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Representative Dan Huberty



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Biennial State Budget

Last week, the Texas House addressed the largest infrastructure issue we face each session: the state biennial budget. Senate Bill 1 (SB 1) came to the House Appropriations Committee after passage by a 29-2 vote in the Senate Chamber. It was then unanimously approved by the House Appropriations Committee with a vote of 27-0. Before the vote, House Appropriations Committee Chairman Jim Pitts added an amendment that increased the basic allotment for public education funding by \$1 billion. Pitts also said the committee plans to put an additional \$500 million toward schools in the current budget as part of a supplemental budget bill the Legislature will address later in session.

SB 1 finally came to the House Floor for debate on Thursday, April 4th. After a historically short, one-day debate, the budget was passed. The final budget totals \$193 billion for the 2014-1015 biennium, and equates to a \$3.9 billion, or 2.1 %, increase in funds from the last biennial budget. These increases can be found: in funding for public education, which was increased by \$2.7 billion - an 8.6% increase; in the Teacher Retirement System, where the state's pension contribution was increased to 6.6%; in a \$265 million increase in funding for mental health programs; in a \$100 million increase to women's health programs; and in fully funding projected caseloads for Medicaid, CHIP and foster care programs.

The members of the House will now each turn their focus to the passage of our own legislative agendas and personal bills to help our districts. I am honored to have already had two bills pass through the House and head to the Senate Chamber. You can read more about those bills in the newsletter below.

As always, please feel free to contact my office with any questions you may have regarding the 83rd Legislative Session. You can reach the Capitol Office at 512-463-0520, or my District Office at 281-360-9410.

Sincerely,

Dan Huberty
State Representative- District 127

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More on the Biennial State Budget

As mentioned above, the Texas House passed the State Biennial Budget late last week by an overwhelming margin of 135 -12. The measure now heads to a conference committee between the House and the Senate. The budget appropriates \$193.8 billion over two years, funded within existing state revenue, and provides for a balanced budget as required by the Texas Constitution. Public and Higher Education funding increased from the previous budget by allocating 54% of general revenue to educate our children. Much of this can be attributed to the difference in the revenue estimate from 2011 to now. Instead of a \$27 billion shortfall, the legislature convened in January with an \$8 billion surplus. The budget surplus is due in large part to the tough but fiscally responsible decisions made last session. A healthy Texas economy and strong fiscal discipline, allowed for more money to be distributed to legislative priorities like education.

Some of the state budget highlights include:

- After consideration for population growth and inflation estimates, Texas's spending from all fund sources will have decreased by 1% from the 2012-2013 biennium to the 2014-15 biennium
- Significant increases to public education including fully funding growth and enrollment
- \$175 million increase for financial aid programs, including \$150 million increase for Texas Grants, a program that provides financial assistance to our highest performing students in need
- Increase in the State's contribution rate for retired teachers' pensions;
- Adding \$170 million to ensure the protection of Texas children in the foster care program
- \$100 million increase for Women's health wellness and prevention services
- \$92.3 million provided for border security purposes at the Department of Public Safety, the Office of the Governor, and the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department

For more information, visit the Legislative Budget Board website at <http://www.lbb.state.tx.us/>.



Legislative Update

This legislative session, Representative Huberty has filed a total of 18 bills. Each bill addresses a specific issue and they cover a wide spectrum of topics from public education to municipal utility districts. You can view the full list of his legislative agenda by visiting his House website, which can be [accessed here](#).

Last week, Rep. Huberty passed two of his bills, House Bill (HB) 222 and House Bill (HB) 1264, through the House Chamber and on to the Senate. On Tuesday, April 2, HB 222 was passed by the body. This bill makes a small but affective change to the notification process for schools in the public education grant (PEG) program. You can read more about the bill [here](#). The next day, HB 1264 was also passed from the House Floor. The bill requires school districts to report the number of enrolled students who are identified as having dyslexia to the commissioner of education through the Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS). You can read more about the bill [here](#).

