you.

TLO - New Bill List

Texas Legislature Online  
**Selected Bill List**

Home My TLO House Senate Legislation Search Committees Calendars

Bill Lists Selected Bill List

To add bills to this list, enter the bill number (e.g., hb27, sjr9) and an optional comment. Click **Add**. You may also add a **Bill** radio button to sort rows by bill number, or click **Entry** to display your entry order. Once you have finished editing the list, click **Save** and **Run**.

Legislature: 82(R) - 2011      Display Order:  Bill  Entry      Save      Run

Bill List:

Description:

Bill	Comment	Row Action		
HB 112	Voter ID	Delete	Insert	↓
HB 186	Voter ID	Delete	Insert	↑ ↓
HB 248	Voter ID	Delete	Insert	↑ ↓
HB 250	Voter ID	Delete	Insert	↑ ↓
HB 401	Voter ID	Delete	Insert	↑
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	Add		

4. Create as many Bill Lists as you like. It is recommended that you create multiple bill lists specific to individual subjects (e.g., Voter ID, Conceal Carry, Anti-Abortion, etc.).

Texas Legislature Online - Bill Lists

Texas Legislature Online  
**Bill Lists**

Home My TLO House Senate Legislation Search Committees Calendars

Create a list of bills you wish to follow. Enter the list name and description and click **Create**.

Legislature:

**Bill Lists**

Bill List Name	Description			
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	Create		
HB 16	Voter ID	Edit	Run	Delete
HB 86	Conceal Carry - College	Edit	Run	Delete

## Legislative Alerts

A function of the TLO website is its ability to create alerts which will automatically send email messages to the CLTP watchdogs when action has been taken concerning a bill or committee.

The following screen shots show the alert set up screens for Bills, Committee Calendars, and Committee Notices, and Committee Minutes.

Texas Legislature Online - Bill Alerts

Texas Legislature Online  
**Bill Alerts**

Home My TLO House Senate Legislation Search Committees Calendars

Help FAQ Site Map Contact Logout  
 House: Adjourned until Tue, Jan 18, 2011 9:30 am  
 Senate: Recessed until Tue, Jan 18, 2011 11:00 am

Bill: 82R

Bills Calendars Committee Notices Committee Minutes Subjects Adjournment

Bill Alert List | My Bill Alerts Today | Bill Alert Report

Receive an e-mail alert when certain actions are added to entered bills. Enter the bill number, choose an action category, and enter an optional comment, and click **Add Bill**.

Bill	Category	Comment
<input type="checkbox"/>	Any category	
<input type="checkbox"/> HB 16	Any category	Voter ID
<input type="checkbox"/> HB 86	Any category	Conceal Carry - College Carry
<input type="checkbox"/> HB 112	Any category	Voter ID
<input type="checkbox"/> SB 321	Any category	Conceal Carry - Carry to Work

Add Bill Save Delete Reset

TLO - Calendars Alerts

Texas Legislature Online  
**Calendars Alerts**

Home My TLO House Senate Legislation Search Committees Calendars

Bills Calendars Committee Notices Committee Minutes Subjects Adjournment

Receive an e-mail alert when calendar or agenda items are made public.

Description	Chamber	Receive E-mail Alert
Daily House Calendar	House	<input type="checkbox"/>
Supplemental House Calendar	House	<input type="checkbox"/>
Local, Consent, and Resolutions Calendar	House	<input type="checkbox"/>
Congratulatory and Memorial Calendar	House	<input type="checkbox"/>
Items Eligible for Consideration	House	<input type="checkbox"/>
Pre-Filed Amendments Calendar	House	<input type="checkbox"/>
Notice of Intent	Senate	<input type="checkbox"/>
Senate Bills Returned from House with Amendments	Senate	<input type="checkbox"/>
Status of Bills in Conference Committee	Senate	<input type="checkbox"/>
Local and Uncontested Bills	Senate	<input type="checkbox"/>
Nominations Pending	Senate	<input type="checkbox"/>
Regular Order of Business	Senate	<input type="checkbox"/>
Miscellaneous Announcements	Senate	<input type="checkbox"/>
Senate Floor Action	Senate	<input type="checkbox"/>
Bills Referred Today	Senate	<input type="checkbox"/>

Save

Done

TLO - Calen... Gmail - Leg... WatchDog Pictures Document1... Presentation1

TLO - Committee Notice Alerts

Texas Legislature Online  
**Committee Notice Alerts**

Home My TLO House Senate Legislation Search Committees Calendars

Bills Calendars Committee Notices Committee Minutes Subjects Adjournment

Receive an e-mail alert when committee notices are made public.

