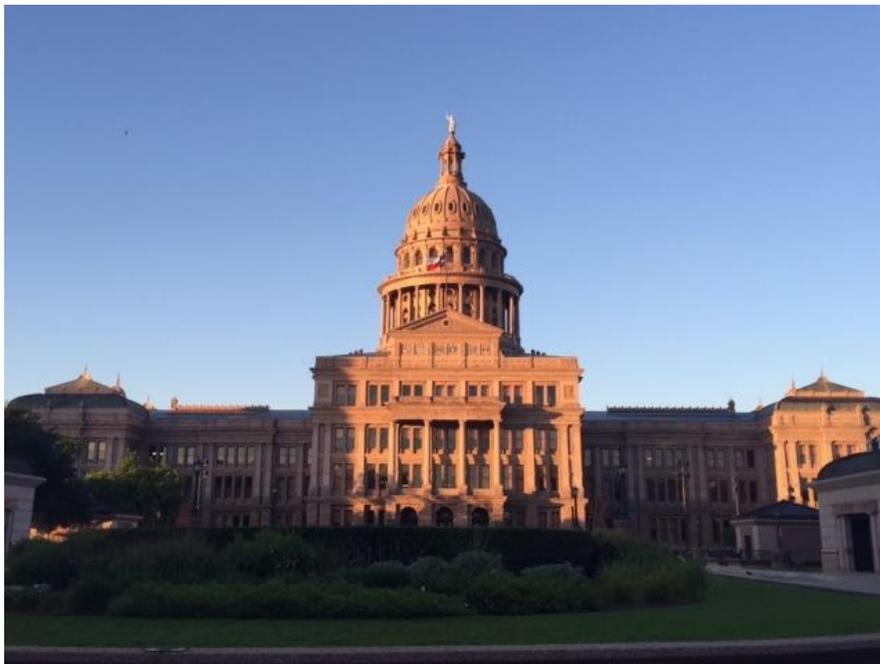




Capitol Comments

Tax Relief & TxDOT Oversight

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As of today, the 84th Session is in its final month. Even as we near the end, the legislature is still going full force. The members of this legislature are dedicated to the hard work necessary to accomplish its goals. This week we achieved one such goal. The House passed \$4.9 billion worth of tax relief that will affect every single Texan in the state. Additionally, your State Representative passed HB 20 from the House, landmark legislation to ensure that TxDOT spends your tax dollars in a transparent, accountable manner.

House Highlights

House Bill 20

House Bill 20, a bill on which I am a primary author, received overwhelming support from members of the Texas House on Friday. Among other measures, HB 20 requires the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) to provide information regarding transportation funding decisions in a manner that is accessible and understandable to the public. House Bill 20 was filed to provide a framework to ensure transportation dollars are administered in an objective, transparent manner with accountability for every dollar spent.

TxDOT has publicly articulated the need for an additional \$5 billion per year for highway investments in order to maintain 2010 road condition and congestion levels since the 2013 Legislative Session. The legislature responded in 2013 by proposing a constitutional amendment that was approved by nearly 80 percent of Texas voters in 2014 and provided an additional \$1.7 billion in transportation funding. However, more funding is still needed. While there have been numerous efforts to increase transportation funding this session, public concern regarding how and why transportation funds are spent continues to grow, placing the infrastructure needs of the state at odds with the public desire for greater transparency and efficiency.

HB 20 requires TxDOT to implement a performance-based planning and programming process to provide the legislature with indicators that quantify and qualify progress toward attaining department goals and objectives. HB 20 also requires the department to establish a scoring system to prioritize projects seeking state funding. The bill establishes temporary House and Senate select committees to provide oversight as the provisions of the bill are implemented by TxDOT.

Click [here](#) to see the full text of HB 20.

House Bills 31 and House Bill 32

This week, the Texas House of Representatives voted overwhelmingly in support of a pair of bills that will provide \$4.9 billion in tax relief for Texans. House Bill 31 would reduce the state sales tax rate from 6.25 percent to 5.95 percent. House Bill 32 would reduce franchise tax rates by 25 percent. As a Joint author of HB 32 and a coauthor of HB 31, I am extremely proud of these two bills.

By passing a budget that is \$2 billion below the spending limit, the House left plenty of room for tax cuts. As a businessman, I know that it's the private sector, not the government, which creates jobs and economic opportunity. HB 31 and HB 32 will put more money back in the pockets of every hardworking Texan, which is exactly what I came here to do.

There are many reasons why I favor the steps taken by the House. Unlike property tax cuts, which cost the state budget and grow in cost with time, the sales tax reduction simply means the state collects less. Furthermore, the proposals the House passed shrink the size of government instead of shifting it. If the state government cuts property taxes, local governments can easily raise taxes before Texans even begin to feel the impact. Legislators came to Austin to shrink government, not shift the tax burden from local government to the state.

Click [here](#) to see the full text of HB 31.

Click [here](#) to see the full text of HB 32.

District 65 Connections

Recognizing a New Eagle Scout



With Phillip Hinojosa, his family, and Representative Celia Israel, his great-aunt (left); passing a resolution in honor of Phillip (right)

On Tuesday I had the honor of recognizing Phillip Hinojosa of Troop Number 753 in Carrollton for attaining the rank of Eagle Scout. Phillip has distinguished himself outside the world of scouting as well. He is a member of the Creekview High School power lifting, track and field, and varsity football teams. It is an honor to represent young men like Phillip.

