



# ERIC JOHNSON

STATE REPRESENTATIVE ★ DISTRICT 100



## 82<sup>ND</sup> LEGISLATIVE SESSION

### HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES



**ERIC JOHNSON**  
DISTRICT 100

Dear Neighbor,

The 82<sup>nd</sup> meeting of the Texas Legislature came to an end on June 29, 2011, after completing both a regular session and a special session called by the governor. Though only a first time member of the legislature, I had the privilege of serving on both the Appropriations and Higher Education Committees in the House. The former committee was responsible for producing our state's two year budget and the later deals with the governance of our higher education system.

Much of our time this session was dominated by debates on how to balance the budget and what programs would have to be cut. Out of concern for the working class families of District 100 I voted against cuts to education, healthcare, and other state services. Though some cuts were unavoidable many cuts were made that were simply not in the long term best interests of our state. The fight over these cuts did not end with the legislative session; we must all continue to talk about our goals and hopes for this state and work to make them a priority for our state government.

With the session concluded, I have spent time visiting schools, hosting a town hall on college financial aid, and attending various community meetings. All of us in District 100 are stakeholders in the future of Texas and together we must work to make our voices heard.

The district office is located just south of downtown Dallas; do stop by to visit it sometime in the next few months. Please enjoy this newsletter and share it with your family, neighbors, and friends. It remains a tremendous honor to represent you in the Texas House of Representatives.

Estimado Vecino,

La 82<sup>a</sup> sesión de la Legislatura de Texas llegó a su fin el 29 de junio 2011, después de completar un período ordinario y una sesión especial convocada por el gobernador. Aunque sólo un miembro por primera vez de la legislatura, tuve el privilegio de servir en los Comités de Apropiación y Educación Superior en la Cámara. El comité primero fue responsable de la producción de nuestro presupuesto estatal y la segunda con el gobierno de nuestro sistema de educación superior.

La mayoría de nuestro tiempo en esta sesión fue dominada por los debates sobre la manera de equilibrar el presupuesto y cuáles son los programas que tienen que ser cortados. Por la preocupación de las familias de clase trabajadora de Distrito 100 vote en contra de los recortes a la educación, la salud, y otros servicios estatales. A pesar de algunos cortes son inevitables los recortes que se hicieron simplemente no estaban en el intereses largo plazo de nuestro estado. La lucha por estos recortes no terminó con la sesión legislativa, todos debemos seguir hablando de nuestras metas y esperanzas para este estado y trabajar para que sean una prioridad para nuestro gobierno estatal.

Con la conclusion de la sesión, he pasado tiempo visitando escuelas, anfitrión de una reunión sobre la ayuda financiera para la universidad, y asistiendo a diversas reuniones de la comunidad. Todos nosotros en el Distrito 100 están interesados en el futuro de Texas y juntos debemos de trabajar para que nuestras voces sean escuchadas. La oficina del distrito se encuentra al sur del centro de Dallas, se visitalo en algún momento en los próximos meses. Por favor, disfruten de este boletín y compartirlo con su familia, vecinos y amigos. Sigue siendo un gran honor representarles en la Cámara de Representantes de Texas.

PO Box 2910  
AUSTIN, TEXAS 78768-2910

COMMITTEES:  
APPROPRIATIONS • HIGHER EDUCATION

PHONE: (512) 463-0586  
FAX: (512) 463-8147



*Rep. Johnson introduces his first bill on the House floor.*

## Legislation Passed to Protect Our Rights

Representative Johnson went to Austin to address the challenges facing the residents of District 100. He began his work early, filing several bills in November of 2010, months before the House convened in January. At the end of the legislative session two of those bills, House Bill 184 and House Bill 1106, reached the Governor's desk and were signed into law.

House Bill 184 was passed unanimously by both the Texas House and Senate. It provides a process so that when a vacancy occurs in the Legislature and a special election to fill the vacancy is uncontested, the secretary of state can declare that sole contestant the winner. Without this legislation, the seat could, unnecessarily, remain vacant for months, depriving Texans of the representation they deserve. House Bill 184 will ensure that citizens go without representation for as short a period as possible.

House Bill 1106 will ensure that defendants sentenced to deferred adjudication are aware of their rights under Texas law. Many mistakenly believe that completing deferred adjudication will result in a person having a clean criminal record. While a *conviction* will not appear on such a person's criminal record, the deferred adjudication still remains. Having this deferred adjudication visible often makes it difficult for people to find employment and housing as they try to get their lives back on the right track. House Bill 1106 requires a court to inform defendants receiving deferred adjudication of their right, if eligible, to seek an order of nondisclosure, both at the time they are placed on deferred adjudication as well as upon their successful completion of deferred adjudication.

