

## Texas Representative Roberto R. Alonzo's

## Capitol Report



### *New Unique Laws Take Effect Sept. 1, 2013*

This is the first in a series of this *Capitol Report*, where I will highlight some of the unique laws passed by the 83rd Legislature, most of which took effect September 1, 2013:

***Auto Insurance:*** SB 1567 which took effect on June 14, 2013, now requires insurance companies to tell policyholders orally and in writing that other drivers (not listed on the policy) may not be covered in that policy, if that other person is not listed or named in the policy, even if they have the permission of policyholder to drive the vehicle.

***Proof of Insurance:*** Under SB 181 which took immediate effect on May 24, 2013, when passed by lawmakers, now permits motorists to be able to show a police officer an image of proof of auto insurance on a cellphone instead of a hard paper copy if they have an active policy during a traffic stop or after an accident.

***Tanning Salons:*** Senate Bill 736 which took effect on Sept. 1, now raises the minimum age for someone to use a tanning salon from 16½ years old to 18 years old. Previously, persons under 18 were allowed but only with parental consent.

***Flying the flag:*** Under HB 680 which took effect immediately when signed by the governor on June 14, permits homeowners in deed-restricted subdivisions to erect a flag pole in their front yards.

***Liquor tax:*** HB 3572 which takes effect on Jan 1, 2014, requires consumers ordering mixed drinks in restaurants to pay a sales tax of 8.25 percent. Currently, those drinks are untaxed. Additionally, restaurants will now under the new law see the mixed beverage tax they pay reduced from 14 percent to 6.7 percent. Under current law, customers at restaurants that sell only beer and wine already pay 8.25 percent tax on these drinks. But customers at restaurants that also sell mixed drinks are not required to pay the tax. Instead, those restaurants pay a 14 percent tax to the state. The idea of this legislation is to make the taxes consistent.

***Electricity and gas disconnections:*** HB 1772 which takes effect Jan. 1, 2014, now requires landlords of apartment complexes to give written notice to tenants and to the city of pending disconnection of utility service because of landlord's nonpayment of a bill. Additionally, a utility must also provide written notice to the city where the complex is located before a disconnection. This law is aimed to protect tenants whose utility bills are included in their monthly rent

***Employee registry for facilities:*** HB 2683 which takes effect Jan. 1, 2014, grants registry access to both individual employers and management companies in addition to facilities, when conducting background checks for employees and nurses' aides who work in facilities licensed by the state Dept. of Aging & Disability Services. The registries are designed to protect the elderly and the disabled from acts of abuse, neglect, exploitation, misappropriation and misconduct. The law also requires proper record keeping of these periodic checks, prohibits employment of persons convicted of exploitation of a child, a senior or disabled individual, and gives employees accused of misconduct the right to a formal hearing.

To learn more about these and any other laws passed, visit the website at: [www.capitol.state.tx.us](http://www.capitol.state.tx.us) and search under the "Legislation" tab of the link.

The Dallas Home Connection, a non-profit organization dedicated to helping Texans achieve homeownership and build their assets, will be hosting a Home Buyer Workshop in the Dallas area:

#### **Home Buyer Workshop**

**Saturday, September 14**

**11am – 1pm**

**Martin Luther King, Jr. Center**

**2922 Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd.**

**Dallas, Texas 75215**

This event is a great opportunity for constituents, who are interested in purchasing a home, to become educated about the home buying process. For more information please visit: [www.dallashomeconnection.org](http://www.dallashomeconnection.org) or call 1-888-341-6461.