

Senator Whitmire has been in the Legislature almost as long as the Astrodome has existed, so he must know how unusual his proposed legislation is. However, he and his supporters might not know how misleading the title of the legislation is. He has not talked with me about the county's plans for the Dome, so I can only react to his public statements, some of which are demonstrably incorrect.

This bill is an example of state government making it more difficult for local government to do its job. After the voters rejected a \$217 million bond proposal in 2013, I and Commissioners Court set about the task of finding a solution to the vexing issue of the Astrodome that minimized the use of property taxes and allowed the Dome to be a revenue source for the operation and maintenance of the entire NRG complex, including the NRG Stadium where the Texans and Rodeo hold events. The current plan for the Dome, for which the architectural engineering contract was awarded today, is far different from the bond proposal.

The two potential biggest losers if this bill passes are the tenants of NRG Park and the property taxpayers of Harris County. The county was ready to undertake a comprehensive analysis of future operation and maintenance needs at NRG Park, but that cannot go forward until we have certainty about the role of the Astrodome.

Senator Whitmire has stated his desire that Harris County spend money on NRG Stadium and demolish the Astrodome. Demolishing the structurally sound iconic structure that is finally paid for would cost at least \$30 million. That shortsighted approach will guarantee that the property taxpayers will then bear more of the costs of maintaining and upgrading of NRG Stadium.

I would much rather use property taxes to fund flood control efforts, mental health initiatives, transportation improvements and other programs that improve daily life. I urge Senator Whitmire and his colleagues to focus on the real needs of Texas and allow county government to do its job.

It is particularly ironic that Senator Bettencourt supports the legislation that will put an even greater burden on property taxpayers.

I urge him to make real tax reforms by allowing Harris County to receive a share of the revenue from future major events such as the Super Bowl.