## Short Sighted Budget Cuts

Representative Johnson served on the powerful House Committee on Appropriations, which was charged with the difficult task of producing a balanced state budget for the 2012-2013 biennium. They faced the largest budget shortfall in Texas' history. As a result of this budget crisis, drastic cuts were made to our public schools, colleges and universities, and health and human services which have already begun to hit the working class families of Texas and District 100. These cuts were not just harmful, but

also avoidable. The budget left \$6.2 billion remaining in the Rainy Day Fund, the state's savings account designed for times of economic emergency just like the ones we face today. Given this situation Representative Johnson voted against the budget both in committee and on the House floor.

The cuts made will leave thousands of low-income college students without access to financial aid and underfund our public schools by a staggering \$4 billion dollars. The next session of the Legislature will continue to face tough choices and we look forward to returning to Austin next session with a strong understanding of the budget writing process and with the goal of working to reverse the devastating cuts that have been made.

## Providing Leadership on Higher Education

One of Representative Johnson's top priorities is making quality higher education accessible and affordable for Texas' working families. Producing more college graduates is critical to increasing economic development and improving the quality of life in District 100 and across Texas.

In the 82nd Texas Legislature, our state's public colleges and universities faced severe scrutiny and significant cuts. Some of the most painful cuts were those proposed to state financial aid for low income students. The TEXAS Grants program, for example, which is the largest source of aid for students from underprivileged backgrounds, will only be able serve 33,100 of the 53,000 graduating high school seniors who are eligible. These cuts will make it even harder for some families to afford college.

In recognition of his hard work, Speaker Joe Straus appointed Representative Johnson to the House and Senate Joint Oversight Committee on Higher Education Governance, Excellence and Transparency, the only freshman to be named to this committee. This committee, composed of six Representatives and six Senators, is responsible for overseeing the governing boards of the state's institutions of higher learning and ensuring that their policy decisions are made transparently and follow best practices.



*Rep. Johnson working at his desk on the House floor.*



*Over 100 parents, students and school administrators learn about changes coming to financial aid programs.*

### Higher Education the Focus of District 100 Town Hall

Representative Johnson hosted a town hall meeting focused on the impact of the 82nd Legislative Session on higher education and financial aid. The town hall was held at the Yvonne A. Ewell Townview Magnet Center in September 2011. Having served on the House Committee on Higher Education, Representative Johnson gave a direct account of the debates around higher education that happened during the legislative session. This included a detailed overview of the cuts to specific financial aid programs that have already begun to impact students attending college this fall.

Texas' Commissioner of Higher Education, Dr. Raymund Paredes, spoke directly to parents, teachers, students, and concerned citizens. He reviewed the state's efforts to more fairly distribute its scarce financial aid resources and discussed efforts to improve college graduation rates. The town hall concluded with questions from the audience about education benefits for veterans, dual credit courses, and online resources for financial aid information. Information on saving for college and on how to apply for financial aid is available in our district office; please contact us for more information.

### Recognizing District 100 Academic Achievement

In February, the Texas Legislative Black Caucus (TLBC) met for its biennial African American Legislative Summit to address issues facing the state's black community. Throughout the two day event, the TLBC held panel discussions that focused on key concerns being considered during this year's legislative session.

In addition to the panel discussions, the Summit allowed us the opportunity to acknowledge the hard work of three District 100 high school seniors. On the evening of February 28th, TLBC members from across the state gathered at the TLBC Scholarship Banquet to recognize the achievement of over 60 Texas students. This year, the

Texas Legislative Black Caucus awarded over \$125,000 in scholarship funds to well-deserving future graduates. In order to be eligible for the scholarship, the recipients are required to enroll as full time students at an accredited university or community college for the upcoming fall semester. Additionally, each winner wrote an essay about how a college education will allow them to better their communities.

From District 100, scholarships were awarded to Alexandre Pendergrass of the Yvonne A. Ewell Townview Center, Tre Lawton of W.W. Samuell High School, and Michelle Valenzuela of Bishop Lynch High School. Each student received a \$1,500 scholarship toward their college tuition.

In addition to awarding scholarships, the Summit also recognized two outstanding District 100 citizens: Mrs. Pat Stephens and Mrs. Willie Mae Coleman. Representative Johnson presented both Mrs. Stephens and Mrs. Coleman, the TLBC Community Award for their years of faithful service to the people of District 100 and thanked them both for their hard work to improve our community.

