

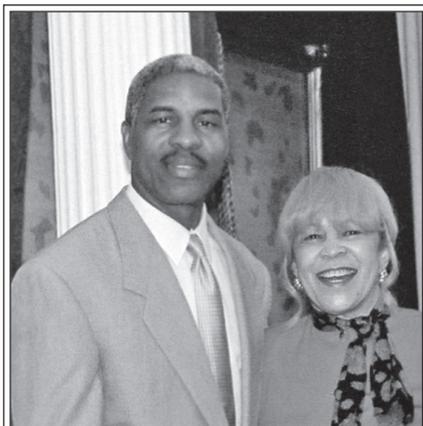
“The genocide in Darfur is both undeniable and morally reprehensible. Texans have a moral duty, and an obligation as human beings, to stop these human rights abuses. Texas has sent a strong message that we do not support genocide,” Giddings said.



Irwin Thompson recognized on the House Floor

### IRWIN THOMPSON CAPTURES THE AFTERMATH OF HURRICANE KATRINA

Giddings honored Pulitzer Prize winning photojournalist, Irwin Thompson on the floor of the Texas House of Representatives in February 2007. In 2006, eight Dallas Morning News photographers captured the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina so vividly, they each earned the prestigious Pulitzer Prize in Breaking News Photography. “The world was able to feel the sorrow and anguish of Hurricane Katrina victims through the lens of these talented photojournalists,” Representative Giddings said.



Everson Walls & Representative Helen Giddings

### DALLAS HERO, EVERSON WALLS HONORED FOR SAVING A LIFE

Representative Giddings honored former Dallas Cowboys football player Everson Walls on the House floor in May 2007. In February 2007, Everson Walls selflessly gave one of his kidneys to his former Cowboys teammate and close friend Ron Springs. “Everson reminds us all that one of God’s greatest gifts to mankind is the gift of friendship,

a gift that really does keep on giving,” Representative Giddings stated. Giddings also arranged for Southwest Transplant of Dallas to be on site at the Capitol to register those interested in becoming organ donors as a part of this special recognition and support of Everson Walls.

### WORKERS’ COMPENSATION REFORMS

Representative Giddings authored several bills to improve the care that workers receive when they are injured on the job. **House Bills 1003 and 1006** ensure that reviews of medical care received by injured workers are done by doctors licensed in Texas. **Giddings says “Doctors making medical decisions for Texas citizens should be licensed in Texas and be held accountable by the Texas Medical Board.”** Giddings continued her work in this area by passing several bills that make the workers’ compensation system more accessible to workers, doctors, and employers, assist workers in their disputes, and improve the quality of medical care. The **Business & Industry Committee**, which Giddings chairs, also addressed the issue of hospital fee disputes, which are an ongoing concern, as they tie up resources in litigation rather than in helping injured workers.

### IDENTITY THEFT

Giddings was determined to offer additional protection to citizens of Texas from the fast-growing crime of identity theft. Currently, when a consumer reports his or her checks missing or bank account compromised, that information does not reach check verification entities that recommend to businesses whether to accept or deny a check. As a result, even after the identity theft is reported, bad checks can be passed in the victim’s name for weeks. **Giddings says “I authored HB 2002, establishing a system of reporting wherein check verification companies can be notified by banks or by victims of fraud by the second business day, saving millions of dollars.”** Because identity theft is a crime that takes a long time to discover or investigate, **Giddings authored House Bill 887 to extend the statute of limitations for prosecution of identity theft crimes from 3 years to 7 years.** The **Business & Industry Committee**, which Giddings chairs, continues its efforts to develop and pass legislation to protect citizens from identity theft and to punish criminals.



STATE REPRESENTATIVE

**HELEN GIDDINGS**

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STATE REPRESENTATIVE

**Helen Giddings**

District 109

**Capitol Report**

80<sup>th</sup> Session Highlights

Dear Friends and Neighbors:

The 80th Legislative Session ended on May 28th, and I would like to share some of the highlights with you.

I was re-appointed Chair of the Business and Industry Committee, appointed Vice-Chair of the House Administration Committee, and member of the Higher Education Committee. Additionally, I am pleased to have been appointed to the House Select Committee on Higher & Public Education Finance, as education has always been one of my top priorities. The Select Committee on Higher & Public Education Finance will meet throughout the interim, and I hope that we will have community participation when the committee meets in our area.

