



House District 1 - Bowie, Franklin, Lamar & Red River counties
District & Capitol Interim Report
February 2016

Information for forest landowners. This month, Texas A&M Forest Service (TFS) published its "tax tips" for forest landowners who have yet to file their 2015 tax returns. Their publication summarized the federal income tax laws relating timber issues including: property classifications; basis and depletion; sales; management expenses; reforestation costs; cost-share payments; and, filing Form T (Timber). The TFS encourages taxpayers to be sure to consult their own legal and tax professionals for specifics about their situations, but their newsletter provides a good summary, which can be found on-line at:



<http://www.timbertax.org/publications/fs/taxtips/TaxTips2015Updated.pdf>.

Military experience/EMT certification. Several state agencies, including the Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS), Texas Workforce Commission (TWC), Texas Veterans Commission, office of the governor; and the Texas Department of Licensing & Regulation (TDLR) are working to inform current military service members, veterans and spouses who received emergency medical technician (EMT) training in the military and have a current National Registry certification that they are eligible to apply for a Texas EMT certification under certain program guidelines. More information can be found at www.dshs.state.tx.us/emstraumasystems/recertinfo.shtm.



Around House District 1. On February 18, New Boston ISD's Crestview Elementary students enjoyed the life-size exhibition of a real Chuck wagon. Rep. VanDeaver displayed the Chuck wagon to the students, demonstrating the cooking techniques, living conditions and experience of trail life during the days of Chuck wagon travel. This presentation was part of the students studying the book Little House in the Big Woods by Laura Ingalls Wilder (published in 1932). The book, which is set deep in the woods of Wisconsin in the 1870s, shows a life very different than the ones we live

today. Rep. VanDeaver's exhibition of the Chuck wagon and frontier life gave students a peak at the life many of their ancestors lived over 100 years ago.

Sam Bell Maxey House (Paris). Preservation Texas, Inc. recently awarded the Sam Bell Maxey House State Historic Site in Paris a 2016 Honor Award according to a release from the Texas Historical Commission (THC). Here is a link to the THC information about this historic home's most recent

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restoration that earned the recognition by Preservation Texas, Inc.:
<http://www.thc.state.tx.us/preserve/projects-and-programs/thc-state-historic-sites/preservation-projects>.

Around the Capitol. House Public Education. Earlier this month, I attend the first interim meeting of the House Committee on Public Education to hear a review of the state's current education policies and initiatives regarding middle grades, as well as to review current public education programs addressing needs of high performing students.

Texas Commission on Next Generation Assessment and Accountability. On February 23, the Commission held its second meeting to continue discussing what changes the state needs to consider making in how students are taught and assessed on that information, as well as how school districts, campuses and teachers are held accountable. Some of the discussions centered on possibly using college-admission examinations such as the SAT and ACT in an expanded role to judge student and school performance. Additionally, the Commission heard public testimony from parents who are frustrated with the current high stakes assessment system because of the adverse effects and excessive stress on students. On the other side of the assessment debate, there are many education reform advocates and business organizations that support high stakes testing that hold students and schools more accountable.

House Appropriations & Higher Ed Committees. On March 24, the Article III subcommittee of the House Appropriations Committee (HAC) and the House Committee on Higher Education will hold a joint hearing to focus on funding for the state's community colleges. My office worked with area community colleges to submit this charge to the Speaker for consideration, and I am very pleased that the Speaker charged these committees with reviewing the current funding formulas for community colleges and making recommendations for needed changes. Community colleges are such an integral partner in our state's higher education system that we need to ensure they have the necessary funding so they can prepare the future workforce and meet higher educational needs of the state.

Joint Interim Committee on TRS Health Benefit Plans. Later this spring, there will be two meetings of this committee that was created last session in Senate Bill 1940. The committee is charged with studying the health benefit plans for both active and retired members of the Texas Teacher Retirement System (TRS). The meeting scheduled on March 30, will look at TRS Active Care, while the meeting on April 13 will focus on the retiree program known as TRS-Care. Legislators want to ensure that both plans are fiscally sound and affordable while ensuring that TRS members have sufficient access to the physicians and health care providers they need. The committee will make recommendations for any needed changes to the 85th Legislature.

Early voting continues through February 26. The March 1 primary elections are just around the corner. This year's primary includes many important elections in local, state and federal offices including the President of the United States. Texans can vote early through February 26, 2016. Before voting, you will need one of the following forms of identification: driver's license issued by the Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS); Texas Election Identification Certificate issued by DPS; Texas personal identification card issued by DPS; license to carry a handgun issued by DPS; U.S. military identification card including photograph; U.S. citizenship certificate including photograph; or a United States passport. Contact your county voter registrar's office for more information; here is a helpful link: <http://votesmart.org/elections/offices/TX#.VgG1FWfl1s>. Additional voter information can be found at: <http://www.votetexas.gov/register-to-vote/need-id/#faqs>.

My office is here to help. I thank each of you for letting me serve you as your state representative. Please contact either the District office (903-628-0361) or Capitol office (512-463-0692) if there is anything you think we can do to help you.

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