

Texas House of Representatives



Lyle Larson

State Representative - District 122

What's New in District 122

Howdy! It's hard to believe we're almost two months into the 83rd Legislative Session. Things are really getting hectic under the pink dome, and Team Larson has been very busy.

Last week, the Capitol felt like home as many San Antonians made the journey to Austin for Viva San Antonio Day at the Capitol. The San Antonio delegation, having passed a resolution in the House, officially declared it "one of the treasures of the Lone Star State" and it was great to honor our city and its fine residents at the Texas legislature. That day I had the opportunity to meet with several groups from the San Antonio Chamber representing areas such as water, energy, and manufacturing interests in the city, who came to share their perspective in their areas of expertise. Among those I met with were representatives from SAWS, CPS Energy, NuStar, Toyota, and other great economic drivers of our city.

Additionally, we've kept busy meeting with groups including the Guadalupe-Blanco River Authority, the Plumbing Heating Cooling Contractors, the Association of General Contractors of Texas, the Foundation Repair Association, the San Antonio Manufacturing Association, the San Antonio Restaurant Association, the Texas Nurses Association, the League of Women Voters, and several students from my district representing Texas Lutheran University, Incarnate Word, and St. Mary's. We also met with several doctors in my district, Dr. Gary Wesson, Dr. Monica Allison, Dr. Warren Branch and a group of dentists and dentistry students from the UT Health Science Center in San Antonio to discuss legislation that impacts their industry. Locally, I also attended the San Antonio Sports Foundation Gala as they inducted several members into their Hall of Fame for the great work they've done in our community. Congratulations to Ed Whitacre, Norm Charlton, Larry Kenon, Joe Conrad, and Nell Fortner!

As we approach the weeks ahead, we look forward to presenting several of our bills in committee and continuing to meet with and listen to various individuals and organizations that visit the Capitol. We hope to see you up in Austin or around the district!

Legislation by Larson

So far, we have authored 43 bills during the 83rd Legislative Session. [Here](#) is our current legislative package. We're just 10 days from the filing deadline, and we're doing

our best to finish up our last few pieces of legislation to get them introduced just in time. What do you think about our legislative package so far?

HB 4: Creation of the State Water Implementation Fund for Texas

After more than eight hours of invited testimony, it seems that there's relative consensus about the urgency of funding the State Water Plan. [HB 4](#), authored by Natural Resources Committee Chairman Allan Ritter, calls for a diversion of \$2 billion from the almost \$9 billion sitting in the Rainy Day Fund to be used to help regional water districts finance infrastructure and conservation measures to secure Texas' water future for the next fifty years and beyond. The committee heard from the mayors of many of the major cities around the state, including San Antonio's Julian Castro. San Antonio has become a national model for water strategy. The city's population has grown by 67% since the mid-eighties yet its water use has remained constant. San Antonio Water System (SAWS) president, Robert Puente, was lauded by committee members for its forward thinking in conservation, storage, and treatment. Texas, as a whole, should take a cue from San Antonio and attempt to move away from water management strategies that have dominated since the 1950s.

While we remain fully committed to funding the State Water Plan and stand behind Chairman Ritter's HB 4, some concerns were raised during the meeting that we're eager to investigate. [HB 4](#) calls for 20% of the funds be dedicated to conservation efforts. We completely agree that conservation is the low-hanging fruit when it comes to obtaining new water, but we feel like it might make sense to specifically target conservation among the state's largest water consumer: the agriculture industry. We might use funds to incentivize and help farmers to update their irrigation techniques and install meters on all of their wells to get a sense of how they might be able to use water more efficiently and, perhaps, more sparingly. The meeting also brought the issue of permitting to the forefront of the conversation. We're going to work with water authorities and planning boards to see what we can do in the capitol to expedite the permitting process and ensure that water projects that are shovel-ready can get water to the people that need it in a more timely and efficient fashion.

Bills in Committee

This week will be extremely busy for the Larson Team as we prepare to lay out 7 bills in 3 different committees. Committee hearings are a very important part of the legislative process and we look forward to providing detailed explanations of our bills and answering tough questions from committee members.