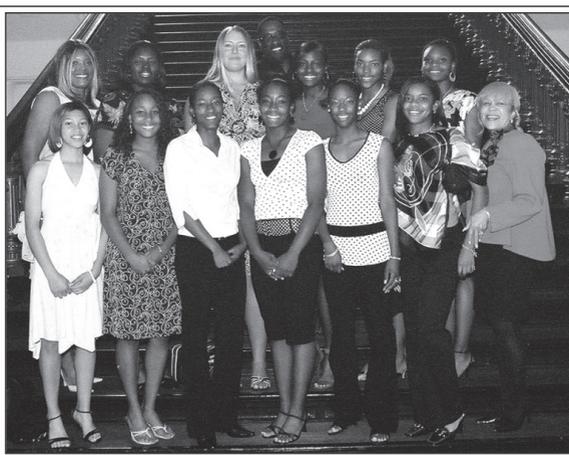
Arriving in Austin with a strong agenda to improve the quality of life for the citizens of Texas, I was able to leverage my House leadership position to improve student access to education, help teachers, and increase the availability of services to those who need them the most. As Chair of Business and Industry, our committee worked to create an environment to encourage business development and job creation while respecting the rights of individuals and protecting consumers. It was not an easy fight, however, the results will benefit Texans who have nowhere else to turn and are most in need.

I successfully authored 13 House Bills and joint authored and sponsored numerous other bills. In the process, we improved public education, provided for an additional 127,000 children to enroll in the Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP), addressed planning for our state’s water needs, as well as cleaner air, transportation and safer communities.

This newsletter highlights legislation that I believe will make Texas a better place for all of us to live. Remember, the Texas House of Representatives is “your House” and I invite you to visit whenever possible. Your continued confidence in me and allowing me to be your voice in the Texas House of Representatives is truly an honor, and I am deeply humbled and will continue to do my best to represent you.

Best regards,

Helen Giddings



### REP. GIDDINGS CONGRATULATES DISTRICT 109 CHAMPIONSHIP WINNERS AT THE CAPITOL!

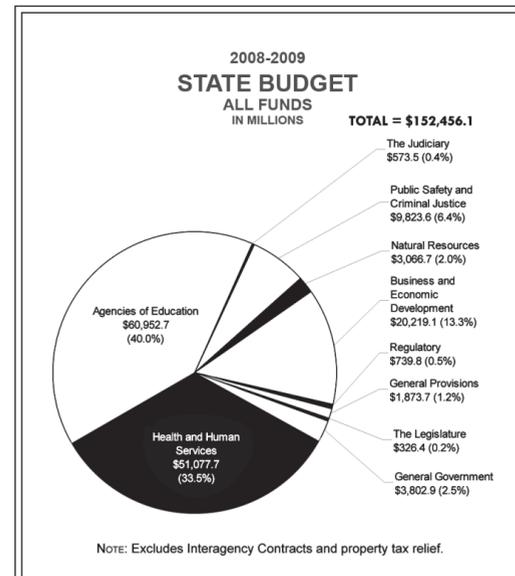
The Cedar Hill High School football team won the 5A Division II State Football Championship.

The South Oak Cliff boys’ basketball team won the 2007 UIL Class 4A State Boys’ Basketball Championship.

The Lancaster High School girls’ Track & Field team set a new record by winning the school’s 7th consecutive Class 4A State Track & Field Championship in Austin.

