

Houston Geological Society



August 16, 2018

Texas Sunset Advisory Commission
sunset@sunset.texas.gov

Re: Texas Board of Professional Geoscientists Sunset Review

Dear Chairman Birdwell and Members of the Sunset Advisory Commission:

I am writing this letter today on behalf of the Houston Geological Society, the world's largest local professional geological society with 3,129 members. We want you to know that as a professional organization, we strongly oppose the abolishment of the Texas Board of Professional Geoscientists (TBPG) which would result in the expiration of licensing for Texas geoscientists.

Our society is comprised of geoscientists practicing in various disciplines of geoscience which includes hydrogeology, engineering geology, and environmental geology – areas of application that directly effect the public health, safety, and welfare. We recognize the need for those who practice in these areas to be qualified professionals. Licensing assures the public, private industry, and governmental entities that the licensed individual is capable (has the required education), is competent (has the minimum experience), and is ethical.

Environmental geologists are called to assess soil and groundwater contamination and implement corrective action; thus, they are integral to the protection of groundwater and surface water. Engineering geologists identify geologic hazards that can cause damage to construction and they describe geologic conditions that affect engineering design. Hydrogeologists develop models of groundwater flow systems and groundwater availability. Proper education and experience is required to competently perform the work of these disciplines, and only licensure can ensure that a minimum standard of education and experience has been met.

The work of licensed geoscientists is performed for both the public and private sectors. The private sector includes clients who range from individuals such as property owners to corporations, and the public sector consists of governmental entities. The work can be contracted either directly with the client or subcontracted through an intermediate party such as an engineering or environmental firm. Either way, the public is ultimately affected by the quality of the work done.

One of the findings mentioned in your report addressed the number of grandfathered licensees. Grandfathering is an accepted norm for newly enacted licensing since those being grandfathered have satisfied State requirements for education and experience. Grandfathered licensees typically have far more experience than recent graduates who have taken and passed the ASBOG exam. Interestingly, a number of licensed HGS members have told me that they were grandfathered in Texas, but subsequently passed the ASBOG exam in order to obtain a license in other states.

If licensing goes away, the quality of the services to the public that licensed professionals currently provide will be diminished as unqualified people attempt to provide the same services. Consequently, the Houston Geological Society asks the Sunset Advisory Commission to recommend continuance of the Texas Geoscience Practice Act and the TBPG.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Cheryl Desforger".

Cheryl Desforger, PG, CPG
President
Houston Geological Society