



Capitol Comments

Volume II February 8, 2013



Representative

Ron Simmons

UNDER THE DOME

The structure of our state government here in Texas is really a brilliant design for those of us who believe in the ability of the individual as opposed to the power of the State. While certainly much work is done by legislators all year long, our legislature is only in official session for 140 days (not including any special sessions) every other year. During that time, our state constitution prohibits the passing of any new law for the first 60 days. This of course leads to fewer laws being passed. Hopefully, it also requires us as legislators to focus on those items that are most important to Texans and only those items where government plays a necessary role.

Within the first few weeks of Session, each Member submits a Committee Preference Card to the office of the Speaker of the House. House Rules require the Speaker to allocate a certain number of slots on each committee based on service seniority (how long a Member has served in the House) with the remaining slots being the subjective choice of the Speaker. I received one of my seniority preference committee picks - Elections. I was also assigned to the Homeland Security and Public Safety Committee.

There is nothing more important to the continuation of a republic or democracy than fair and peaceful elections. The integrity of our election process in our country and our state is one of the key distinguishing factors that will allow Texas to prosper and its people to maintain our bold independent spirit. I am honored to serve on the Elections Committee.

Homeland Security and Public Safety is another committee that deals with issues that undergird our ability to live in a free society. The Texas Department of Public Safety as well as our Emergency Preparedness operations falls under the jurisdiction of this committee. My main goal is to make sure that we minimize any loss of liberty in the name of security. We all want ourselves and loved ones safe, but we must be vigilant, as liberty surrendered is not easily regained. I look forward to the challenges and opportunities of serving on the Homeland Security and Public Safety Committee.

My staff and I also continue to meet with many different constituent groups who come to visit the Capitol on a daily basis. From the Denton County Medical Society, to Farmers Insurance Agents, to Communities in Schools, the process of citizens holding their government accountable is truly grassroots democracy in action.



Rep. Ron Simmons with Denton County Commissioner Andy Eads, DISD Superintendent Dr. Jamie Wilson, and members of Communities in Schools

Finally, I have recently signed on as coauthor of several bills that I believe are positive moves for our state. HB 760 puts the educational program CSCOPE under the jurisdiction of the State Board of Education, the same as all other curricula in Texas public schools. I also signed on to a bill by fellow Denton County Representative Pat Fallon to require that large school districts video record and make available all school board meetings. Lewisville ISD already does this, but many across the state do not. This is a good move for transparent government.

IN THE DISTRICT

Please continue to remember Christian Community Action (CCA) and the families touched by the gas explosion last month in Lewisville. Your donations to this outstanding organization are very much appreciated and efficiently used. Often when tragedies occur in the community there is a sudden outpouring of support. Then rather quickly, life gets in the way, and our focus shifts to other things personally or community based. This is normal and understandable. But this does not change the underlying need of these families.

Many of you were active participants in voicing your opinion on the proposed new package liquor store proposed on the northeast corner of Hebron and Charles on the border of Hebron and Carrollton. We were successful in our request, and the court ruled to deny the license. We have learned that the intended proprietor has decided to appeal that decision, so there will be another hearing on February 27 at 1:30 P.M. We again need to send our letters of concern and protest to the TABC and Court. (Please fax to Denton County Court #2 at 940-349-2121. Please reference Case CV201202941 ase CV20120294.) Also, please plan to attend the hearing, located at 1450 E.

McKinney Street, Suite 4325 (4th floor), Denton TX 76209-4524 if you can. We must continue to be diligent and we need your involvement.

Another issue in District 65 is the Camelot Landfill located on the border of Carrollton and Lewisville, just behind the Coyote Ridge residential development. Republic, (the current operator of the landfill on behalf of Farmers Branch), has filed an application with the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) to essentially double the size of the landfill and extend the time period for which new trash will be accepted at the landfill by decades. In my opinion, and that of the cities of Lewisville and Carrollton, this is unwise and carries an added risk to public health and acceptable environmental quality. Senator Jane Nelson and I recently met with the TCEQ and voiced our concerns. They assured us that our input would be given the utmost consideration. The TCEQ staff is currently completing an internal report to submit to their executive director. Upon his review there will be another period for public comment and hearings. We will continue to monitor this situation and let you know when we all need to spring into action again and work hard to stop this trash pile from becoming a reality.

It is a great honor to serve you. Please feel free to call on us if you have any questions or comments. We value your input.

Best regards,



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