



GENE WU

STATE REPRESENTATIVE ★ DISTRICT 137



Issue 14

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NEWSLETTER

Interfaith Ministries for Greater Houston Meals on Wheels in District 137

On Friday, March 18th Representative Wu volunteered with Interfaith Ministries' Meals on Wheels for Greater Houston by delivering meals to homebound seniors in District 137.

Meals on Wheels provides a home-delivered meal to the most frail and isolated seniors. The nutritional support helps seniors stay independent and in their own homes. Meals and Wheels for Greater Houston delivers more than 1 million meals each year to seniors in Harris County.

- Know a senior over 60? They can sign up for the program by contacting Interfaith Ministries at 713-533-4978.
- [Volunteer with Interfaith Ministries](#) and help serve people in need.



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Apartment Safety Meeting

A Bike Plan for Southwest Houston

The City of Houston and its partners have been developing the Houston Bike Plan since March 2015, engaging over 3,000 residents in the process. The draft Plan was just released and more information can be found at houstonbikeplan.org.

On March 19th, Rep. Wu attended a workshop hosted by the Houston Bike Plan in Southwest Houston. Residents provided input on short-term and long-term planning for a bike friendly neighborhood. It was announced that a segment of the Gulfton and Sharpstown areas has been selected to serve as a pilot neighborhood plan location, which will be documented to create a guide for the creation of additional neighborhood plans throughout the City.

Your feedback and help with promoting the Bike Plan is key to increasing community support as outreach efforts continue, and in finalizing the Houston Bike Plan for adoption by City Council. **Public comment will close on April 11th.**

Provide your feedback and support at houstonbikeplan.org/participate, or contact our office at District137.Wu@house.texas.gov, or 713-271-3900.



Plant It Forward Farm Fiesta

Located at St. Paul Presbyterian Church, the newest of the Plant It Forward Farms in Houston is right here in District 137! Rep. Wu and his family celebrated the farm's first anniversary at their recent Farm Fiesta.

Plant It Forward Farms are great examples of sustainable land use and urban farming. They provide fresh vegetables to local restaurants and buyers, and in turn local refugee farmers make a living.

[Join the Farm Share Program](http://plant-it-forward.org) and enjoy a weekly box of fresh, local produce. Every 30 Farm Shares purchased provides a living wage for a refugee farmer in Houston. Learn more at plant-it-forward.org.

City of Houston CIP Projects for Districts F and J

The City of Houston recently conducted their round of public meetings to gather input on their [Capital Improvement Plan](#) (CIP) budget. House District 137 includes parts of both District F and District J. At each meeting, city representatives identified ongoing projects in the area, answered questions, and listened to comments and concerns from local residents about the needs in their own neighborhoods.

"I'm excited about new drainage projects and expansion of green-spaces and jogging paths." - Representative Wu.

CIP projects for the two districts can be viewed online ([District F](#) - [District J](#)). Video of both meetings can be seen on the [HTV archives](#).



Students Prepare for Life After High School at Youth Empowerment Fair



In March, over 100 students attended our *Youth Empowerment Fair: Life After High School* at the [Baker-Ripley Neighborhood Center](#). Special credit to YES Prep, Liberty and Sharpstown high schools for driving their students to this event during Spring Break!

The event featured various workshops to help our youth prepare for college, a career, and other challenges they may face as young adults. Students learned about community college vs. four-year university programs, student loans like TASFA or FAFSA, resume and interview preparation when looking for a job, managing finances on your own or as a young parent, and more.

Representative Wu — a member of the Baker-Ripley Advisory Council, and a longtime volunteer for Neighborhood Centers — shared his story with students, describing his family's humble beginnings, his passion for policy and public service, and how his education and work experience prepared him to run for elected office.



Houston Independent School District State of the Schools

Earlier this month, the Houston Independent School District (HISD) held their State of the Schools event. Interim Superintendent Ken Huewitt highlighted the success of HISD's efforts devoted to literacy, college preparation, and career development.

