



JODIE LAUBENBERG

STATE REPRESENTATIVE ★ DISTRICT 89



LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

TEXAS HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES



JODIE LAUBENBERG

DISTRICT 89

Dear Friends,

As we reflect on the past year, I am pleased to report that the state of our state is strong and our future is optimistic. This newsletter offers some of the highlights of the 2015 Legislative Session.

The Texas Legislature meets every other year for 140 consecutive days. This session more than 6,300 bills and joint resolutions were filed in both the House and the Senate. In order for a bill to be sent to the governor and signed into law, it must be filed as a House or Senate bill, and voted favorably by both chambers. Approximately 1,300 bills and joint resolutions were adopted by both chambers and sent to the governor.

Our work included passing a balanced budget based on population plus inflation. The budget provided \$3.8 billion in tax relief for property owners and businesses. We did all of this while advancing fiscal responsibility, securing the border, funding transportation and education, defunding Planned Parenthood, protecting life, and strengthening the Second Amendment and religious freedom. Texas is truly the shining example for conservative principles in action.

During the upcoming year, I look forward to talking with you and hearing your comments or concerns about the issues that are important to you. It is my privilege to serve you in Austin. I hope you will always feel free to call on my office whenever we can be of assistance to you or your family.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jodie Laubenberg". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jodie Laubenberg

State Representative, District 89

★ LEGISLATIVE UPDATE ★

BUDGET HIGHLIGHT

Strong Fiscal Restraint: The \$209.4 billion budget for the 2016-17 biennium represents a growth of 3.6 percent, or less than 2 percent per year. It stays well beneath the constitutional spending limit, and keeps the budget below what would be necessary to account for population plus inflation increases. The budget was balanced without dipping into the state's Rainy Day Fund. As a result, the Rainy Day Fund is projected to have a balance of over \$11 billion at the end of 2017.

Tax Relief: Includes nearly \$4 billion in property tax and business tax relief over the next two years.

Public Education: Fully funds our classroom enrollment growth and adds an additional \$1.5 billion to public education funding.

Higher Education: Funds \$240 million in capital projects for higher education institutions, supporting our state's commitment to offering tier-one level of university education.

Border Security: Provides \$800 million for border security efforts and operations.

Transportation: Ends diversions of the gas tax and ensures that all of the money in the State Highway Fund will be used only for transportation projects.

Transparency: In addition to using all of the State Highway Fund revenue for transportation, the budget takes a number of other steps to end "budgeting gimmicks" and use taxes and fees for their intended purpose.

Teacher Retirement System: Provides \$768 million in funding to address a shortfall in TRS Care, protecting school retirees from increases in their health care premiums.

Protecting Children: Increases Child Protective Services by \$332 million to address serious challenges in protecting abused children.



Sharing Texas stories with David and John McDowell of McDowell Label, one of our state's great small business success stories.

TAX RELIEF

Senate Bill 1, if approved by voters in November, increases the homestead exemption for school property tax from \$15,000 to \$25,000 beginning with the 2015 tax year, effectively returning \$1.24 billion to Texas taxpayers. This legislation also prohibits a school district, municipality or county from repealing any existing homestead exemption before the 2020 tax year.

House Bill 32 reduces the rate of the business margins tax by 25 percent. This amounts to a \$2.6 billion tax cut in the upcoming biennium. HB 32 also extends the eligibility for EZ computation to businesses with \$20 million or less in total revenue.

Senate Bill 1760 makes a number of important changes to the Property Tax Code to increase transparency and promote efficiency in the property tax system.

House Bill 7 eliminates the "Professional Tax", a \$200 annual fee on accountants, architects, attorneys, chiropractors, dentists, engineers, interior designers, investment advisors, landscape architects, land surveyors, optometrists, physicians, property tax consultants, psychologists, real estate brokers, and veterinarians, saving over 600,000 Texas professionals an aggregate total of \$125,000,000 annually.

BORDER SECURITY

Following the surge of illegal migrant children crossing the Texas-Mexico border in 2014, the 84th Legislative Session was a crucial one for border security. **House Bill 11** provides an unprecedented \$800 million for border security efforts and operations. The legislation bolsters the ranks of the Texas Department of Public Safety by authorizing the hiring of 250 new troopers, increasing the number of troops stationed on the border, and creating a voluntary corps of retired DPS officers. The bill increases penalties for human smuggling, establishes a transnational intelligence center on the border to analyze crime data and to serve as a real-time, around-the-clock intelligence hub for state and local enforcement agencies. HB 11 also requires DPS to assist federal authorities at southbound checkpoints on the border to screen for guns and illicit cash headed to Mexico.