### HELPFUL TOLL-FREE NUMBERS

Adopt-A-Beach.....	1-877-892-6278	Texas Department of Insurance.....	1-800-252-3439
AFDC/Food Benefit Stamp Inquiry Hotline.....	1-800-448-3927	Dept of Protective & Reg. Services.....	1-800-720-7777
AFDC/ Food Stamp Complaint Hotline.....	1-800-252-9330	<b>Texas Department of Public Safety:</b>	
Texas Department of Aging.....	1-800-252-2412	• Missing Persons Hotline.....	1-800-346-3243
Texas Department of Agriculture.....	1-800-835-5832	• Motorcycle Safety.....	1-800-292-5787
Alternative Fuel Marketing.....	1-800-642-5327	• Motorist Assistance.....	1-800-525-5555
<b>Attorney General’s Office:</b>		Small Business Owner Start-up Tech Asst.....	1-800-888-0511
• Consumer Protection.....	1-800-621-0508	<b>Workforce Commission:</b>	
• Child Support.....	1-800-252-8014	• Labor Commission.....	1-800-832-2829
• Medicaid Fraud.....	1-800-252-8011	• Commissioner.....	1-800-832-9394
Texas Commission for the Blind.....	1-800-628-5115	Division of Workers’ Compensation.....	1-214-350-9299
State Comptroller.....	1-800-252-5555	Crime Stoppers Hotline.....	1-800-252-8477
Texas Dept of Licensing & Regulation.....	1-800-803-9202	Crime Victims’ Compensation Program.....	1-800-983-9933
Lottery Commission.....	1-800-375-6886	Governor’s Office.....	1-800-843-5789
Nursing Home Complaints & Info.....	1-800-458-9858	Home Health Care Hotline.....	1-800-228-1570
Oil Spill Reporting.....	1-800-832-8224	DFPS Abuse Hotline.....	1-800-252-5400
Texas Parks & Wildlife.....	1-800-792-1112	Immunization Information.....	1-800-252-9152



## CHIP REFORM: THOUSANDS OF TEXAS CHILDREN TO BE INSURED

**Representative Giddings** coauthored **House Bill 109**, which addresses key policy changes to the current **Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP)**. This program will insure an additional 127,000 qualified children in the State of Texas. The bill removes significant barriers to enrollment by restoring the 12-month period of continuous coverage, and eliminating a 90-day wait period for coverage. **HB 109** also changes the income requirements for enrollment from gross income to net income. Net income means gross income minus child care costs. These changes will give children the health insurance they need. They will have access to preventative care and life saving treatments. **Giddings stated, "Their primary care physician will no longer have to be the doctor on-call in the emergency room."** For more information on how to enroll in CHIP, please call 1-877-KIDS-NOW (1-877-543-7669).



*Representative Giddings speaks at CHIP Rally at the Capitol*

## GIDDINGS VOWED TO IMPROVE OUR FOSTER CARE SYSTEM

A 6-year-old girl died after allegedly being repeatedly body-slammed while living in a foster care home. According to reports, police were called a number of times to investigate disturbance calls to the home. **Repeated disturbance calls should have been a warning and should have brought about additional scrutiny.** **Representative Giddings** successfully amended Senate Bill 723 to create and maintain a shared database between the Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS), law enforcement, and child-placing agencies. Law enforcement will now notify DFPS within 24 hours of responding to calls at a foster home. This bill also puts in place an added measure to require prospective foster care applicants to disclose whether any family violence or domestic disturbance calls have occurred at their home in the last 12 months. **"While this particular incident may have happened in the district that I represent, this is a statewide problem that needed to be addressed immediately. Injuries and deaths may be prevented with this simple measure of implementing basic communication,"** **Giddings said.** To report abuse, neglect, or exploitation of children, please call the **Texas Abuse/Neglect Hotline at 1-800-252-5400** or visit <https://www.txabusehotline.org>.

## EDUCATION REFORM TO PREPARE THE NEXT GENERATION

School superintendents in District 109 along with Dr. Jennifer Wimbish of Cedar Valley College, and Dr. John Price of the University of North Texas at Dallas worked together to draft guidelines for improvements to public education. Many of their proposed changes are incorporated in **House Bill 2237**. This legislation, joint authored by **Giddings**, establishes a clearinghouse for best teaching methods; increasing professional development for teachers; establishing a personalized graduation plan for all students in their ninth grade year; providing grant money for school clubs that promote staying in school; funding intensive academic summer programs; and establishing a community-based pilot program. **This legislation increases the tutoring, mentoring, and assistance available to students.**

**Giddings' House Bill 2658** was developed to establish college preparatory math and science classes for 12th grade students who do not meet college readiness standards. **Giddings** added the provisions in **House Bill 2658** to **House Bill 2237**. With this decisive action, the state will save thousands of dollars, and provide a better opportunity for students to get the education they deserve from public schools.