[HJR 42: Term Limits](#)

Today, our term limits bill will be considered in the House Committee on State Affairs. Term limits will bring new blood and fresh ideas into the legislative process. In addition to reducing the powers of special interests over our elected officials, term limits will ensure more judicious lawmaking. We need to replace professional politicians with folks

who are like our Founding Fathers. These men were farmers and shopkeepers, who migrated to Philadelphia and Washington, DC to craft the first laws of our nation and promptly returned home. If a legislator knows he will be forced to return home to live under the laws he passes, he will be much less likely to advocate for repressive and unreasonable laws.

Career politicians are exactly what inhibit our government from achieving its mission. As a longtime advocate of term limits, I believe every elected official at every level of government should be allowed to serve for a finite amount of time. I filed [HJR 42](#), which will limit all elected officials serving at the state level to a maximum of 12 years in office: 6 2-year terms for Texas House members and 3 4-year terms for State Senate members and statewide officeholders. My office has completed extensive research on term limit laws around the country. Please feel free to review it [here](#).

[HJR 73: Resign to Run](#)

Also at today's meeting of the House Committee on State Affairs, our [HJR 73](#) will be discussed. [HJR 73](#) requires that anyone who holds state office will be forced to resign if they announce their candidacy for another elective office with more than a year left on their term. Currently, anyone running for a higher office, other than county officials, are able to continue holding office while they spend as much time as they want on the campaign trail. They may skip meetings and important business related to the office they hold. [HJR 73](#) would put an end to this practice. If this bill is successful, officeholders will be required to resign while they campaign and won't be able to take advantage of incumbency or fail to fulfill the duties of their elected office. For more information about resign to run provisions in other states, please take a look at this [fact sheet](#).

[HB 120: Specialty Military License Plates for Defense Superior Service Medal Honorees](#)

We look forward to presenting [HB 120](#) before the House Committee on Defense and Veterans' Affairs and fellow Bexar County representative Chairman Jose Menendez. In Texas, there are over 60 specialty license plates acknowledging various military awards, medals and recognitions. You have likely seen, or maybe you personally have, a license plate depicting the Purple Heart, Bronze Star or Legion of Merit. Currently, the Texas Department of Motor Vehicles' Special Plates Program does not provide for the issuance of a specialty plate recognizing the Defense Superior Service Medal (DSSM). The Defense Superior Service Medals are awarded to members of the United States Armed Services who perform "superior meritorious service in a position of significant responsibility." [HB 120](#) recognizes the exemplary service of Defense Superior Service Medal recipients by providing the issuance of special plates and other benefits.

[HB 150: Flying Flags at Half-Staff in Remembrance of Fallen Service Members from Texas](#)

Also being heard in Defense and Veterans' Affairs this week is [HB 150](#). While traveling through Michigan last summer, I noticed that the flags flown at state buildings were at half-mast. It was later explained to me that the flags were lowered that day to commemorate the death of a soldier who called Michigan home. Seeing the flags flying at half-staff that day was a powerful reminder of how blessed we Americans are to count on these brave service members who risk their lives each day for us, and in too many cases, make the ultimate sacrifice. The families and communities that suffer the great loss of these selfless individuals will never be the same. The flags floating somberly at half-staff provide a stark reminder that freedom comes at a great price.

To provide a way to honor Texan service members who are killed in action, I filed [HB 150](#), which requires both the United States and Texas flags at all state office buildings to be flown at half-staff in recognition of a member of the United States Armed Services from Texas who has been killed in action. [HB 150](#) requires the flags to be displayed at half-staff for one day following the notification of the service person's family. The bill would make the office of the governor responsible for notifying state agencies when the flags are to be displayed at half-staff. For more information about the policies of other states with regard to lowering the flags, please take a look at [this research](#) conducted by my office.

[HJR 30](#) and [HB 151](#): City-County Consolidation

On Thursday, [HJR 30](#) and [HB 151](#), a bill that would amend the Texas Constitution to allow Bexar County and the City of San Antonio to pursue a merger of the two governances, will be heard in the House Committee on County Affairs. As tax revenues struggle to keep up with the demand for various services, state and local governments continue searching for cost saving solutions. In Texas, cities and counties are mired with costly bureaucracy and multiple layers of administrative duplication, with taxpayers footing the bill for unnecessary government expenses. The best way to reduce costs, streamline operations and provide for more efficient delivery of services is to consolidate our city and county governments.

