

# Gov. Rick Perry calls for special legislative session

09:22 PM CDT on Thursday, June 25, 2009

By **CHRISTY HOPPE** and **ROBERT T. GARRETT** / The Dallas Morning News

[choppe@dallasnews.com](mailto:choppe@dallasnews.com)

[rtgarrett@dallasnews.com](mailto:rtgarrett@dallasnews.com)

AUSTIN – Gov. Rick Perry called a special session for next week, but said he hopes lawmakers can complete the patchwork necessary in only a few days that would keep state agencies running until the Legislature meets again in 2011.

In special sessions, which can only last up to 30 days, lawmakers are restricted to consider an agenda set by the governor. In this case, Perry has tried to narrowly define the topics for the session to begin July 1 so that legislators will issue road bonds and authorize five state agencies to continue operation.

“I think they’ll be in and out in three to four days and we’ll be gone – and everybody can enjoy their summer,” Perry told a lunch meeting of Austin commercial real estate developers.

He said that he had no intention to tie the Legislature in knots by adding the highly partisan and toxic issue of mandatory voter ID. It was that issue that blew up the regular session that ended June 1 with important work left undone.

On his to-do list, Perry has asked lawmaker to reauthorize five agencies to continue operating as they are until they can be placed under sunset review during a regular legislative session.

The agencies include the Texas Department of Transportation and the Department of Insurance, which would have to start dismantling this year unless the Legislature gives them a stamp of re-approval. Both agencies have vocal detractors who want major changes in tollways and how highways are funded, as well as greater regulation of insurance companies that have handed Texas homeowners the highest premiums in the nation.

Perry has instead said lawmakers shouldn’t get into the nuts and bolts of the agencies. He only wants legislation to continue the agencies as-is until 2011 or beyond, when they can be properly vetted.

The governor, looking at a stiff primary fight from U.S. Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison, wants to avoid a protracted, brutal fight over toll roads, which he has championed, and consumer insurance rights.

The other agencies, under sunset, are the Texas Racing Commission, Office of Public Insurance Counsel and Texas State Affordable Housing Corporation.

Under Texas law, state agencies must be “sunset” reviewed by the Legislature every 12 years, when recommendations are made to streamline, improve and refocus their operations. If nothing happens, the agency automatically is dissolved.

Sunset bills for those five agencies were caught in the partisan fight over voter ID and were not reauthorized in the final hours of the regular session.

Perry is also asking lawmakers to authorize \$2 billion in voter-approved highway bonds to be issued next year.

And he wants the Legislature to continue comprehensive development agreements – usually involving private-public partnerships in building tollways. There are 12 such agreements currently on the books, and they need to be reauthorized to continue, the governor said.

Both Lt. Gov. David Dewhurst and House Speaker Joe Straus issued statements that they are ready to return to Austin and get to work.