

Education and School Finance

This session afforded legislators the opportunity to make real reforms to education. We set out with the goal of improving flexibility for teachers by moving away from an emphasis on standardized tests and towards preparing students for higher education and the workplace. Our other priority was restoring funds absent from the last budget and improving the security of teacher retirement benefits.

Reducing the required number of standardized tests from fifteen to five allows educators to work personally with students on their individual strengths and shortcomings, helping guide them towards areas of expertise that will best benefit them. House Bill 5, the major vehicle for education reform in the 83rd Session, also established new accountability standards and grants increased local control to school districts. Schools will now be graded on academic performance, financial responsibility, and community engagement. This new system enables parents to better assess the performance of their children's school and challenges administrators to lead their district to new levels of success.

The Teacher Retirement System of Texas received bipartisan reforms as well, which will keep our educators' retirement fund fiscally sound for decades to come. Senate Bill 1458 provided crucial adjustments to TRS, protecting the benefits for those already retired or near retirement while gradually increasing contribution rates for both educators and the districts they serve. In addition, the retirement age was increased by two years, while a much-needed cost of living adjustment was provided for educators who have been retired for some time.

The ultimate objective of the package of reforms passed this session was to create a system that focuses on the best avenues of learning and vocational training for individual students, raising graduation rates and improving overall success. Increased funding and adjustments made to our teacher pension plan greatly complemented these efforts.

Energy and Natural Resources

Representative White is taking an active role in developing strategies for energy production and the responsible and effective use of our state's natural resources as a recently appointed member of The Energy Council, a non-profit organization composed of industry leaders and members of government from energy-producing states throughout the nation.

"Texas has abundant energy resources, and it is important that our state lead the nation in developing sound economic and national security policies determining how these resources are used," said Representative White. "As we are seeing throughout Texas and the nation, the energy industry is providing much-needed jobs and a boost to our economy, and with its continued growth we have the ability to become energy independent and eliminate our need to import oil and gas from politically unstable and hostile foreign countries."

Texas will continue to play a crucial role in contributing to our economic growth and security, and Representative White believes the constituents of HD 19, where the energy industry employs a substantial number of working individuals, deserve to have their voices heard in this process. With its numerous major petrochemical operations, growing wood-based biomass energy industry, and many reserves and rivers, Southeast Texas boasts enormous potential to produce energy, provide good jobs, and spur economic growth.

"I am proud to bring the perspective of Southeast Texas to the Council, and I look forward to working with the other members to advance thoughtful, productive energy policies," said Representative White.



How to Contact Rep. White

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Lumberton High School sophomore Bobby McDaniel was an intern for the day on Monday, July 15th. Bobby answered phones, wrote letters, and greeted visitors, and he also helped Representative White lead the House in the pledges to the United States and Texas flags. He is an excellent student, participates in his school choir, and is working on his Eagle Scout project.



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STATE OF TEXAS
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES



Winter 2013

Dear Constituents of House District 19,

This summer concluded the end of the 83rd Legislative Session and three special sessions. I'm sure most of you either heard or witnessed the numerous debates over transportation, the budget, and the right to life on television or your radio. Austin was buzzing with activity from January all the way to August, and the eyes of the nation, and indeed the world, were on the Legislature.

This session provided legislators an opportunity to chart a course that balances fiscal responsibility and the opportunity for growth in our state. Countless hours were put into negotiations regarding water, transportation and port infrastructure, education spending, and the timber industry, all critical to our way of life in Southeast Texas. Important reforms were passed for education, including a reduction in the number of standardized tests students must take. Retirement benefits for teachers and state employees were also adjusted in a way that met their approval and made the state accounts for both groups actuarially sound for years to come.

I want to thank the great number of you who had the chance to visit our office in the Capitol. Barely a day went by without several people making the long trip from Southeast Texas to share their concerns about any number of issues, and for that I am truly grateful. Keeping in constant contact with the voters of HD 19 has been and will remain my top priority.

As the interim begins, my staff and I will continue working hard for the good people of Hardin, Jasper, Newton, Polk and Tyler Counties. I hope you will find this newsletter a useful update about your state's government and guide on how to get in touch with me.

Thank you,



James White



HARDIN • JASPER • NEWTON • POLK • TYLER

Tyler and Jasper County Youth Visit State Capitol

On August 2, Representative White hosted participants and administrators of the Tyler County Summer Youth Work Program at the state Capitol. The group consisted of about a dozen youth participants, mentors Michael Craig-Palomo and Tia Barlow, program administrators Terry Allen, Tonya Sheffield, and Kathy Harris, and Woodville ISD bus driver Tim Durr. The program is run by the Tyler County Juvenile



The Tyler County Summer Youth Work Program had a great visit to their state Capitol.

Probation Department and designed to provide local youths summer jobs as well as tutoring, counseling, and instruction in life skills such as budgeting, relationships, and job skills. The group began their visit by touring the Capitol dome, and they got a great view of Austin and the surrounding area at the top. After lunch, they went on a tour of the Visitor's Center and the rest of the Capitol, took pictures with Representative White, and got souvenirs at the gift shop. Terry Allen, the Tyler County Chief Juvenile Probation Officer and group leader, said that the day's visit was exciting and a valuable experience for those in the program, who also attended a commissioners court meeting and participated in a mock trial this summer.

Representative White is eager to host constituents at the Capitol. To arrange a visit, contact his office at 512-463-0490.

83rd Session Interns

Representative White hosted more than a half dozen student interns in his Austin office during the 83rd Legislative Session. Interning gives young people the opportunity to learn firsthand how your Texas Legislature works and prepares them for careers in public service as they continue their college studies.