### Supporting Our Public Schools

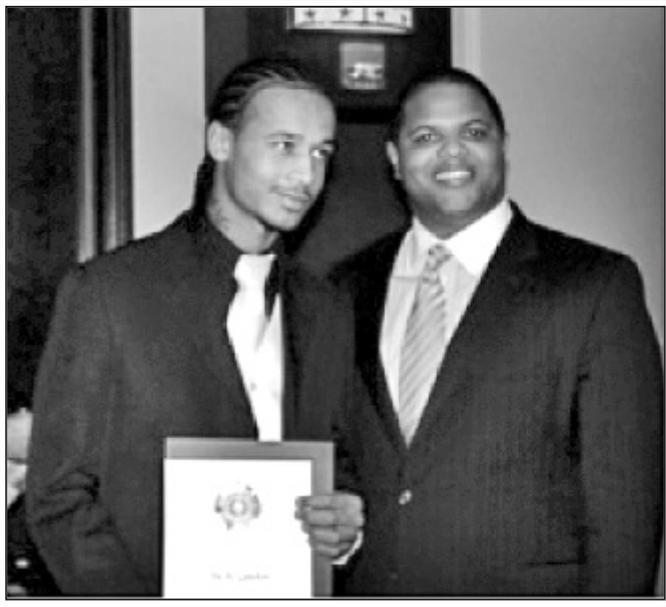
Recently, Representative Johnson visited his alma mater, C.F. Carr Elementary in support of the nationwide, *Read for the Record*, literacy campaign. This nationwide event was organized by an organization started at Yale University, named Jumpstart, whose principal aim is closing the achievement gap for low-income children.

Students across the nation went to school in their pajamas as part of this special event to join in a record-breaking reading of *Llama Llama Red Pajama* by Anna Dewdney. That same day all across the nation people committed to encouraging our nation's children to read spent the morning reading to pajama clad children.

In addition to this annual literacy-promoting event, the schools of District 100 are seeking mentors, tutors, and volunteers for after school programs. If you are interested in participating or helping these schools please contact our district office.



*Children at C.F. Carr Elementary participate in Read for the Record event.*



*HD 100 - TLBC Scholarship Winner - Tre Lawton.*

### **District 100 Boundaries to Change**

Every ten years the United States conducts a nationwide census that documents the changes in population over the past decade. Following the release of the most recent census data, the Texas Legislature underwent the process of redistricting, to ensure that the current House and Senate properly reflect changes in the populations. The population of Texas has now reached 25 million people. The Legislature approved a new map and as a result Dallas lost two seats, going from sixteen to fourteen. While Texas grew as a whole, over 20.6% in the past decade, Dallas County only grew about 6%, meaning that the Dallas area lacked the necessary growth to gain additional representation in the Texas House of Representatives.

District 100's boundaries will shift in the House's adopted plan, though this plan has not yet been approved by the federal courts. At the time that this newsletter is going to print we are not yet certain as to the final boundaries of the new District 100. While he is sad to lose a number of his former constituents, Representative Johnson is pleased to welcome the new constituents to District 100.

### **Major Plant Closes**

The Pilgrim's Pride poultry processing plant located in District 100 closed its doors on September 30, 2011. Representative Johnson directed his staff to coordinate with the Texas Workforce Commission in order to aid the more than 1,000 employees who lost their jobs. With only 60 days notice before the closure of the plant most employees have not yet found new employment.

In October, Representative Johnson filed a petition with the U.S. Department of Labor seeking additional funds for worker training on behalf of these workers. The petition was filed after it was discovered that the office of U.S. Trade Representative Ron Kirk had filed a complaint with the World Trade Organization

about China's unfair trade practices in the poultry processing sector.

The Department of Labor operates the Trade Adjustment Assistance Program which can provide funds for vocational and remedial job training, extended unemployment benefits, and even relocation allowances for workers who have to move to find work. The petition seeks to provide these additional resources to aid the more than 1,000 workers who were laid off when the Pilgrim's Pride's Dallas plant closed on September 30.

### **Voter ID Law - Know Your Rights**

On September 1, 2011, a new law regarding voting rights became law. Senate Bill 14 requires all voters, beginning January 1, 2012, to present in addition to their voter's registration card, a valid, acceptable form of photo identification (ID) in order to cast your ballot. Your choices for acceptable proof of identification are limited to:

- ✓ Texas driver's license,
- ✓ Texas Election ID Certificate or
- ✓ Texas Personal ID issued by the Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS).