Attending a border briefing with DPS before the 84th Legislative Session.

TRANSPORTATION

SJR 5 proposes a constitutional amendment that, if approved by voters in November, will dedicate a portion of general sales tax revenue to the State Highway Fund, beginning in 2018. SJR 5 dedicates up to \$2.5 billion annually to the State Highway Fund from existing taxes. This amendment will provide a stable revenue source to address the state's transportation needs. No taxes or fees are increased or created and it cannot be used for toll roads.

★ LEGISLATIVE UPDATE ★

House Bill 20 provides necessary oversight, transparency, and accountability to ensure TxDOT maximizes the effectiveness of the resources we have provided. HB 20 requires TxDOT to develop a performance-based planning and programming process that will allow the legislature to assess how well TxDOT is achieving stated goals. It requires the Transportation Commission to establish a scoring system to prioritize projects seeking state funding. HB 20 also establishes temporary House and Senate select committees to provide oversight as the provisions of the bill are implemented.

EDUCATION

To keep up with the explosive school population growth in Texas, we fully funded our classroom enrollment growth and then added an additional \$1.5 billion to public education funding. In all, we dedicated 37.4 percent of our overall budget to public education. Several significant reforms were also made in public school accountability and teacher training. **House Bill 2804** requires TEA to assign performance ratings of A, B, C, D or F to school campuses, providing transparency and giving parents greater control over the quality of their children's education.

The 84th Legislature passed a variety of bills aimed at enhancing teacher effectiveness inside the classroom by increasing opportunities for professional development including **Senate Bill 935**. SB 935 implements a "reading excellence team" pilot program for under-performing schools to collaborate with teachers on improving outcomes.



Visiting with Youth Leadership Conference Honorees at the Military Order of the World Wars luncheon.

PRO-LIFE

Texas decreased taxpayer funding of Planned Parenthood by another \$1.4 million and shifted the funding to alternate providers in the Breast and Cervical Cancer Screening program. **House Bill 3994** reforms the judicial bypass process for abortions performed on minor girls. **House Bill 3074** increases protections for vulnerable patients by reforming end-of-life care laws. **House Bill 3374** extends protections to unborn babies with disabilities. **House Bill 1** increases funding for Alternatives to Abortion Programs from \$5.15 to \$9.15 million per year.

SECOND AMENDMENT PROTECTIONS

House Bill 910 allows concealed handgun license holders to openly carry handguns. Individuals are still required to obtain a concealed handgun license to open carry. HB 910 does not prevent or restrict private businesses from prohibiting licensed individuals from carrying a handgun on their premises.

Senate Bill 11 allows a concealed handgun license holder to carry a concealed handgun on college campuses. It also permits universities to establish rules, regulations, or other provisions concerning the storage of handguns in dorms or other residential facilities owned or operated by the university. To be eligible for a concealed handgun license in the state of Texas, citizens must pass state and federal background checks, pass both an educational course and shooting proficiency test, and be over the age of 21.

RELIGIOUS LIBERTY

Current nationwide assaults on religious freedom and conscience indicate that religious liberty is in danger of becoming a second-class right...one that can be easily overridden by other rights, claims and interests. **Senate Bill 2065** protects the fundamental First Amendment right to freedom of religion by reaffirming that pastors and churches may not be required to participate in any part of a marriage or celebration of marriage if it would violate a sincerely held religious belief.

OTHER LEGISLATION

Texas Bullion Depository - Texas currently stores its substantial gold holdings in New York City. Texas assets belong in Texas. **HB 483** establishes the Texas Bullion Depository allowing state agencies, political subdivisions of Texas, state affiliated investment organizations and private individuals to store precious metals in a secure state-of-the-art depository.

Online Solicitation of a Minor - **SB 344** strengthens law enforcement's ability to investigate and prosecute those who solicit minors online.

E-Verify - **SB 374** requires state agencies and public universities to use the E-Verify system to protect against the hiring of those who are in the country illegally.



Enjoying the Wylie Rodeo with Pastor Jeff Denton of Waterbrook Bible Fellowship, Mayor Eric Hogue and Red Byboth, Chairman of the Rodeo!

JODIE LAUBENBERG

STATE REPRESENTATIVE ★ DISTRICT 89

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JODIE LAUBENBERG
STATE REPRESENTATIVE



PEARL HARBOR REMEMBRANCE DAY

DECEMBER 7, 2015

LET'S REMEMBER AND HONOR
THOSE WHO HAVE BRAVELY SERVED
IN OUR NATION'S MILITARY