The "Literacy by 3" program aims to have every child reading and writing with fluency by the end of Grade 3. With 50 dual language campuses, HISD is educating bilingual students, preparing them for college and career in a competitive global economy. Through HISD's "PowerUp Initiative," every high school student receives a take-home laptop, bridging the digital divide and creating a learning environment that reflects the modern work environment.

The success of programs like these, and successful student outcomes across the state, hinges on adequate funding of our public school system.



*Ken Huewitt, HISD Interim Superintendent
Photo by Dave Einsel, [HISD Gallery](#)*

Unfortunately, Texas is in the middle of a court battle over how to fund our public schools. The case grew out of the Legislature's cutting \$5.4 billion from public education in 2011, prompting more than 600 school districts responsible for educating three-quarters of Texas' 5 million-plus public school students to sue. Check out the [Houston Public Media coverage](#) for more information about the Texas school finance case.

HISD is facing a \$107 million shortfall for the 2016-2017 school year as a result of the state's school funding structure, which requires property-wealthy districts to send local tax dollars back to the state. Though nearly 80 percent of HISD students come from low-income communities, the district is considered property wealthy because of rising property values throughout the city.

Every student—regardless of their socioeconomic status—deserves access to a high quality education. Next session, Representative Wu will be advocating to allocate more funding for our schools on behalf of students in Houston and across Texas.

HISD Superintendent Search

The HISD Board of Education is searching for a new superintendent, and trustees want input from community members about the qualities and traits they would like to see in the next district leader. On March 24th, Representative Wu joined Houston ISD trustee Greg Meyers for a community meeting at Sharpstown High School. Participants provided insight into what attributes of a school superintendent were important for them and in dealing with a diverse school district such as HISD. Current superintendent, Terry Grier, has stepped down and the board will make a decision on his replacement in the coming months.

HISD is still seeking input from as many Houstonians as possible. You're encouraged to fill out an online survey and provide your own input. [Take the survey here.](#)

Feedback obtained will be used by trustees to finalize their superintendent profile and begin searching for candidates. Updates will be posted at <http://www.houstonisd.org/SupeSearch>.



Rep. Wu Joins Baker Institute Panel on Drug Policy

Representative Wu recently joined Harris County District Attorney Devon Anderson and others at a panel discussion hosted by the Baker Institute to discuss law enforcement perspectives on the impact of drug policy and public safety.

As a former prosecutor, Representative Wu saw firsthand the cracks in our justice system and the high rates of incarceration, specifically of those languishing in jail for non-violent, small-time drug possession. In his comments at the panel discussion, Representative Wu referenced the Texas Code of Criminal Procedure which sets forth the primary duty of all prosecuting attorneys as being to see that justice is done - not necessarily that a person be convicted.

"I'm embarrassed that our state has been so slow and unwilling to move forward politically to make sure we have a just and fair system. I'll be back next session to work on it again."

- Rep. Wu.



During the 84th Legislative Session, Representative Wu authored HB 325 which would have lowered penalties for the smallest amounts of marijuana possession, creating a sensible distinction between possession of very small amounts of marijuana and larger amounts. Leading up to the next legislative session, Representative Wu continues to meet with numerous local leaders to get their input on ideas for reforming Texas' criminal justice system.

The Energy Council Conference

The Energy Council is a legislative organization comprised of 11 states— including Texas—and two international affiliates, drawn from the major energy producing regions of the US and Canada. The Council provides a forum for discussing government policies regarding energy and the environment. Representative Wu attended the recent quarterly meeting held in Washington, DC, which focused on federal energy and environmental matters.

The conference was especially important for Texas this Spring due to the dropping price of crude oil. Economic forecasters delivered good news and bad news for the next year. The good news is that the forecast for the next year shows that oil will finally be stable at around \$32 per barrel; the bad news is that oil will be at \$32 per barrel for the entirety of 2016.

Finally, a lot of attention was given to U.S. LNG exports and their role in the global market. During the 84th Legislative Session, Rep. Wu co-sponsored SCR 32, which urged Congress to expedite LNG exports. [Check out this recent op-ed](#) for more on how LNG exports will benefit the Texas economy and add jobs.