In lieu of one of the above, you may present a:

- ✓ U.S. military ID card with photo,
- ✓ U.S. citizenship certificate with photo,
- ✓ U.S. Passport, or
- ✓ Texas DPS concealed handgun license.

To be valid, no form of ID can be more than 60 days expired at the time of the election. If you do not have one of these forms of acceptable ID you must act now in order to be able to vote in next year's elections. Please contact our office if you have ANY questions about whether you have the proper ID to allow you to exercise your right to vote.



*Rep. Johnson with TLBC Community Award Recipient Mrs. Pat Stephens.*



## HELPFUL NUMBERS FOR CONNECTING WITH STATE & LOCAL GOVERNMENT



City of Dallas .....	311	Texas Dept. of Insurance .....	(800) 252-3439
City of Mesquite .....	(972) 288-7711	Texas Dept. of Transportation.....	(214) 320-6110
Dallas County .....	(214) 653-7011	Public Utility Commission .....	(888) 782-8477
Dallas County Elections Dept. ....	(214) 637-7937	Driver License Renewal.....	(866) 357-3639
Dallas ISD .....	(972) 925-3700	Texas Tomorrow Fund .....	(800) 445-4723
Mesquite ISD .....	(972) 288-6411	Roadside Assistance .....	(800) 525-5555
Dallas County Schools .....	(214) 944-4545	Crime Stoppers .....	(214) 373-TIPS (8477)
Governor - Information Line .....	(800) 843-5789	Legal Services for Seniors .....	(800) 622-2520
Comment Line .....	(800) 252-9600	Report Child Abuse .....	(800) 252-5400
Voting and Election Information .....	(800) 252-8683	Aging and Disability Services .....	(800) 252-9240
Comptroller .....	(800) 252-5555	Nursing Home Complaints .....	(800) 458-9858
Attorney General .....	(800) 252-8011	Adult Protective Services .....	(800) 252-5400
Consumer Protection Hotline .....	(214) 969-5310	Child Support .....	(800) 252-8014
State Employees Retirement System ....	(877) 275-4377	Crime Victims .....	(800) 983-9933
Teacher Retirement System .....	(800) 223-8778	Texas Depr. of Criminal Justice	
Texas Education Agency.....	(512) 463-9734	(Offender Status Line) .....	(800) 535-0283
Texas Dept. of State Health Services ..	(888) 963-7111	Medicaid Information .....	(800) 252-8263
Texas Workforce Commission .....	(800) 832-2829	CHIP .....	(800) 647-6558

### Representative Johnson's Work Recognized

2011 Emerging Leaders Program - State Legislative Leaders Foundation

Each year, the State Legislative Leaders Foundation invites Senate Presidents and House Speakers to nominate members of their respective state legislatures to participate in an intensive leadership workshop. Representative Johnson was the only Texan to participate.

2011 Achievement Award - Public Policy and International Affairs Fellowship Program

The award recognizes a PPIA alumnus who has made significant professional achievements and upholds the ideals of PPIA including a commitment to public service.

2011 Five Outstanding Young Texans - Texas Junior Chamber of Commerce

In recognition of his work in the 82nd Legislature.

2011 Courage in Public Service Award - Dallas Regional Chamber

The Chamber chose Representative Johnson for this award because of his enthusiasm for and dedication to higher education and public service. This is the first time the Dallas Regional Chamber has bestowed this recognition on a citizen of Dallas.



HD 100 - TLBC Scholarship Winner - Michelle Valenzuela.



HD 100 - TLBC Scholarship Winner - Alexandre Pendergrass.



STATE REPRESENTATIVE  
**ERIC JOHNSON**  
 P.O. Box 2910  
 Austin, Texas 78768-2910

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# ERIC JOHNSON

STATE REPRESENTATIVE ★ DISTRICT 100

**CAPITOL OFFICE:**  
 P.O. Box 2910  
 Austin, Texas 78768-2910  
 (512) 463-0586  
 (512) 463-8147 Fax  
 Capitol Extension: E1.306



**DISTRICT OFFICE:**  
 1409 S. Lamar Street, Suite 9  
 Dallas, Texas 75215  
 (214) 565-5663  
 (214) 565-5668 Fax

House Website: [www.house.state.tx.us](http://www.house.state.tx.us)

[District100.Johnson@House.State.TX.US](mailto:District100.Johnson@House.State.TX.US)

COMMITTEES: Appropriations • Higher Education



*Rep. Johnson welcomes students from West Dallas to the Capitol.*



*Rep. Johnson and Speaker Straus welcome Pastor of the Day from District 100. Pastor Michael Hubbard and his wife LaTonya, serve at Hopewell Missionary Baptist Church.*