

THE STATE OF TEXAS



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DISTRICT 42~LAREDO

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 23, 2015

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Governor Abbott Signs Several Bills by Rep. Raymond from Laredo

Below is a summary of the bills Representative Raymond passed during the 84th legislative session

Editor's Note: This is the first of two reports by Rep. Raymond on his accomplishments in the 84th legislative session.

LAREDO – The veto period for the 84th Regular Session of the Texas Legislature has expired with several important pieces of legislation passed by Representative Richard Peña Raymond, Chairman of the House Committee on Human Services, now on their way to becoming law.

“I’m very proud of the work we were able to do this session that helps better the lives of Laredoans and Texans all over the state,” Rep. Raymond said. “Working together with constituents, City of Laredo and Webb County officials, we achieved many of our goals for Laredo and Texas,” added Rep Raymond.

In addition to the legislation Representative Raymond passed, he also secured funding for a summer law school program at Texas A&M International University in Laredo. This program will be offered through the Texas A&M School of Law for a summer course in international law, with a focus on Mexico and Latin America. **“This law school class will be open to students from all law schools. We are breaking new ground in offering a law school class in South Texas which focuses on trade and energy,” added Rep. Raymond.** Representative Raymond came up with concept and was able to get support for this exciting new program. The first class will be offered in the summer of 2017.

Governor Abbott signed many significant pieces of legislation passed by Rep. Raymond, including:

HB 2035 by Raymond, allowing Laredo and other border communities to further regulate certain alcohol-related businesses. Under **HB 2035**, governmental bodies could place reasonable restrictions on the location of such alcohol-related businesses--requiring them to be located a certain distance away from a school or church, for instance. Local regulation of businesses dominated by alcohol sales is intended to keep communities safe and meet the regulatory needs of individual jurisdictions.

HB 1463 by Raymond, ensuring that appraisers make extra efforts before cancelling a senior citizen's homestead tax exemption. Because senior citizens may struggle with mobility issues, hearing or vision impairment, and other ailments, they should be given additional time and opportunities to respond to appraisal districts before having their taxes raised. **HB 1463** seeks to provide greater security for our parents and grandparents in their dealings with county appraisal districts.

HB 1464 by Raymond, extends the same provisions offered in **HB 1463** to senior citizens' agricultural and open-space tax exemptions.

HB 2861 by Raymond, authorizing the creation of an overweight vehicle corridor in Laredo. As the nation's largest inland port, Laredo is responsible for a large portion of the state's commercial activity. Production and shipping companies, the city of Laredo, and economic development corporations support the designation of an overweight vehicle corridor to avoid unnecessary stops and promote efficiency. The permits for Laredo's overweight corridor will cost considerably less than DMV-issued permits and will allow for greater efficiency and increased trade volume.

HCR 34 by Raymond, naming the new DPS crime lab in Laredo after Oscar "O.J." Hale, chief investigator for the Webb County District Attorney's office for more than 40 years. A Vietnam veteran, Mr. Hale began his career in law enforcement as a police officer in 1968, and was quickly promoted to detective and then chief investigator. Throughout his career, he has set a standard of excellence for the community and for law enforcement throughout the state. As the Texas Department of Public Safety completes a new crime lab in Laredo, it is only fitting that the facility be named in Mr. Hale's honor.

HB 315 by Raymond, establishing "In God We Trust" specialty license plates, which will be available through the Department of Motor Vehicles. All proceeds from the license plates will go to the Texas Veterans Commission to assist Veterans.

HB 1678 by Raymond, continuing the Governor's Committee on People with Disabilities. The Committee serves as a central source of information on a wide array of disability-related issues and works to influence state policy, educate people on disability-related laws, and raise awareness of the achievements of and barriers faced by people with

disabilities. Under Sunset provisions, the Committee would be abolished on September 1, 2015 if not extended by the Legislature. This bill continues the Committee for 12 years, until 2027. It also removes provisions from the committee's statute that do not align with the committee's purpose and resources.

HB 388 by Raymond, extending protective orders against certain family violence offenders who have subsequently been incarcerated. The bill aims to give victims and their families peace of mind in the period immediately following the offender's release.