Dr. Hinojosa said, "The Dallas Independent School District appreciates and acknowledges the support and attention **Representative Giddings** showed for the Dallas ISD programs. We intend to take her work and move it forward in our district."



*Dr. Wright Lassiter (Chancellor, DCCCD), Dr. Lee Jackson (Chancellor, UNT Denton), Sen. Royce West, Lt. Gov. David Dewhurst, Dr. Jennifer Wimbish (CVC President), Rep. Helen Giddings, and Dr. John Price (Provost, UNT Dallas)*

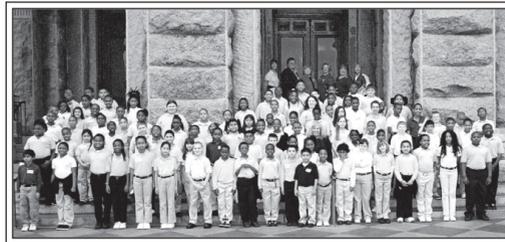
## GOOD-BYE TAKS TEST

Overwhelmingly, members of the community have expressed their discontent with the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) student assessment test. **Giddings explains, "Teachers, parents, and students voiced concern regarding the TAKS test. Teachers felt they were forced to teach to the test, which in turn hinders a student's ability to develop critical thinking skills. With end-of-course exams, students and teachers**

**will be held accountable for both critical thinking and factual knowledge."** **Senate Bill 1031**, actively supported by **Giddings**, will phase out TAKS and replace it with end-of-course exams in the four core subject areas in grades 9-12 by 2011. The end-of-course exams will count as 15% of the student's overall grade in a class. The bill maintains accountability for schools while providing multiple pathways to graduation for students by allowing a student to satisfy graduation requirements in different ways rather than a single pass/fail test. Furthermore, end-of-course exams will allow for conceptual and comprehensive learning for future generations.

## SCHOOL BUS SAFETY

Over 1 million students rely on school buses to get to and from school, making safety a critical issue. **House Bill 3190**, by **Giddings**, supports school bus safety by requiring school bus drivers to have good driving records for 10 years with an absence of certain offenses, such as drunk driving and vehicular manslaughter. Furthermore, the bill requires that drivers strictly enforce bus capacity restrictions, and makes certain that students are aware of emergency evacuation procedures.



*Ruby Young Elementary students, teachers and parents traveled by school bus to visit the Capitol*

## THE PRESERVATION OF THE TOP 10% RULE

This session legislators proposed amending the Top 10% law, which grants automatic admission for those students in the Top 10% of their high school class. Since its inception in 1997, it has increased diversity in higher education across Texas. Through hard work and persuasive argumentation, **Representative Giddings**, as joint author of the original Top 10% bill, led an effort to preserve the Top 10% law. **Giddings said, "The Top 10% admissions policy sends a message to every high school student in Texas: you do not have to be wealthy, you do not have to be a legacy or an athlete to attend a top university. You simply must work hard and perform to get into the state university of your choice."**

## STUDENTS GIVEN MORE INFLUENCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION

**Representative Giddings** sponsored **Senate Bill 1007**, which gives students representation on the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) and in certain coordinating board advisory committees. **Giddings expressed, "Students deserve the opportunity to express their ideas and have an influence on higher education. SB 1007 opens a much-needed line of communication between students and policy makers."** The student representative will be voted on by the student body of their respective institutions, and appointed by the Governor.



*Rep. Giddings speaks to students about the importance of education*

## SILVER ALERT KEEPING OUR SENIOR CITIZENS SAFE

**Representative Giddings** proudly joint sponsored **Senate Bill 1315**, establishing the Silver Alert. The Silver Alert requires the Department of Public Safety to develop an alert system for missing senior citizens and provides for the administration and usage of the system. The Silver Alert is similar to the Amber Alert, which warns people to be on the lookout for a missing or abducted child. **Representative Giddings** received a panicked phone call from her staff member whose 83-year-old grandfather had been missing for hours and suffers from Alzheimer's disease. The police found the gentleman in his car miles away from his neighborhood. **Giddings explains, "We felt helpless and feared for the safety of this man. It became clear to me the police need additional tools to assist them. Many terrible things could have happened when he was sitting on the side of the road in his car for hours."**

