



The Capitol Ledger

May 29, 2019

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Want to schedule a meeting?

Send an email request to
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End of Session Recap

This session has been a whirlwind of local and state bills, capitol visits and district meetings so it's time we wrap it all up and summarize some of the high points for our district.

Local Legislation

Two local highway renaming bills passed this session. One was in memory of Senior Trooper Tom Nipper, who was killed in a vehicle accident during a traffic stop on I-35 in Temple. The other creates the First Cavalry Division Veterans Highway on I-14 to commemorate all our service members and veterans in the area and the long standing deployments of the First Cavalry Division.

Former County Commissioner Tim Brown brought a local bill that would help ease the burden and backlog of truancy court cases by appointing "Truancy Masters" to hear some of these cases. House Bill 452 passed both chambers unanimously.

The Bell County Water Control & Improvement District No. 1 and Elm Creek Watershed bills passed to adjust boundaries, change election procedures and expand representation for these water entities.



Trooper Nipper's family and Sr. Corporal Robert Watts are recognized on the House floor.

SB 2 (Property Tax Reform)

Increases Transparency For Taxpayers

Gives taxpayers the tools to make informed decisions about their property taxes

- Our staff worked over 18 months with a broad workgroup developing the provisions in HB 490 that were incorporated into SB 2
- Improves communication between taxing units and taxpayers
- Adds real-time tax notices that allow taxpayers to timely engage in the rate-setting process
- Informs taxpayers who has proposed a rate increase, by how much, and when and where to protest
- Provides an online form for taxpayers to communicate their position on proposed rates and submit it to the appropriate taxing unit
- Increases financial disclosures from taxing units
- Expands opportunities to protest or appeal appraisal values
- Requires notices from appraisal districts to be issued electronically

Empowers Voters

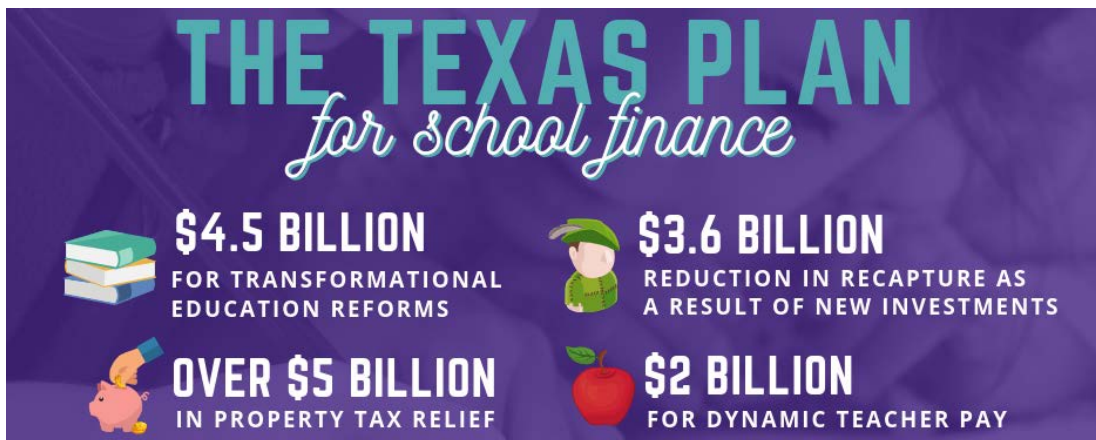
- Eliminates burdensome requirements that force voters to gather signatures to petition for an election
- Automatically triggers a November election when taxes are raised above the voter approval rate
- Ensures taxing units that exceed the voter approval rate are equipped to meet the November election date deadline



HB 3 (School Finance Reform)

The Texas House and Senate stood together in support of the most monumental and historic investment in public education in decades. House Bill 3, the Texas Plan for school finance reform, dedicates \$4.5 billion to student-centered education reforms, over \$5 billion for property tax relief, \$2 billion for dynamic raises for hardworking educators, and significantly reduces recapture. Texans have waited decades for true reform. This legislation moves public education reforms and financing from the courts to the legislature, where it belongs. I'm proud to be a co-author for House Bill 3.

Learn more at TheTexasPlan.com



Disaster Relief

HB 492 and HJR 34 was the product of over 18 months of hard work between stakeholders and members of the legislature. The legislation will create a mandatory property tax exemption due to a natural disaster declared by the Governor in all taxing entities until they adopt their tax rate. If the natural disaster occurs after the tax rate is set then it is a local option as to if the taxing jurisdiction adopts the tax exemption. This will help any storms or disasters in the future that leave people's lives in ruins. Thank you to Senator Bettencourt and Taylor for sponsoring this language in the Senate. I am proud to have authored this important legislation!



Senator Bettencourt (left) and Senator Taylor (right) pictured with Rep. Shine after approving disaster relief bill.

Pro-Life Legislation

Senate Bill 22

- Prohibiting transactions between governmental entities and abortion providers
- Closes loopholes to ensure that taxpayers are not inadvertently subsidizing abortions by prohibiting state and local governments from entering with abortion providers and their affiliates
- The Attorney General is authorized to bring action on behalf of the state in the event of a violation
- I am proud to be a co-author and have voted for this legislation

House Bill 16

- Establish a physician-patient relationship between a child born alive after an abortion and the physician who performed or attempted the abortion
- Require the physician to exercise the same degree of professional skill, care, and diligence to preserve the child's life and health as they would render to any other child born alive at the same gestational age
- Establish a third-degree felony (2 to 10 years in prison and an optional fine up to \$10,000) against a physician who with gross negligence failed to provide the appropriate medical treatment to a child born alive after an abortion
- I am proud to be a co-author and have voted for this legislation

Pro-Second Amendment Legislation

House Bill 1177

- Revise the application of certain handgun laws in a declared state of disaster
- The offense of unlawfully carrying a weapon would not apply to a person carrying a handgun if:
 - the person carried the handgun while evacuating from an area subject to a mandatory evacuation order during a declared state of disaster or local state of disaster or while reentering that area following the person's evacuation
 - not more than a week have elapsed since the evacuation was ordered and since it was issued and the governor extended the period during which a person could carry a handgun
 - the person was not prohibited by state or federal law from possessing a firearm
- Texans should have the ability to take firearms with them in a mandatory evacuation without fear of breaking the law or being forced to leave handguns behind in vehicles or homes, where they could be at risk from looters
- I am proud to have voted for this monumental legislation

District 55 Staff

As session comes to an end, I want to take moment to recognize my fantastic staff for all their hard work this session. The legislative process is a team effort and I wouldn't be able to serve the wonderful people of District 55 without their contributions.

Charlotte E. Blakemore - Chief of Staff: Charlotte works in our Capitol office and is in charge of all staff at the Capitol and back in the District. She coordinates on all property tax policy as well as is the chief policy advisor for the office.

Connor D. Leigh - Legislative Director: Connor works in our Capitol Office assists Charlotte in handling local bills and legislative needs during session and interim.

Blake Dickerson - Legislative Aide: Blake works in our Capitol office and assists Connor with legislative duties as well as administrative duties in the office.

Lamar Lewis - District Director: Lamar works at our district office in Temple and represents the office at various events around the District.

Karen Stagner - District Scheduler: Karen works in our district office in Temple and handles all scheduling in the district including meetings and events.

Allison Joy - Constituent Services: Allison works in our district office in Temple and handles constituent service needs that come through the office as well as helps Charlotte in education policy.

Judy Benson - Constituent Services: Judy works in our district office in Temple and aides Allison in constituent services.



Left to Right: Connor D. Leigh, Hugh D. Shine, Charlotte E. Blakemore, Blake Dickerson