

## Texas Representative Roberto R. Alonzo's

## Capitol Report



**Photo:** (left) Rep. Alonzo stands with graduates from the **Alonzo Scholars Program** at the University of North Texas at Dallas.

*Alonzo Scholars Program to Continue  
Training Teachers  
in Bilingual Education at UNT-Dallas*

*Rep. Alonzo's Bill on Bilingualism Gains Legislative Approval  
as Part of HB 5 Signed by Gov. Perry*

A measure authored by Rep. Alonzo gained legislative approval by lawmakers as part of one of the comprehensive education reform bills (HB 5) passed by the recently-completed 83rd Regular Session of the Texas Legislature. House Bill 5 which was signed by Governor Rick Perry on May 10 includes among its provision an Alonzo measure proposing to establish the Texas State Seal of Bilingualism and Bilingualism for recognition of high school graduates who attain a high level of proficiency in both English and another language.

*"As we move into a rapidly growing, technologically-filled, globally-competitive, and diverse international economy, it becomes more apparent that our graduates from both high school and institutions of higher learning will have to better equipped and ready to face the challenges that come with those changes. One of the best ways for our students to be prepared is to be bilingual, biliterate and proficient in languages other than English if they are to be able and ready to compete in the job market for the best-paying and competitive jobs. This legislation proposes to help address those challenges,"* said Rep. Alonzo.

While Alonzo's HB 921 did not gain full approval as originally filed, the Dallas lawmaker worked closely with his colleagues in the Senate to amend significant portions of his measure to HB 5, permitting students to earn the **Seal of Bilingualism** and proper insignia based on the curriculum guidelines established by the State Board of Education (SBOE) and the Texas Education Agency (TEA). The seal/insignia would be stamped on the student's graduation diplomas.

The measure would establish the *Texas State Seal of Bilingualism & Bilingualism* to recognize high school graduates who have attained a high level of proficiency in comprehending, speaking, reading, and writing in English and one or more other languages.

One exciting educational program that will once continue to get funded and remain intact for two more academic years of the 2014-2015 biennium during the 83rd Regular Session is the **Roberto R. Alonzo Bilingual/ESL Education Scholars Program** at the University of North Texas (UNT) - Dallas campus. Thanks to efforts of the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB), particularly Commissioner Dr. Raymund Paredes and the UNT-Dallas campus administration, the program was able to secure the **\$300,000** funding to continue the operation of the program at UNT for the 2013-14 and 2014-15 academic years. This much-needed funding will make sure that this nationally-recognized teacher training program at UNT stays in place and continues to address the bilingual education teacher shortage problem in the DFW/North Texas region. The program which has been funded since the 2004-2005 school year and has collectively offered **over \$1.8 million dollars** graduating over 175 teachers, helps both current and potential teachers gain certification in bilingual education and English-As-A-Second Language (ESL) teaching, specifically in the DFW area where there is a shortage of such teachers. The program was initially passed by the 78th Texas Legislature in 2003 *"to provide tuition assistance and loan forgiveness as incentives for college students to pursue certification programs in bilingual or ESL education."* Since its initial funding, the Alonzo Scholars Program has received much praise from both the National Association for Bilingual Education (NABE) and the Texas Association for Bilingual Education (TABE) because of its success. Both organizations continue to encourage its replication in other parts of the state and nation.