



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

***Around House District 1. Education Service Center-Region 8 Meeting.*** On July 11, I met with Region 8 superintendents to discuss upcoming education issues the state will be facing in the upcoming session. With a big turnout, I was able to speak with the local superintendents and gain feedback on how certain implementations will affect rural East Texas schools. Some of the key topics discussed were education savings accounts, special school programs, cameras in the classroom, property tax dollars, accountability, unfunded mandates and the Supreme Court's latest decision on school finance. I appreciate all the hard work the local superintendents are putting into staying educated on school issues, and I feel I was provided with ample information that will be beneficial for the upcoming session.

***East Texas Education Summit.*** Longview ISD hosted a meeting on July 14, for legislators to hear directly from school finance experts about the school funding system that was ruled constitutional by the Texas Supreme Court last May. Though the current system was ruled as meeting "minimal constitutional requirements," the justices also called it "Byzantine," "undeniably imperfect" and covered from top to bottom with "Band Aid on top of Band Aid." The experts stressed the need for legislators to remove some of the band aids to make the system more efficient and responsive to changing conditions in local school districts so that more resources can be focused in the classrooms to improve student achievement. I want to thank my House colleagues for making the trip to East Texas to listen to these presentations and to LISD for being so hospitable.



*From l-r: Rep.-elect Dean (Longview); Rep. Paddie (Marshall); Rep-elect Bailes (Shepherd); Rep. VanDeaver (New Boston); Rep. Wray (Waxahachie); Rep. Clardy (Nacogdoches); also attending but not shown: Rep. Ashby (Lufkin).*

***Area water meetings.*** Our area's major water groups held several meetings the third week of July and demonstrated a commitment to support each other's efforts to not only provide water to meet today's demands but to be good stewards of water long into the future. The *Sulphur River Basin Authority* (SRBA) spent time hearing expert testimony on mitigation and sedimentation that can have an adverse effect on the river's ability to meet its current and future water demands. *Riverbend* devoted substantial time to planning the development of their Regional Water Master Plan that will cost approximately \$500,000 and be completed by December 31, 2017. At *Region D's* meeting, the president of the Texas Water Development Board (TWDB), Bech Brunn, spoke about the importance of rural water supplies and the different entities that control and develop them. He

said that the TWDB is specifically looking for these rural water districts/regions/entities to fund. Region D also passed a resolution supporting Riverbend's effort in developing its Regional Master Water Plan. They believe that this study will not only benefit Riverbend but all the water entities in the area. Region D's board also said they believe this is a positive step in bringing everyone together to work as one.

**REMINDER: Scholarship Opportunity.** The Texas Armed Services Scholarship Program (TASSP) allows me, as a state representative, to nominate one student from my House District to receive a scholarship. This program is designed to encourage students to become members of our armed forces and help pay some of their college expenses. A student must meet specific eligibility criteria in order to receive an initial scholarship award. In addition to the eligibility criteria, a student must enter into an agreement requiring a four-year commitment as a member of the Texas Army National Guard, Texas Air National Guard, Texas State Guard, U.S. Coast Guard, U.S. Merchant Marine or a commissioned officer in any branch of the armed services of the United States. Student resumes should be sent to my legislative director, Madison Stewart-[madison.stewart@house.texas.gov](mailto:madison.stewart@house.texas.gov), no later than August 26th. Final determination of the award amount will be made by the Texas Higher Education Coordination Board on September 9, 2016, for the 2016-2017 academic year. Students may receive up to four years of scholarship awards. Further information can be found at: <http://www.hhloans.com/index.cfm?ObjectID=8FB593C7-EE1E-7872-00A8808886543AEE>



**Around the Capitol. DPS issues caution.** Now that summer heat is in full swing, DPS reminds everyone that leaving children (and pets) in parked cars can be deadly. It says that "every year children die from heatstroke after being left in a vehicle or entering a vehicle unnoticed." The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration says that "temperatures inside a car can rise more than 20 degrees in only 10 minutes." So, parents, grandparents and childcare providers, please be extra cautious when driving around with your children and grandchildren that you do not accidentally leave them in a parked car that can quickly turn deadly.

**Office of Attorney General (OAG) offers to help local communities.** In 2015, the legislature passed legislation giving the OAG additional enforcement powers to help cities and counties fight the spread of synthetic cannabinoid/marijuana under deceptive trade practices. These products are often sold as "legal alternatives to marijuana" and can be deadly. The OAG states that "the new statute gives our office a narrowly tailored instrument to use to specifically prosecute the retail of synthetic substances, including synthetic marijuana, based solely on deceptive representations made about the product or its effects." If your city or county needs assistance or more information, please contact either Paul Singer, deputy chief, Consumer Protection Division (Austin), at 512-936-1791; or, Pat Stein, assistant attorney general, Consumer Protection Division (Dallas), at 214-969-7630, ext. 8816.



