

ANGIE CHEN BUTTON



The State of Texas
House of Representatives

April 24, 2009

Dear Friend:

We are reaching the final stretch of the 81st legislative session. There are 37 days remaining before Sine Die and we still have a great deal of work left to be done. I represent you and your interest so please be sure to let me know how you feel about issues that are important to you. You can call my office at 512-463-0486 or you can email me directly at Angie.Button@house.state.tx.us. I look forward to hearing from you.

The Budget

At about 4:45 last Saturday morning, we successfully passed your state budget. In these economic times, it is more important than ever to scrutinize how Texas spends your tax dollars. I focused on the priorities that you and your family expressed were most important.

These budget priorities included increasing the quality of our public schools, improving job-training programs, reducing the cost of government, and lowering your tax burden. As we debated the budget early into the morning, my like-minded colleagues and I remained committed to protecting essential programs while ensuring that government spending tightens its belt, just as your family has had to do.

When the state collects your taxes and fees most of the money goes into the General Revenue Fund. In developing the budget, we reduced spending from the General Revenue by 2.5%. This is your tax money we are saving, and we are proud that by working together we were able to reduce the future size of government.

Some highlights of the budget include establishing and protecting job training programs for people displaced by these difficult economic times; fully funding our veterans' needs; increasing our public education expenditures by 1.8 billion dollars as all our children deserve every opportunity to succeed in school; and reviewing government spending. All of this was successfully achieved while reducing expenses from the General Revenue Fund by 2.5%.

Unique to this year's budget cycle is the federal stimulus money that has recently gained notable attention. The stimulus money is an influx of your federal tax money coming back to you. Since this is a one-time receipt of funds, it is our duty to assure that this money will be used only for one-time expenses such as school construction, rebuilding of the gulf coast and other single item expenses, rather than growing government programs that expect taxpayers to continue new spending every two years.

Creating any budget is always a difficult task and doing so for a state as diverse as Texas is especially challenging. However my priorities are clear and my commitment is strong to make

certain that Texas addresses the most important needs while also remembering that this money is yours, not ours, and it is scarce and hard-earned.

Government Efficiency

On Wednesday, Dallas county tax payers had another victory. My bill, HB 1205 unanimously passed the house. This bill raised the amount of a refund that must have approval by the Commissioners court for erroneous or excessive payments from \$2,500 to \$5,000 for Dallas and Harris counties.

The old process placed an unnecessary strain on large counties and delayed the amount of time it took to get your money back. The Auditor's Office had to review the claim which takes a week or more then the claim was sent to Commissioners Court. Typically, weeks would pass before final approval for the refund could be issued. Not only did this provide an unnecessary strain on the county, it delayed the amount of time it took to get money back into the hands of the taxpayer.

I was pleased to work with Dallas county on HB 1205. Now taxpayers will get their money back 4-5 weeks faster than in the past.

University of Texas at Dallas

More good news for District 112 happened today on the floor of the House. HB 51 which I co-authored with Rep. Dan Branch, passed to engrossment. This bill creates initiatives to enable emerging research universities to achieve national prominence as major research institutions. Dr. David Daniels, UTD President, was in Austin today to show his support for HB 51 and with the help of this legislation, UTD is well on its way to becoming a Tier-One University.

Capitol Visits



Texas Retired Teachers from Garland, Richardson, and Dallas from left to right: Virginia Blair, Lucy Brigham, Lien Nguyen, Paula Morales, Yolanda Davila, and Tonna Duke pictured with Rep. Button during Texas Retired Teachers Day at the Capitol. Behind the group is a representation of the funds appropriated to TRS in order to provide a 13th check to retirees this biennium.

It is a great pleasure to serve you in the Texas Legislature. Please contact me with any questions or concerns you may have.

Sincerely,

Angie Chen Button

If you would like to be added or removed from this mailing, please e-mail District112.Button@house.state.tx.us.