

Trans-Texas Corridor and the Transportation Commission

Since the end of the 80th Legislative Session, many positive changes have been made at the Texas Transportation Commission. Some of the changes include the formal adoption of statutory principles to help address public concern over the direction of state transportation policy.

The Transportation Commission adopted a minute order reaffirming five statutory requirements and issuing two new protections for future transportation infrastructure development. Most importantly, TxDOT formally scrapped the original Trans-Texas Corridor I-69 (TTC I-69) route which would have cut large sections through House District 28 and other parts of Texas. TxDOT will now focus its attention to upgrading the existing US Highway 59 to create the long awaited Interstate 69 in order to meet the current and future demands of our transportation infrastructure.

Rep. Zerwas believes transportation infrastructure is critical to the future growth of Texas and is working to ensure that the state's transportation needs are met responsibly and with respect for private property rights. While the latest action by the Commission is a step in the right direction, we still have work ahead to ensure property rights are preserved.



Rep. Zerwas presides over Texas House during transportation debate.



Rep. Zerwas discusses issues affecting Fort Bend county with Rep Charlie Howard.

The Transportation Commission has formally agreed to adhere to the following statutory requirements:

- The state will retain ownership of its state highways and will not transfer this ownership to private developers.
- All contracts entered into by the Department will contain provisions that allow the state to buy back any facilities that have been leased to a private developer.
- The Department will only approve initial rates for toll projects in a public meeting and in coordination with local metropolitan planning organizations.
- Tolling will only be imposed on new capacity, and the amount of non-tolled lanes on existing roads will not be reduced.
- No contract entered into by the Department will include any limitations or prohibitions on improvements needed to existing or future highways.

The Transportation Commission minute order also issues the following property rights safeguards:

- The Department will utilize existing rights of way and easements when possible so that private property is not taken when it is not needed.
- Transportation projects will be planned, subject to environmental regulations, so that existing property is not split into separate tracts.

This announcement comes in a series of positive changes at TxDOT in response to an overwhelming amount of public concern and disapproval of the massive Trans-Texas Corridor which was approved in 2003 with little public input or legislative debate. After dozens of public hearings and town hall meetings across the state, TxDOT received over 28,000 public comments opposing the TTC.

Spotlight on Zerwas Legislation

Education

- Delivered a \$13 billion / 31.9% increase in public ed. funding; a \$2.4 billion / 12.9% increase in higher ed. funding and \$162 million for additional financial aid & student work study programs.
- Replaced exit-level TAKS test with end-of-course exams to keep schools accountable for student performance while moving away from wooden metrics
- Delivered a well-deserved raise to our retired teachers in the form of a 13th check
- Established Texas Tomorrow Fund II to allow families to lock in today's rates for their children's higher education needs

Environment/Energy

- Expanded the Texas Emissions Reduction Program (TERP) to reduce emissions by high-polluting vehicles from our roads
- Reduced statewide emissions from power plants by updating building energy codes and providing efficiency standards for state buildings
- Passed energy conservation legislation to reduce consumption during peak times and thus expand the capacity of existing power plants and transmission lines
- Worked to increase availability of renewable power production in Texas

Transportation

- Supported monumental legislation enacting a moratorium on the Trans-Texas Corridor (TTC) and Comprehensive Development Agreements (CDA)
- Improved transportation infrastructure and strengthened oversight of TxDOT
- Reformed unfair towing practices and updated towing restrictions in Fort Bend County

Public Safety

- Strengthened penalties for car break-ins
- Enacted 1st highway safety law addressing drivers over age of 85
- Required fingerprinting & background checks to prevent child predators from working at public school campuses
- Authorized \$100 million to protect and secure our border; including a \$65 million to aid border sheriffs and law enforcement groups



Rep. Zerwas receives gavel from Speaker Tom Craddick after passing his first house bill.

Health Care

- Passed Medicaid reforms to help enroll more of those who are eligible in the program and increased reimbursements to doctors and hospitals performing uncompensated care while maximizing efficiencies and cost containment strategies
- Reformed the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) to help more working Texans' children get the healthcare they need by eliminating the 90-day enrollment waiting period and extending the renewal cycle from 6 months to 12 months (Co-Author)
- Created program to expedite credentialing of doctors joining an established medical group to reduce out-of-network insurance costs to patients
- Passed voter-approved constitutional amendment creating the Cancer Prevention and Research Institute of Texas

Open Government

- Passed voter-approved constitutional amendment to require a recorded vote on final passage of all non-ceremonial legislation with results posted on the internet

Tax Relief

- Delivered \$14.2 billion in school property tax relief, the largest tax cut in Texas history
- Saved taxpayers \$600 million by abolishing the outdated telephone infrastructure tax
- Passed voter-approved constitutional amendment to lower the maximum homeowner appraisal cap from 30% to 10%, regardless of appraisal frequency

Citizen Questionnaire

Understanding your priorities is key to providing you with sound representation in Austin. Attached is a comprehensive questionnaire that touches a variety of issues. Please take a few minutes to fill out your responses and then return the questionnaire to my office at your convenience.

When answering the following questions, please use this scale to give me your position on these issues.