## CLEANER AIR

Clean air is a critical issue for our state. Too many children suffer from asthma and other respiratory illnesses due to pollution caused in part by the cars we all drive. Getting older vehicles, or vehicles that fail emissions tests, off the road will go a long way toward improving our air quality. **Giddings successfully amended the appropriations bill to include more money in the RetroFit Fund**, and joint sponsored **Senate Bill 12**, the bill that includes this provision. **This important program provides money to low-income vehicle owners to replace vehicles that fail the emissions test or vehicles that are over 10 years old.** Previously, up to \$1,000 was given for replacement vehicles and now people can receive up to \$3,000 for a newer, cleaner-running vehicle or \$3500 for a hybrid. "This program is imperative to improving our environment without imposing undue hardship on our citizens. I'm proud to have been successful in increasing the appropriations for this fund," **Giddings said.** For more information about this program, call the North Central Texas Council at 1-800-898-9103.



*Rep. Giddings and Leroy Granvie (Manager, Kwik Car and Lube) in Cedar Hill*

## REDUCING ELECTRICITY BILLS

**Giddings** fought for and strongly supported fully funding the System Benefit Fund. **The System Benefit Fund provides a 10% discount for low-income individuals on their electric bills.** The fund comes from a 65-cent fee on electric bills in areas that are open to electric competition. In years past this money had not been properly allocated to the fund. This year, \$200 million will be in the System Benefit Fund. This fund is expected to significantly reduce the financial burden of low-income individuals statewide.



*Constituents from the Dallas area visited with Rep. Giddings to express concerns within their communities*

## URBAN LAND BANK PROMOTES AFFORDABLE HOMEOWNERSHIP

**Representative Giddings' House Bill 1742** addresses and modifies the Urban Land Bank, which has been a priority for the City of Dallas. This program encourages home ownership for mostly low-income and some moderate-income individuals by allowing Community Development Organizations and private developers to build modern, affordable homes for individual families. The City of Dallas will be able to turn what has been a drain on resources into taxpaying properties to revitalize distressed neighborhoods.

## GOOD NEWS FOR DALLAS COUNTY AND SOUTHERN SECTOR CITIES

**District 109** is fortunate to have a strong surge of sustainable economic development. The new Union Pacific Inter-modal facility, an inland port, and numerous other developing projects will require improvements in the water and sewer utility system to adequately serve the area. **Representative Giddings** sponsored **Senate Bill 1271** that gives Dallas County the ability to sell general obligation bonds for water to better serve Hutchins and other southern sector cities.

## JURY DUTY PER DIEM REVISED TO RESTORE DONATIONS TO CHARITY

**Representative Giddings' House Bill 1204** allows jurors to donate part or all of their daily stipend to the county for charitable use. Ninety percent of these funds are distributed to the Dallas County Juvenile Department and ten percent to the Foster Parent Association for the purchase of holiday gifts. **HB 1204** will once again encourage people to donate to this important cause. **Jurors will have the freedom to donate as little or as much as they choose.**

## SUPPORTING LOCAL PROJECTS

As a result of **Representative Giddings'** efforts the City of Lancaster and the City of DeSoto will receive matching funds for hike and bike trails and a visitors' center, as well as funding to restore the Old Nance Farm. After renovations, the 1850s farm house of Nance Farm will become a museum. The new Lancaster Visitors' Center will be housed in the city's historic Interurban Building in downtown Lancaster once renovations on the building are completed. **Giddings comments, "I look forward to these additions to our community. I think we all will enjoy and benefit from these improvements."**

## TEXAS TO DIVEST FROM COMPANIES SUPPORTING GENOCIDE

What we do in Texas can influence the state, the nation, and sometimes the world. Texas took action against the inhumane crimes being committed in the Sudan. Recognizing the horror of the genocide in Darfur, **Giddings** joint sponsored **Senate Bill 247**, which prohibits Texas from investing state money in companies that support or contribute monetarily to the Sudanese government. Texas took strong action with this legislation because, without funding, the Sudanese government will be forced to cease the abuses against its citizens.

## HOW TO CONTACT HELEN GIDDINGS

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