

# *Capitol Comments*

## **Bill Filing Deadline**

**Volume II, Issue 9**

**March 13th, 2015**



*At the dais with Peter, my three year old grandson.*

The legislature kicked it into high gear this week as the bill filing deadline approached. Today, March 13th, is the last day to file bills for the 84th Legislative Session. In total, the House filed 4,122 bills.

## Highlights

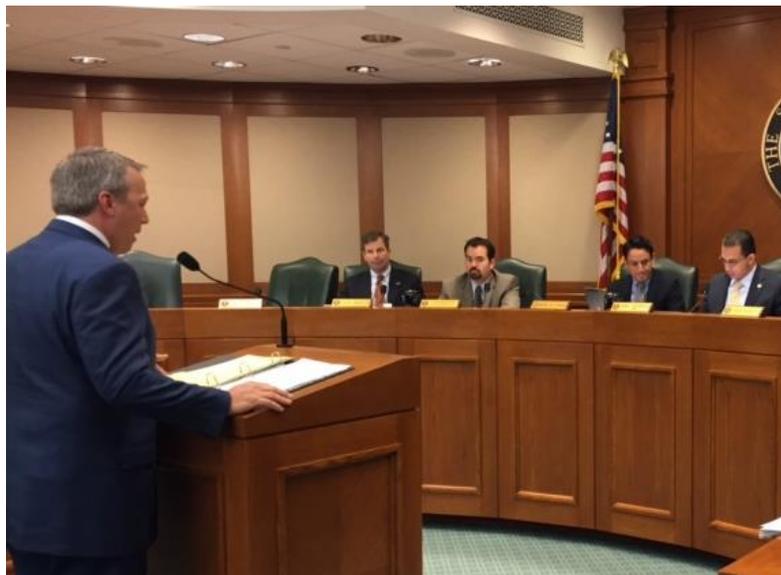
### Pirelli World Challenge- Autism Awareness



*With families from Autism Society of Central Texas (right) who came out to watch the race.*

This past Saturday, the Autism Society of Central Texas hosted children with Autism and their families at the Circuit of the Americas race track for the Pirelli World Challenge races. Autism Society's sponsored driver, Jason Cherry, earned 4th place during his race. It was an honor to be a part of the festivities and to help promote autism awareness during the races. Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is now the fastest growing developmental disability in our nation, now affecting 1 in 68 children under age 21. This session, I filed House Bills 2703 and 3282 to help children with Autism, both of which are summarized below.

### House Bill 1286



*Laying out HB 1286 in front of the Criminal Jurisprudence Committee*

On Wednesday I had my first opportunity to lay out a bill this session. Inspired by the sad story of an autistic boy harrassed in Ohio, I authored House Bill 1286. HB 1286 strengthens the definition of a "disabled individual" in the penal code so that people with disabilities are better protected under Texas law from malicious acts against them. Crimes against the children, the elderly, and the disabled carry harsher penalties under state law.

## **Committee Action**

### Business and Industry

The House Committee on Business and Industry met this week. This meeting served as our first time hearing bills referred to the Business and Industry. During the hearing, five bills were presented to the committee on topics such as employee compensation, propane tanks on residential property, and residential electric generators. As the Business and Industry Committee moves forward in considering these and other bills, I look forward to the opportunities to positively affect employees, employers, and homeowners across our state.

### Transportation

The Transportation Committee had another busy week. The weekly hearing took place on Thursday with bills being heard on everything from registration fees to the mowing of a right-of-way. All of these bills were left pending for further consideration.

In the capitol comments last week I asked for opinions on texting while driving, and am grateful for every response received. The majority of those who responded were in support of a statewide ban on texting while driving. In response to overwhelming public support, the House Transportation Committee reported HB 80 favorably out of committee on Tuesday. HB 80, filed by Representative Tom Craddick, will be referred to the Calendars committee; from there it will be sent to the House floor for a vote.

## **Bill Update**

In the final week of bill filing, I filed several bills relating to a variety of issues. Below is a short summary for a few of the bills.

### HB 3008 - relating to eliminating the wrongful birth cause of action

Under current Texas law, parents of a child with a disability may sue medical providers for failing to inform them that their child would be born with a disability (the "loss" that parents would claim is that they had the disabled baby rather than abort it). This sends the message that a disabled child's life is worth less than that of a non-disabled child. Additionally, the threat of malpractice may influence a healthcare provider to recommend an abortion to avoid liability.

HB 3008 statutorily removes "Wrongful Birth" as a cause of action to sue for malpractice to demonstrate that the life of a disabled child is worth just as much as any other child.

HB 3055- *relating to assessment of public school students enrolled in a special education program*

House Bill 3055 exempts a special education student from being administered an assessment test if their parent or guardian has submitted a written statement to the school or district. If exempted, the student's admission, review, and dismissal committee (ARD) shall develop, in consultation with the student's parent or guardian, an individual progress plan for the student.

HB 3282- *relating to the establishment by the commissioner of education of an autism program to provide applied behavior analysis services to students with autism spectrum disorder and to the coordination of autism services in this state*

HB 3282 places state's autism program under the Texas Education Agency (TEA). The aim of this legislation is to increase the number of children served per year by the program through cooperation of school districts, university programs, and local community service providers.

## Upcoming Events and Dates

### Bill Hearings

I will be laying out the following bills in committee hearings during this upcoming week:

HB 279- *relating to eligibility for a public education grant of certain students receiving special education services*

- Will be heard by the Public Education Committee on March 17th

HB 281- *relating to a limitation on the expansion of certain landfills.*

- Will be heard by the Environmental Regulation Committee on March 17th

HB 1284- *relating to the review by certain governmental entities of a permit application for a solid waste facility.*

- Will be heard by the Environmental Regulation Committee on March 17th

HB 1288- *relating to the elimination of straight-party voting.*

- Will be heard by the Elections Committee on March 16th

### Bill Filing Deadline

All bills were filed today before 6:00 PM. After this point, members may not submit any more bills for consideration. On Monday (the 61<sup>st</sup> day of session), the House and Senate can begin considering bills in their respective chambers.

## What's Your Opinion?

This week, we heard a bill in the House Transportation Committee that would allow the commissioner's court of each county in Texas to decide if they want to increase the annual automobile registration fee by \$10 to support transportation infrastructure projects.

Would you support giving each county this option?

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,



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