Description	Chamber	Receive E-mail Alert
Election Contest, Select	House	<input type="checkbox"/>

Save

Note that at the time of this training package was developed; only one House Committee and no Senate Committees had been organized and placed on the website.

TLO - Committee Minutes Alerts

Texas Legislature Online  
**Committee Minutes Alerts**

Home My TLO House Senate Legislation Search Committees Calendars

Bills Calendars Committee Notices Committee Minutes Subjects Adjournment

Receive an e-mail alert when committee minutes are made public.

Description	Chamber	Receive E-mail Alert
Election Contest, Select	House	<input type="checkbox"/>

Save

To receive these alerts just check the boxes next to the alerts. Again, it is advised that you set up specific email account to handle the volume of email traffic.

The CLTP Watchdog training associated with the Texas Legislative Online website is not to be considered all inclusive. It is meant to be a brief tutorial into the functionality of the TLO web application whereby the watchdog can get familiar with the tool and expand their abilities and knowledge to be an effective watchdog.

## Miscellaneous Information

The TLO Homepage offers a wealth of information to the citizen watchdog. The left side of the webpage offers links to members, committees, and committee assignments for both House and Senate. Watchdogs can also view video broadcasts of House and Senate Committee Meetings through links on the right-hand side of the webpage. The website also offers watchdogs on-the-go a mobile version of the TLO.

## Status Reports

Once the watchdog has gathered information on the legislation, committees, and legislative votes, the watchdog needs to compile a weekly report and send to the CLTP Watchdog Coordinator. These legislative status reports will be the basis for tea party action.

Watchdogs are encouraged to turn in at least a weekly status report every week during the 140 day Texas legislative session. Watchdogs may turn in reports more often but the Watchdog Coordinator will develop the Watchdog newsletter from submitted reports on a weekly basis ending by 12 noon Saturdays. This will be about a 20 week exercise. A dedicated email has been setup ([watchdog@clearlaketeaparty.com](mailto:watchdog@clearlaketeaparty.com)) for watchdogs to email their reports. The CLTP legislative analysts will then collate the information received and provide the CLTP Executive Board with a comprehensive analysis and recommendations on what actions are required to help pass or block legislation. In order to facilitate analyzes of watchdog data, watchdogs are requested to provide one Status Report per bill or committee.

It is recommended that the CLTP Watchdogs begin with tracking the various committees. It is expected that approximately 8000 bills will be filed in the 2011 legislative session. By focusing on key committees, watchdogs can find out what bills are coming through which committees. By focusing on Senate and House Committees, the watchdogs can identify the key legislators who are responsible for moving or blocking legislation moving through their respective committees.

It is also important to consider that when following legislation or committees that the House now has a super majority of 101 Republican members. A large amount of conservative legislation should be passed by the Texas House. However, the Texas Senate remains a 19 to 12 Republican majority (same as before the mid-terms). When making a decision on what to track and who to track, consideration should be given to following the Senate side of the Texas Legislature. It is there that the battle over conservative legislation will occur.

The format for the status reports is as follows (next page):



## CLEAR LAKE TEA PARTY WATCHDOG STATUS REPORT



Watchdog Name:		Date:
<b>Bill Status Report</b>		
Bill No:	Bill Description:	
Author:	Assigned Committee:	
Priority: <input type="checkbox"/> Emergency <input type="checkbox"/> Urgent <input type="checkbox"/> Routine	Action Due Date:	
Status Summary: <i>(Be brief and concise in describing the status of Bill)</i>		
Recommendation: <i>(Be brief and concise in describing what you think is needed to support or block the bill)</i>		
<b>Committee Status Report</b>		
Committee Name:	Committee Chair:	
Assigned Bill of Interest:	<input type="checkbox"/> House or <input type="checkbox"/> Senate Committee	
Priority: <input type="checkbox"/> Emergency <input type="checkbox"/> Urgent <input type="checkbox"/> Routine	Action Due Date:	
Status Summary: <i>(Be brief and concise in describing the Committee issue/list key legislators)</i>		
Recommendation: <i>(Be brief and concise in describing what you think is needed to influence the legislation)</i>		
<b>Legislator Status Report</b>		
Legislator Name:	<input type="checkbox"/> Representative or <input type="checkbox"/> Senator	
Issue: <i>(Be brief and concise in describing the issue concerning this legislator)</i>		
Recommendation: <i>(Be brief and concise in describing what you think is needed to support or block the bill)</i>		

Thank you for accepting personal responsibility in holding our elected officials accountable.