House Energy Resources Committee - Interim Hearings

In November 2015, House Speaker Joe Straus issued more than 150 interim charges directing committees to study a wide variety of issues in preparation for the next legislative session in 2017. This month, the Texas House Committee on Energy Resources met to hear testimony on three of its seven assigned interim charges:

Interim Charge #4:

Study enforcement policies of the Railroad Commission of Texas. Consider the effectiveness of maximum fines as a deterrent of violation, the economic benefit of noncompliance, and greater accessibility to enforcement and complaint data for the public.

Interim Charge #5:

Review how the Mexican energy transformation has bolstered or diminished the energy economy in Texas. Explore opportunities that would encourage binational exchange and commerce of oil, gas, and oilfield materials. Discuss how a competitive market across the border will affect supply, market price, reliability of Texas oil, gas and energy markets, pipeline build-out as well as other economic factors such as workforce and local economy sustainability. (Joint charge with the House Committee on International Trade & Intergovernmental Affairs).

Interim Charge #7:

Conduct legislative oversight and monitoring of the agencies and programs under the committee's jurisdiction and the implementation of relevant legislation passed by the 84th Legislature. In conducting this oversight, the committee should: (a) consider any reforms to state agencies to make them more responsive to Texas taxpayers and citizens; (b) identify issues regarding the agency or its governance that may be appropriate to investigate, improve, remedy, or eliminate; (c) determine whether an agency is operating in a transparent and efficient manner; (d) identify opportunities to streamline programs and services while maintaining the mission of the agency and its programs; (e) monitor the impact of major energy legislation passed by the 84th Legislature including the implementation of regulated surface activity on oil and gas sites; and (f) review seismic research needs for the University of Texas Bureau of Economic Geology and any response to research findings by the Railroad Commission of Texas.

Click [here](#) to view the 84th Legislature's Interim Charges for the Texas House of Representatives. Videos of committee meetings are archived and available [here](#).

Representative Wu is a member of the House County Affairs, Energy Resources, and Federal Environmental Regulation committees.

Upcoming Property Tax Workshops in District 137

There are two upcoming Property Tax Workshops in District 137 to help taxpayers lower their tax burden, through protesting their values and applying for exemptions. These workshops will cover how taxes are calculated, types of exemptions available, how to protest your value, and payment plans for delinquent taxes.

Saturday, April 2nd | 11:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.
Baker-Ripley Neighborhood Center
6500 Rookin St, Houston TX 77074

Monday, April 25th | 10:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.
Tracy Gee Community Center
3599 Westcenter Drive, Houston TX 77042

[See full schedule here](#). If you have questions, please call the Harris County Tax Office at 713-274-8000.

The last day to submit a protest for the 2016 tax year with the Harris County Appraisal District is May 31, 2016. Learn more about the protest process by visiting the Harris County Appraisal District page [here](#).

**Apartment Safety Meeting at Baker-Ripley Neighborhood Center
Saturday, April 16, 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.**



**Safer Community, Safer You -
Resources for Apartment Residents**

Apartment Safety Meeting
Date: April 16
Time: 10 a.m. to Noon
Location: Neighborhood Centers-Baker Ripley
Cullen Reunion Hall
6500 Rookin St., Houston, 77074

Join the Houston Apartment Association and our community partners for an informative meeting that will connect you to resources regarding safety in your apartment community!
 Experts and community leaders are coming to you to discuss topics including:

- Houston Apartment Association residents' resources
- Safety in the Gulfton area
- Immigration relief for victims of crime
- Crime Prevention Education
- Human trafficking awareness in Houston

Join the Houston Apartment Association and our event partners and participants:
 NEIGHBORHOOD CENTERS • CRIME STOPPERS • HOUSTON POLICE DEPARTMENT • CITY OF HOUSTON
 STATE REP. GENE WU • COUNCIL MEMBER MIKE LASTER • COUNCIL MEMBER MIKE KNOX • GULFTON SUPER NEIGHBORHOOD COUNCIL



MIKE LASTER
 Houston City Council Member
 District J

MIKE KNOX
 Houston City Council Member
 At-Large Position 1

GENE WU
 State Representative
 Texas House District 137