- 1 (strongly support)
- 2 (support)
- 3 (neutral)
- 4 (oppose)
- 5 (strongly oppose)

Tax Reform

Should Texas increase its sales tax revenue in order to eliminate school property taxes? And if so by how much? _____

Should Texas limit the amount of annual property appraisal increases? _____

Do you believe that all future budget surpluses should be returned to taxpayers? _____
If so, please explain how _____

Would you support extending Texas' tax free holiday in August? _____

Would you support indexing the state fuel tax to better finance transportation projects? _____

Public Education Ideas

Do you support diversifying public education by creating publicly funded schools with focuses in business, health, and other needed fields? _____

Do you support community colleges coordinating with local schools to prepare students for higher education? For example, dual credit course work. _____

Do you support school choice vouchers? _____

Do you support a revision of curriculum? _____
If so, please explain _____

Health Care Reform

What policy do you think Texas should adopt?:
(Please circle your choice)

a.) Mandate Individual Health Insurance Coverage

b.) Provide statewide universal healthcare coverage

c.) Reduce Government Healthcare programs and use savings to help help individuals and small businesses pay for private coverage.

d.) other: please write out your solution here: _____

Border Security/ Immigration Reform

Should Texas better enforce our Federal Immigration Laws? _____

Do you think more funding needs to be appropriated to Border and Homeland Security? _____

Should Texans be required to show photo identification when voting in an election? _____

Do you think that employers who knowingly employ undocumented workers should face tougher penalties in Texas? _____

For this section, please share with me your priorities for seeing your tax dollars spent by ranking the following areas of funding from highest (1) to lowest (9)

- _____ Public Education
- _____ Health and Human Services
- _____ Parks and Wildlife
- _____ Transportation Infrastructure
- _____ Public Safety/Criminal Justice
- _____ Higher Education
- _____ Border and Homeland Security
- _____ Economic Development
- _____ Other _____

Your Address

Name: _____

Address (1): _____

Address (2): _____

City/State/Zip: _____

E-Mail: _____

Phone: _____

Representative Zerwas is Preparing Legislative Agenda for 81st Legislature

Since the ending of the 80th legislative Session, Representative Zerwas has been discussing and working with constituents to prepare legislation for next session.

Constituents may submit proposals for Representative Zerwas to file as legislation for the 81st Legislature through a variety of ways. Please contact Representative Zerwas' capitol office and ask for a "Request for Sponsorship" form. We can e-mail, fax or mail it to you.

This option helps to ensure your voice is heard in Austin and Representative Zerwas encourages your participation in the legislative process.

Revised Margins Tax

Taxable Entities

- Corporations
- Limited Liability Companies
- Partnerships (with exceptions)
- Professional Associations
- Joint Ventures
- Business Trusts
- Other legal entities

In the third called special session of the 79th Legislature, lawmakers voted to enact House Bill 3 to restructure the Texas franchise tax. This proposal came at a time when Texas was forced to reevaluate school funding by the Texas Supreme Court. HB 3 was an attempt to close many loopholes that were routinely exploited by some Texas businesses and to shift some of the burden of school funding from school property taxes to taxes on businesses. The new tax structure took effect January 1st, 2008.

In 2007, the 80th Legislature again revised the franchise tax with HB 3928. This bill clarified language in HB 3 with substantive changes, including the increase of the small business exemption from businesses with total revenues of \$300,000 in total revenue to business with up to \$600,000 in total revenue. While Representative Zerwas supported this margin tax revision legislation during the 80th legislative session, he remains opposed to the margins tax passed during the 79th Legislature. Zerwas looks forward to finding an alternative to the current tax system to reduce the burden on small business, the backbone of the local and Texas economy.



Rep. Zerwas and Rep. John Davis work on Health and Human Service Appropriations.



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John Zerwas, M.D.

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Dear Friends and Neighbors,

When the 80th Legislative Session ended on May 30, 2007, I learned that date was just the beginning. Since leaving Austin and getting back into beautiful House District 28, I've been constantly on the road attending various meetings, town halls, and events with you, determining needs and finding solutions for our community and state.

After the many town halls and public hearings regarding the Trans-Texas Corridor, I am confident we are making headway in coming to a viable alternative. I hope you can share in my enthusiasm and excitement, knowing we might be getting closer to a solution that won't destroy our majestic views, private property rights, and the places we all call home.

I look forward to continuing to serve as your State Representative at the Capitol in Austin. To ensure that your voice is heard, please return the enclosed questionnaire. Together, we can make Texas an even better place to live.

John Zerwas
 State Representative



Committee Assignments
 Appropriations ★ House Administration ★ Land & Resource Management, Chairman of Budget & Oversight

State of Texas Helpful Numbers

Child, Disabled & Elder Abuse Hotline.....1-800-252-5400	Aging & Disability Services, Dept.1-512-438-3011
Consumer Protection.....1-800-621-0508	Child Support Info Line.....1-800-252-8014
Crime Victims Services.....1-800-983-9933	Commission on Environmental Quality.....1-512-239-1000
Drug & Alcohol Abuse Hotline.....1-800-784-6776	Housing & Community Affairs, Dept.1-512-475-3800
Income Assistance & Food Stamps.....1-877-556-3663	Dept. of Public Safety.....1-512-424-2000
Medicare.....1-800-633-4227	Roadside Emergency.....1-800-525-5555
Medicaid.....1-800-252-8263	Workforce Commission.....1-800-939-6631
Nursing Home Complaints & Info.....1-800-458-9858	Workers' Compensation Application Process...1-888-4TX-COMP
State Bar Legal Referral Service.....1-800-252-9690	Injured Worker's Hotline.....1-800-252-7031

Texas House of Representatives

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