Though city-county consolidation has been discussed in Texas for decades, now is the perfect time to revisit the concept as we continue to face tough economic times. Having served in local government for 16 years, first as a San Antonio City Councilman and as a Bexar County Commissioner, my unique perspective and firsthand knowledge of the inner workings of both entities has shaped my belief that consolidation would be a change for the better. [HJR 30](#) and [HB 151](#) would allow Bexar County and the City of San Antonio to merge governances for efficiency, to shed layers of administrative duplication and to provide seamless accountability to constituents.

Locally, residents of the City of San Antonio constitute more than 80% of Bexar County's population. Both entities have departments that provide the following services: law enforcement, fire, public works, planning/development services, budget/resource management, economic development, information technology, human resources, community initiatives, health and human services, purchasing and intergovernmental

relations. If you live within the city limits, your taxes currently fund two departments for each of these functions.

San Antonio-Bexar County could serve as a model for smaller, more efficient metropolitan government for the three other major metropolitan areas in Texas – Houston, Dallas and Austin – and for other counties and cities nationwide.

HB 272: Providing Emergency Services Districts a Cost-Effective Way to Provide Notice

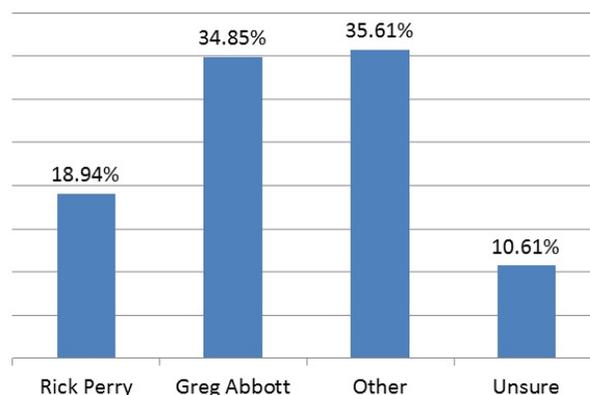
Also in Thursday's County Affairs Committee hearing, we'll present [HB 272](#). Currently, emergency services districts (ESDs) are required to publish notice of their intent to hold hearings in the newspaper of general circulation. These ESDs are also required to publish notice for other reasons, including information regarding elections and to notify constituents of the location of an administrative office. The requirement to publish notice costs taxpayers millions each year and has lost its effectiveness as subscriptions to newspapers continue to decrease. Some ESD board members assert that there should be more cost effective alternatives to publishing notice in the newspaper of general circulation that will achieve the same goal of notifying constituents of meetings and other important information.

[HB 272](#) seeks to provide a cost effective way to notify constituents of ESDs of hearings and by allowing the ESD boards to post meeting notices and other pertinent information in a regional or area-specific publication.

Survey Says

With lots of political posturing going on in Austin, we thought it would be interesting to get your thoughts on the 2014 governor's race. Here are the results:

Recently, Governor Perry indicated that he and Attorney General Greg Abbott made a deal that if Perry decides to run for re-election, Abbott would stand down. A spokesman for Abbott indicated that they were not aware of such a deal. If the Republican Primary was held today, for whom would you vote?



This week, we want to know what you think about our [HB 150](#), which would require the lowering of the American and Texas flags to half-staff for a 24 hour period after the Governor is notified that a Texan member of the U.S. Armed Forces was killed in combat. Several other states do this through either a statutory requirement or through executive order. Across the country, flags are often displayed at half-staff to commemorate the deaths of many individuals. Requiring flags at state office buildings to be lowered for 24 hours to honor the death of a Texan who lost their life protecting our freedom is the very least we can do to express our gratitude for their great sacrifice. What do you think? Tell us here in this brief [survey](#).

Other Legislative News

Last week, I coauthored [HB 1383](#), which would strengthen the Teacher Retirement System of Texas and [HB 773](#), which requires students at open-enrollment charter schools to recite the Pledge of Allegiance to the U.S. and Texas flags. Additionally, I coauthored [HJR 74](#), which would exempt seniors from paying taxes on various foods, drinks and medication. I also joint authored [HJR 22](#), which ends diversions from the state gas tax fund for things unrelated to highway construction and maintenance.



Members of the San Antonio/Bexar County legislative delegation at VIVA San Antonio Day

In the News

As always, please feel free to contact me if I may ever be of assistance to you by phone at (210) 402-5402 or by email at lyle.larson@house.state.tx.us.

Best,



Lyle Larson