Marcus High School Orchestra



The award-winning Marcus High School orchestra performed in the Capitol rotunda on Friday, May 1st. The music program at Marcus is one of the strongest in the country, garnering the 2015 TMEA State Honor Band award, countless sweepstakes honors from the UIL, and an unprecedented 5 straight State Marching Band championships. I'm proud to serve Marcus Marauder families in Highland Village and Lewisville.

Lewisville ISD Principes Visit

On Wednesday I had the honor of meeting with a delegation from the Lewisville Independent School District. Lewisville ISD has met Texas accountability standards on student achievement, student progress, closing performance gaps, and postsecondary readiness. Our community is lucky to have such great schools.



With the delegation from the Lewisville Independent School District

Back in the District



Veterans Court

The Denton County Veterans Court serves a resource for our returned heroes. Pictured here are District attorney Paul Johnson, Judge Garcia, and the veterans court with HD 65 district director and veteran Ebony Daughtry in her USAF dress blues.

For more information on the Denton County Veterans Court, follow this link: <http://bit.ly/1bOaigH>

Committee Action

Business and Industry

The Business and Industry Committee met this week to hear 7 new bills and vote on other bills pending in the committee. The committee heard bills on issues including gratuity payment to employees, tree removal, burial benefits, and repossession of aircraft.

One of the bills, HB 1620, related to job protection for volunteer emergency responders, such as volunteer firefighters. Currently, concerns exist that these volunteers could lose their jobs due to the extended absence required to serve their communities. This bill would provide volunteer emergency responder with job protection by prohibiting certain employers from firing or discriminating against an employee who is a volunteer emergency responder and absent from their work. The bill entitles a volunteer emergency responder to 14 days per year of unexcused job absences; however, the employer can excuse the employee for more time off.

To see a list of bills heard in the House Committee on Business and Industry, click [here](#).

To see the full text of HB 1199, click [here](#).

Transportation

The transportation committee met on Thursday to hear bills; just two hours later, the committee was interrupted when the House convened. After a long day of engaging and sometimes heated debate, the committee met again and heard bills late into the night. There were over a hundred registered witnesses for the hearing. Though these nights are long, I appreciate the dedicated citizens who make it out to Austin and witness on bills. Witness testimony is essential to the legislative process.

To see a list of bills heard in the House Committee on Transportation, click [here](#).

To see a list of bills heard in the House Subcommittee on Long-term Infrastructure Planning, click [here](#).

My Bill Update

The following bills were voted out of committee and will be heard on the House floor:

HB 1944- *relating to coordinated county-transportation authorities*

- Will be considered by the House on May 5th
- Click [here](#) to see the full text of the bill

HB 2703- *relating to the licensing of applied behavior analysts*

- Was voted out of the House Committee on Public Health, awaits consideration on the floor
- Click [here](#) to see the full text of the bill

HB 3750- *relating to a statewide real property data collection study*

- Was voted out of the House Committee on Land & Resource Management; awaits consideration

- on the floor
- Click [here](#) to see the full text of the bill

HB 2161- *relating to the regulation of certain private security companies and occupations*

- Was voted out of the House Committee on Homeland Security & Public Safety; awaits consideration on the floor
- Click [here](#) to see the full text of the bill

HB 3167- *relating to the governing bodies of certain local planning organizations*

- Was voted out of the House Committee on County Affairs; awaits consideration on the floor
- Click [here](#) to see the full text of the bill

The following bills were considered in committee hearings this week, and left pending for further consideration:

HB 3008-



With the witnesses in support of HB 3008

On Tuesday I laid out House Bill 3008 in a public hearing in front of the House Committee on Judiciary and Civil Jurisprudence. Currently in Texas, parents of a child born with a disability may sue medical providers through a claim of "wrongful birth" for failing to inform them that their child would be born with a disability. The cause of action assumes that had the parents known their child would be born with a disability, they would have sought an abortion.

Wrongful birth suits suggest that a child born with a disability would have been better off if he or she had been aborted. Additionally, wrongful birth liability may encourage health care providers to over-cautiously seek out all potential disabilities and promote abortion in an effort to avoid liability.

HB 3008 would eliminate the wrongful birth cause of action. The bill would change Texas law to recognize that all children's lives are equal. A healthy child's life is not worth any more or less than that of a child born with disabilities.

Click [here](#) to see the full text of the bill.

HB 3986- *relating to the coverage of recreational therapy to treat autism spectrum disorder*

- Was heard in the House Committee on Insurance and left pending for further consideration
- Click [here](#) to see the full text of the bill

HB 3282- *relating to autism services provided by the state to develop best practices*

- Was heard in the House Committee on Public Education and left pending for further consideration
- Click [here](#) to see the full text of the bill

Upcoming Events and Dates

National Day of Prayer

May 7th

The National Day of Prayer, established in 1952 by President Truman, is a time for people of faith all over the country to join together and pray for our nation. As session continues, your State Representatives and State Senators are facing serious issues and making tough decisions. Will you please remember the 84th Legislature in your prayers on this important day? Prayer meetings will be held at:

Carrollton City Hall

12:00 PM -12:30 PM

Denton Courthouse

11:30 AM - 1:00 PM

A few helpful links!

Bills I have filed

Bills I have co-authored

How a bill becomes a law

Texas Legislature Online

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,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ron". The letters are stylized and cursive.

Ron Simmons
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