HB 3523 by Raymond, improving Medicaid acute care services and long-term care services and supports. This bill clarifies and enhances current law by requiring an evaluation of each transition stage and making recommendations for continued improvements; extending certain timelines; and assuring meaningful coordination and collaboration in the implementation of the system redesign between the Health and Human Services Commission and the I/DD Redesign Advisory Committee.

HB 2033 by Raymond, granting counties the authority to require subdivision developers to submit a locally compatible digital map with geo-referencing of approved subdivision plats and related infrastructure. This way, counties will not have to spend additional money staffing their digital mapping divisions, while new subdivisions will be provided with adequate resources and emergency support from the counties.

HB 2463 by Raymond, continuing and improving the Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services. This bill redirects independent living funding to the network of centers for independent living to improve local access to those services. It also strengthens oversight and monitoring of case workers to control spending and ensure effective delivery of services, and establishes two existing programs in statute to provide clearer direction and purpose.

HB 2789 by Raymond, requiring the Department of Aging and Disability Services to adopt trauma-informed care training for employees who work directly with individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities in state supported living centers and intermediate care facilities. The need to address trauma is increasingly viewed as an important component of effective service delivery for persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities who are receiving state-funded direct care services.

HB 1679 by Raymond, continuing the Texas Council for Developmental Disabilities, which engages in advocacy, capacity building, and systemic change activities that promote self-determination for people with developmental disabilities and their families. The Council is subject to the Sunset Act and would be abolished on September 1, 2015, unless continued by the Legislature. HB 1679 continues the Council for 12 years, until 2027.

HB 1219 by Raymond, allowing prospective funeral directing and embalming students to begin their apprenticeships before enrolling in mortuary school. This bill will provide an opportunity for prospective funeral directors and embalmers to experience the demands of

the funeral service industry and assess their desire to commit to such a demanding profession prior to enrolling in and paying for an educational program.

HB 1386 by Raymond, removing an outdated provision that allowed only one counsel to represent a municipal court defendant. This bill updates the statute to reflect the common understanding of court procedure, whereby a defendant may be represented by a team of attorneys working in consultation with one another. All defendants are entitled to secure the best representation available to them, and HB 1386 seeks to remove this arbitrary restriction on defendants' rights.

HB 1428 by Raymond, creating a preapproval process for the Homebuyers Assistance Program, which is administered by the Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs and provides working low-income families, including many Texans with disabilities, with financial assistance to help buy a home. This bill improves the program's application procedures to allow for greater efficiency and financial security

HB 872 by Raymond, establishing new reactivation procedures for former police officers. Because there is a shortage of new police academy graduates, many sheriff's departments would like to be able to recruit former officers without forcing them to go through the police academy again. This bill will help compensate for the shortage of new graduates while encouraging former officers to rejoin the force.

HB 4001 by Raymond, streamlining the licensing process for certain providers of home and community support services. The bill amends existing law to regulate the provision of habilitation services by licensed home and community services agencies. The bill also clarifies responsibilities related to the provision of Medicaid services for these providers. Additionally, the bill authorizes the Department of Aging and Disability Services (DADS) to assess and collect administrative penalties from providers participating in the Home and Community-based Services (HCS) and Texas Home Living (TxHmL) waiver programs for violations of law or rule.

Sponsored bills passed by Rep. Raymond:

SB 1129, prohibiting the inhumane "hog-tying" of persons with mental illness during emergency transportation.

SB 914, establishing a council on long-term care facilities.

SB 46, protecting the privacy of business owners by keeping tax appraisal photos of business interiors confidential.

SB 306, amending the content of the annual State Commission on Judicial Conduct report.

SB 59, exempting family violence victims services from competitive bidding requirements in order to deliver services more quickly and efficiently.

SB 203, continuing the functions of the Texas Health Services Authority.

SB 304, increasing penalties for nursing home violations.

Representative Richard Peña Raymond represents House District 42, which is entirely in the city of Laredo. Rep. Raymond chairs the Human Services Committee and is a member of the powerful Texas Sunset Advisory Commission and is former Vice-Chairman of the House Appropriations Committee.

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