



Capitol Comments

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Special Edition

For the Record: Fiscal Accountability and Transparency



Representative
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We are over halfway through the 83rd Legislative Session, and we've cast numerous votes on wide range of issues. Throughout the process, there has been a great deal of talk about what it means to be a fiscal conservative, both on final passage of bills and on individual amendments to bills on the floor. Different organizations try to measure our progress in different ways by highlighting a series of record votes we take on the floor. From Obamacare Medicaid expansion, to preserving funding of school choice, and defunding the Texas Film Commission, we have considered many issues and voted on many bills and amendments.

My goal is to make voting decisions based on a conservative view of government. With that in mind, I want to give you a quick summary of a few votes I have cast in support of fiscal conservatism. These measures will also improve government efficiency, transparency, and accountability.

Amendments to SB1 (The Budget Bill):

- "YES" to a 2% budget cut to fund the water plan (Simmons #266-267) - My amendments were adopted by the House as part of a contingency to fund the State Water Infrastructure Fund of Texas (SWIFT), also known as the state water plan. If we cannot find a way to raise \$2 billion to fund the water plan without "busting the budget cap," this amendment would do so by simply implementing a 2 cent, across the board cut on every dollar in the state budget.
- "NO" to defunding parental school choice (Herrero #95) - I helped lead the fight on the floor to preserve the option of expanding parental school choice in the next two years. An amendment closing down that option, by Rep. Abel Herrero, unfortunately passed. Without changes by the Conference Committee, we will not be able to have state money "follow the child" to a school that best fits their needs as determined by the parent.
- "NO" to expanding Obamacare Medicaid in Texas (Zerwas #52, Burnam #51) - I voted "NO" to the Obama Medicaid expansion provision the first time it came up and then voted again on the motion to reconsider, which effectively stripped it from the budget the second time.

- "YES" to defunding Texas Film Commission and reducing Historical Commission Funding (Schaefer/Leach #71-73) - I voted "NO" to tabling an amendment, which means I supported defunding the Film Commission and reducing the Historical Commission funding as a fiscally responsible move to return government to more basic functions. Sadly, the amendment failed.
- "YES" to reducing Commission on the Arts (Simpson #120) and Economic Development and Tourism (Simpson #116-117) to fund volunteer firefighters - I voted to support our volunteer firefighters *two times* by cutting funds to other programs that lower priorities and moving the funds to where it is needed more--first responders. Sadly, both amendments failed.

Amendments to House Bill 4 (The Water Bill):

- Accountability Amendment (Simmons #6-7) - My accountability amendments were adopted on a voice vote; these measures will prevent funds in the State Water Infrastructure Fund of Texas (SWIFT) from ever being misused for the "budget gimmick" called certification where the funds are applied to "balance" the budget.
- Transparency Amendment (Simmons #27) - My amendment, which I wrote with the help of Rep. Capriglione, was adopted on a voice vote and calls for increased transparency of fund investments and posting project details on the Internet.

House Bill 468 (Texas Emerging Technology Fund Reform):

- Transparency Amendment (Simmons, et al. #4) - My amendment, joint authored by several other Representatives, promotes transparency in the Emerging Technology Fund. It requires information from successful applicants to be disclosed as public record, unless otherwise noted as confidential under law. It was adopted on a voice vote.

If you have any comments, concerns or suggestions on these issues or any others, I would welcome your feedback. As previously mentioned, this is just a small "snapshot" of my voting record this first half of Session. I will continue to stand firm and fight for the values you elected me to represent in the Texas House of Representatives--small, efficient government with prioritized spending, accountability, and transparency for every dollar spent. Thank you for the faith you have placed in me to do so.

Best regards,



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