



Capitol Comments

STAFF INTRODUCTION

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The 84th Legislative Session is underway. All of the inauguration speeches are over and the two respective chambers of the Texas Legislature, the House and Senate, have handled our administrative duties early in session with the passage of rules and housekeeping resolutions. Senate committee assignments have been made and House committee assignments are expected to be issued as early as next week. Bills cannot be considered on the floor of the House or Senate until the 61st day of session. Despite the headlines that are already coming out from Austin, the first 60 days of session could be thought of as the *calm before the storm*.

Last week, we asked for your feedback on some bills that may be filed concerning Tesla and Walmart. I greatly appreciate all of those who responded. If you have not had a chance to respond please do so. While there is still a lot of information to process and it is uncertain as to if legislation on these two issues will even reach the House floor, we will keep you informed.

I want to continue having an open dialogue with you as the session continues. We also want to keep you informed about the happenings here in Austin and where you live in House District 65. In order to do so, weekly editions of *Capitol Comments* to provide updates and frequently request your input on specific issues.

Another way we can foster an ongoing dialogue is through our excellent staff. I encourage you to communicate with our capitol and district office regularly to keep us informed about the issues that matter to you most. With that in mind, I want to take this opportunity to introduce you to the staff before the legislative session heats up and transitions from *calm* to *storm*. Each staff member stands ready to serve you, as do I

Ben Lancaster - Chief of Staff

A north Texas native, Ben Lancaster grew up in Lewisville/ Highland Village and graduated from Marcus High School. Ben has been a part of my team since August of 2012, serving as Legislative Director during the 83rd Legislative Session before being promoted to Chief of Staff in August of 2013. Ben graduated with special honors from the University of Texas at Austin, where he studied government and philosophy and spent two years as an intern in Representative Tan Parker's office.

Ebony Daughtry - District Director

Born and raised in Washington, Ebony Daughtry graduated from the University of North Texas and received her MBA from Texas Women's University. Ebony worked as a home and community based services coordinator at Denton County MHMR before she joined my team in April of 2014. Ebony has the important position of District Director, as she is the first and closest point of contact for constituents and serves as my eyes and ears when I am away from the district. Ebony is also a Staff Sergeant in the US Air National Guard, serving part-time since 2003.

Zach Flores - Legislative Director

A north Texas native, Zach Flores is a proud Coppell High School and University of Texas graduate. While at UT, Zach was a member of the renowned Longhorn Band and double-majored in government and Spanish. Zach got his start in the Capitol building as a college intern in my office during the 83rd Legislative. Zach joined my staff full time as a Legislative Aide after graduating from the University of Texas in May of 2014. Zach continues to prove himself worthy of additional responsibility, as he was promoted to the position of Legislative Director at the beginning of this year.

Christopher Gruning - Legislative Aide

Born and raised in southwest Florida and a graduate of Mississippi College, Christopher Gruning is a grad student at the Texas A&M Bush School of Government. As a participant in the Bush School's Capstone program, Christopher joined my team full time in January, 2015. Christopher's studies are concentrated in education policy, which led him to serve as my point person on all education policy issues, among his many duties as Legislative Aide. Christopher will work the entire 84th Legislative Session before he returns to College Station to complete his Master's degree.

Sarah Landsman - Legislative Aide

A native Texan, Sarah Landsman has lived in Arlington, McAllen and Lake Livingston. Sarah is an undergraduate at Sam Houston State University. Sarah was able to join my staff full time at the begging of this year thanks to her participation in the prestigious Sam Houston Austin Internship Program. Like Christopher, Sarah will work full time for the entire legislative session and will receive course credit for her work before returning to school to finish her degree. Sarah was a part time intern during the 83rd Legislative Session when she was still in high school, and has been an active volunteer for non-profit organizations that work with human trafficking victims and raise awareness about the issue in Texas.

Matthew Hamner - Capitol Intern

An undergraduate student at the University of Texas' McCombs School of Business, Matthew Hamner hails from the city of Houston. Matthew started his internship in my Capitol office at the beginning of the 2014 fall semester. As a part time student intern, Matthew serves an integral role in the day to day operations of the Capitol office. Matthew's work ethic is second to none, as he routinely finishes projects ahead of schedule and always provides excellent work.

Jacob Weaver - Capitol Intern

Another native north Texan, Jacob Weaver grew up in Arlington, Texas. Jacob is currently studying government at the University of Texas, and started interning in my Capitol office at the beginning of the 2014 fall semester. Like Matthew, Jacob is a very necessary component to the operation of my Capitol office in his role as a part time student intern. Jacob has a knack for public policy and frequently volunteers to come in to the office on his off days, despite being active in several student organizations and being a full time student.

As always, please stay in touch with me and feel free to drop by my District Office, follow me on Facebook or find me on the [House Website](#) to hear about upcoming events.

Thank you, it is truly an honor and a privilege to serve as your State Representative.

Best regards,



Ron Simmons
State Representative

House District 65

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