Victoria Dresden served in Representative White's office during the Spring months, splitting time with Senator Nichols's office. Victoria was crucial in keeping the office running efficiently and helping constituents locate resources during the busy final months of the Session. Victoria is the granddaughter of Lumberton's own Sue Cleveland and attends Texas A&M University.



Victoria Dresden



Chase Engman

Chase Engman was a proud member of the 2013 Texas Legislative Internship Program, or TLIP. Starting in January, Chase provided excellent organizational skills and never hesitated to provide Southeast Texas guests with a guided tour of the Capitol and arrange a meeting with Representative White. A China, Texas native, Chase attends Lamar University, where he is President of the Pre-Law Society.

10th Amendment and Voter ID

Representative White is taking a stand for the constitutional sovereignty of Texas under the Tenth Amendment and its Voter ID law by opposing the actions of the Obama Justice Department to overturn common-sense popular voter reforms and ignore instructions from the Supreme Court to revise current federal voting regulations.

In June, the Supreme Court ruled in *Shelby County v. Holder* that Congress needs to update the data used to justify the "preclearance" requirement of the Voting Rights Act, suspending the application of that provision until it does so. In response, the Justice Department announced that it would ignore this Court ruling and sue Texas under another provision of the Voting Rights Act so that it could continue to impose the preclearance requirement for any changes in state election law.

Pro-Life Legislation Passed

This summer, the 83rd Legislature passed major pro-life legislation during the Second Special Session. Signed by Governor Rick Perry on July 16, HB 2 protects the dignity of human life and the health and safety of pregnant women by limiting abortions after five months and strengthening regulations related to that procedure.

The first part of the bill, called the Preborn Pain Act, prohibits abortions after five months on the basis of substantial scientific research that demonstrates unborn children at that stage of development have the capacity to feel pain. The Supreme Court has acknowledged that states have a legitimate interest in such ethical concerns, and recent polling indicates that a substantial majority of Southeast Texans support this restriction. With the passage of HB 2, Texas joins a growing number of states that have taken this step in recognition of our moral obligation to protect the most vulnerable among us.

The second part of the bill contains several common-sense requirements for physicians who perform abortions and the facilities that employ them. Such physicians must have admitting privileges to a hospital within thirty miles of the clinic where they perform abortions, and they also must follow the FDA

The Justice Department is accusing Texas of discrimination in passing its Voter ID law and new redistricting plan. However, Representative White disputed this assessment in an open letter to a member of Congress in favor of the Department's actions, pointing out that in 2012 black voter turnout was higher than white voter turnout in proportional terms on the national level. Representative White went on to label this move by the Justice Department as politicization of our judicial system, and he called on Congress to update the Voting Rights Act, as the Supreme Court directed, so that it could continue to be applied in a just and equitable manner.

Representative White is a proud proponent of the Voter ID law and voting rights for all Southeast Texans. As the Tenth Amendment guarantees, he believes Texas should be free to enact laws that follow the Constitution of the United States and the Constitution of Texas.

recommended guidelines in prescribing abortion-inducing drugs like RU-486. Furthermore, abortion clinics must now meet the same standards as ambulatory surgical centers, though they have until September of next year to comply.

These regulations ensure that women in the most difficult situations receive the care they deserve when undergoing this dangerous procedure. Though this law was met with fierce opposition by those who claim it will limit access to abortions and women's health care, the evidence points to the contrary. First, every abortion clinic in the state of Texas is located within thirty miles of a hospital, and two thirds of Texas abortion providers already have admitting privileges. Second, many of these clinics are for-profit businesses that have more than adequate resources to make the required upgrades.

Now that the battle to protect life has proceeded to the courts, Representative White is confident that our state leaders and justice system will resolve the dispute over HB 2 in a manner that preserves the hard-fought efforts of the Legislature in passing this monumental law.

Illegal Immigration

Representative White recently joined a multi-state coalition that seeks to "provide a network of state legislators who are committed to working together in demanding full cooperation among our federal, state and local governments in securing our borders against unlawful invasion."

Formed in 2007 and with members in 38 states, SSLI has filed amicus briefs in several high-profile

legal battles, including that over the Arizona law that would have allowed state and local law enforcement to partner with federal authorities and enhance safety and security in our local communities.

Representative White is honored to have been invited to this organization and looks forward to working with other members to solve our illegal immigration problems.

2nd Amendment Bills

The 83rd Legislature passed several key pieces of legislation that bolster Texans' right to keep and bear arms under the Second Amendment. To name just a few achievements, legislators passed laws to simplify existing code in regards to obtaining a concealed handgun license, allow CHL holders to store firearms in their vehicle on a college campus, and authorize the Attorney General to obtain an injunction against a municipality or county that adopts prohibited regulations regarding firearms, ammunition, or firearm supplies.

One of the major disappointments of the session was the failure to pass a bill that would have given students, faculty, and staff of public universities an opportunity to work together with campus administration to develop a policy for carrying concealed weapons on campus. Representative White was a co-author of HB 972, which passed the House but died in the Senate.

Following is a list of some of the most important Second Amendment bills passed:

- ★ **HB 48** - creates in statute a process for renewing a CHL online without taking a renewal course.
- ★ **HB 698** - requires close access for CHL holders to digital fingerprinting services in counties with a population of 46,000 or less.
- ★ **SB 864** - reduces CHL classroom hours from 10 to "not less than 4 or more than 6" without changing the test, the required material, or time spent on the shooting range.
- ★ **HB 333** - requires hotels and motels to provide advance notice if firearms are prohibited from the property.
- ★ **SB 987** - allows the Attorney General to obtain an injunction against a municipality or county that adopts prohibited regulations regarding firearms, ammunition, or firearm supplies.
- ★ **SB 1907** - allows students with a CHL to store firearms in their vehicles when parked on college or university parking lots.