



**House District 1 - Bowie, Franklin, Lamar & Red River counties  
District & Capitol Report  
85th Legislature - January 2017**

***Around the District. AP Honor Roll.*** I want to congratulate two area school districts, Pleasant Grove ISD and Texarkana ISD, for making the College Board's 2016 Advanced Placement (AP) Honor Roll for expanding access to AP courses for their students and for improving student performance. Students who score at least a three on the AP exam can earn college credits while still in high school. These districts were among only 22 school districts in Texas that earned slots on the Honor Roll.

***Traffic light upgrades.*** The Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) recently announced that three intersections in Texarkana and Wake Village will have improvements made to their traffic control systems and street lights in 2017. According to TxDOT's traffic engineer in Atlanta, Rebecca Wells, "all the signal lights will be upgraded to add a new feature that local motorists may not have seen before - a flashing yellow arrow means left turns are allowed, but turning motorists must yield to oncoming traffic which now has a green light. A steady yellow arrow means prepare to stop, and a steady red arrow, of course, means stop." The locations to get these upgrades include: US 67 (West 7th Street) at I-369/US 59; FM 989 (Kings Highway); and FM 989 at Redwater Road. Work on the projects should begin in March and take about 13 months to complete.



***Around the Capitol.*** Now that the 85th Legislature is underway, I have been working with constituents in House District 1, associations, local governments and other interested parties drafting and filing bills for consideration this session. You can follow committee hearings, progress of legislation filed and other activities of the Texas House and Senate at Texas Legislature Online at [www.capitol.texas.gov](http://www.capitol.texas.gov). Here are just a few of the bills that I have filed so far this session:

- *House Bill 515* was filed to reduce the number of standardized tests given to our students. Texas administers more standardized tests than required in federal law. HB 515 will align the state's assessment system to the federal *Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)*.
- *House Bill 539* was filed to help students in military families that move to Texas so they can enroll in our state's virtual school network in order to keep up their coursework and make the transition to Texas easier.
- *House Bill 594* was filed to address the voluntary dissolution of a local hospital authority and what to do with its remaining assets and records.

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- *House Bill 786* was filed to prohibit certain employment discrimination of an employee who is a volunteer emergency responder.
- *HB 967* was filed to address the powers of the TexAmericas Center.

House Speaker, the Honorable Joe Straus (San Antonio), will soon appoint House Committees. I look forward to hearing bills and working with my colleagues to keep Texans safe and prosperous while living within our means.

On January 31, 2017, the Honorable Greg Abbott gave his second "state of the state" address as governor. During his speech, he designated several issues as "emergency items" that allows legislators to start immediately hearing bills relating to these items. Some "emergency items" include the following:

- *Child Protective Services (CPS)* in Texas has been rocked the last couple of years with an increase in deaths of children while in CPS custody. In 2016, there were 100 children who died in custody and there were almost 2800 children who had not been seen by CPS workers in months.
- *Teacher - student sexual assaults.* Texas ranks number one in incidents of teacher - student sexual assaults. Governor Abbott wants legislators to immediately address this problem.
- *Banning "sanctuary cities."* The governor wants lawmakers to take immediate steps to protect all citizens and enforce all laws while preventing certain local law enforcement officials from selectively choosing which laws to enforce. He went on to say that he is meeting with federal immigration officials soon to learn how they plan to secure our borders, but while they "ramp up, Texas won't retreat" from our efforts to secure the border.
- *Hate crime for offenses against law enforcement officers.* The governor wants legislation passed to enhance the criminal penalties for assaults on law enforcement officials.
- *Protection of life.* The governor wants it to be a crime to sell or donate baby body parts that result from an abortion.

*TASA Midwinter Conference.* On January 31, I had the pleasure of speaking to school administrators from the Education Service Center Region 8 (Mount Pleasant) while they were in Austin for their annual Midwinter Conference. Administrators are attending breakout and general sessions to hear from the TEA Commissioner of Education, Mike Morath, and learn more about school finance challenges and school accountability. I appreciated the invitation from Region 8 executive director, Dr. David Fitts.



*Pictured: ESC Region 8 Executive Director- Dr. David Fitts and Rep. VanDeaver*

*Texas Historical Commission (THC) - Diversity Internships.* The THC recently announced that applications are open through March 17, for the THC's Diversity Internship Program that builds interest and awareness in historic preservation, specifically among students from underrepresented cultural, ethnic and socioeconomic groups. Interns will receive a \$5000 stipend provided by the Friends of the THC for a full-time, eight-week internship. For more information or to apply, visit <http://www.thcfriends.org/thc-diversity-internship>.

***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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