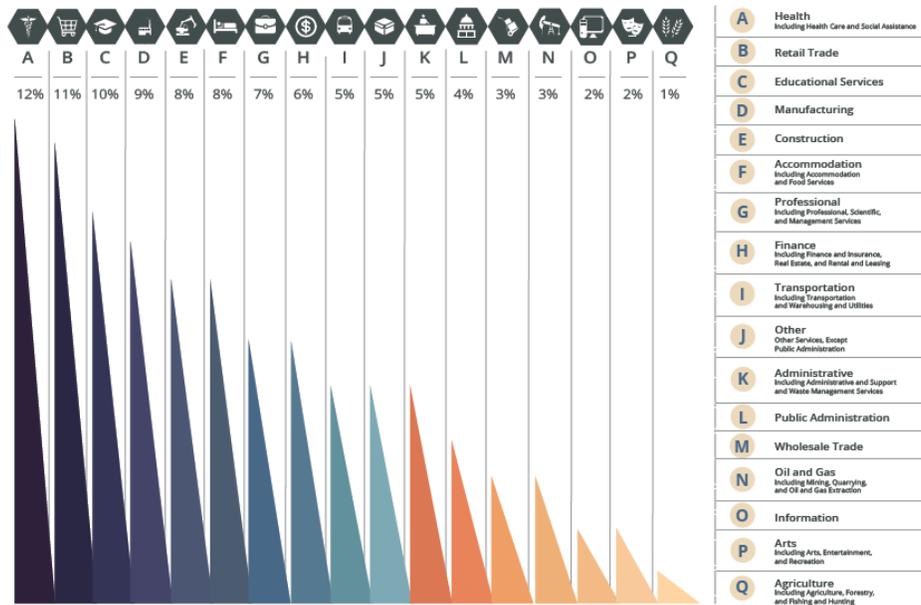
**House Appropriations Committee** - On July 19, the House Appropriations Committee met to receive an update from the DPS on the effectiveness of the use of the funds appropriated during the 84th legislature for border security operations. The committee heard testimony from Director, Steve McCraw, and Chief Financial Officer, Suzy Whittenton. McCraw explained up-to-date border security expenditures and how DPS will continue to send officers to the border from all parts of the state. "Because the agency cannot place rookie agents on the border alone for six months, and because it has to make up for statewide attrition, it will continue rotating officers from

across the state for temporary stints in the area.” Along with 128 new post on the border, DPS is on track to have the additional 250 troopers through training by December 2016. As DPS continues to work to secure the border, there will be several more discussions on how the agency will measure success, report data, and how to plan for the upcoming session that will meet in January 2017.

*Legislative Budget Board (LBB) meets.* The LBB, made up of five House members and five Senators, met on July 25, to hear a high level briefing about the state's economy from state Comptroller of Public Accounts, Glen Hegar. The comptroller said there has been a year-over-year slowdown in the state's overall economic growth due to the longer than anticipated depression in the oil and gas sector of the economy. Over the last 15 years, Texas had added more jobs each year than the nation as a whole; however, beginning in October 2015, Texas's job growth slowed. Despite this, the state still added 171,000 new jobs in June 2016. Other parts of the Texas economy are still doing well including the housing market and overall sales tax collections. Certain cities are doing well including Dallas, Austin and San Antonio, while Houston and Midland are feeling the effects of a barrel of oil priced at \$41. The comptroller predicted that the slowing of the state's growth rates will cause legislators a harder time balancing the state's budget in 2017 than in 2015. Here are links to the two documents used in the presentation by the comptroller and his chief revenue estimator:

[http://www.lbb.state.tx.us/lbb\\_meetings/Update\\_State\\_Financial\\_Conditions\\_07-25-16.pdf](http://www.lbb.state.tx.us/lbb_meetings/Update_State_Financial_Conditions_07-25-16.pdf) and [http://www.lbb.state.tx.us/lbb\\_meetings/Net\\_State\\_Revenue\\_Source\\_07-25-16.pdf](http://www.lbb.state.tx.us/lbb_meetings/Net_State_Revenue_Source_07-25-16.pdf).

*Fun facts to know & tell.* Did you know that 50 percent of the state's population lives in just eight counties? Also, did you know that from 1990 to 2014, the state's population grew by almost 10 million people for a 59 percent increase? And, did you know that only one percent of the state's workforce is involved in agriculture, forestry and hunting and fishing industries? The Texas Legislative Council, a nonpartisan legislative agency that drafts bills, provides research and computer support to the legislature, recently launched its *This is Texas!* Infographic Series to provide demographic, economic and other data about the Lone Star State in an easy quick-to-read format. Here is a link for you to explore more information: <http://www.tlc.texas.gov/thisistexas>.



**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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