So far this session, Rep. Huberty has presented eleven bills in several different committee hearings, including the two committees that he currently serves on: Public Education and State Affairs. Please follow his legislation via the Texas Legislature Online website, where you can create Bill Watch Lists and Bill Alerts. You can access that site at <http://www.legis.state.tx.us/>.

Pastor of the Day - Keenan Smith, Crosby Church

Representative Huberty hosted Pastor Keenan Smith of Crosby Church as Pastor of the Day in the Texas House on Thursday, April 4. Pastor Keenan and his wife, Lorie, serve as the lead pastors at Crosby Church, which has campuses in Crosby and Huffman, Texas. They have one of the largest congregations in the area and lead their members with biblical principles by developing a philosophy of, "Build the People, Build the Body, Build the Kingdom."

An excerpt from Pastor Keenan's invocation: "I thank you, Lord for each and every individual here today. I pray that you help us to fully understand the term of public servant; that it is not about partisanship or special interest but sacrifice and right and wrong. That we would search the scriptures that made this nation and this state great. So, we may find the absolutes, with the aim of fulfilling your destiny on each of our lives, individually, so that corporately we can accomplish much...So Lord I ask you for your protection on our state and on these individuals who serve it, your protection on their homes and families."

The couple was present on a historic day in the Texas House, as the members debated, and finally passed, a biennial budget. "It was an honor to have Pastor Keenan and Lorie here with us, especially on Budget Bill Day, which many consider to be the toughest and longest day of our the legislative session. I believe his invocation had a positive impact on many of the members of this Texas House and assisted us in passing this budget in just one day," Rep. Huberty stated. The Texas House traditionally begins each morning of session with an invocation and the pledges to the United States flag and the Texas flag. Each member of the House is allowed to host a Pastor from their district as the "Pastor for the Day."



KTRH Interview - Matt Patrick Show

On the morning of Monday, April 8, Representative Huberty was live on air with KTRH morning show host, Matt Patrick, to discuss the STAAR test and the proposed pieces of legislation before the Texas Legislature that would effectively change the administration of the test. You can listen to the interview in full by [clicking this link](#).

One of the pieces of standardized testing legislation before the Texas Legislature this session is Rep. Huberty's House Bill (HB) 866. This bill would alleviate the overly burdensome yearly state assessment tests in elementary and middle school grade levels 3 - 8. HB 866 allows high-performing students to "test out" of subsequent STAAR tests in a particular subject by performing well on the test in the third or fifth grade. Not only would this greatly reduce testing for certain students, but it would allow our educators and administrators to focus on those students who do not perform well on the tests and may require more attention. The bill was left pending in the House Public Education Committee after last week's hearing.

Texas Armed Services Scholarship Program (TASSP)

The Texas Armed Services Scholarship Program is open for applications. TASSP was created to encourage students to become members of the Texas Army National Guard, the Texas Air National Guard, the Texas State Guard, the United States Coast Guard, or the United States Merchant Marine, or to become commissioned officers in any branch of the armed services of the United States. Each year the governor and the lieutenant governor may each appoint two students, and each state senator and state representative may appoint one student to receive an initial conditional scholarship.

Program participants must meet two of the following four academic criteria to be selected: be on track to graduate or have graduated high school with the Distinguished Achievement Program (DAP) or the International Baccalaureate Program (IB); a high school GPA of 3.0 or higher; achieved a college readiness score on the SAT (1590) or ACT (23) and/or ranked in the top one-third of the prospective high school graduating class. To be eligible for selection, students must: enroll in a Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC); agree to: complete four years of ROTC training, graduate no later than six years after the date first enrolled, and after graduation, enter into: a four year commitment to be a member of the Texas Army National Guard, Texas Air National Guard, Texas State Guard, United States Coast Guard, or United States Merchant Marine; contract to serve as a commissioned officer in any branch of the armed services of the United States, or repay the scholarship if the requirements are not met.

Representative Huberty is now accepting applications for selection via personal request letters. Please include details on all eligibility requirements listed above. For more information on the TAASP, the application process, eligibility requirements and the amounts that may be awarded, please visit the program [website](#).

Texas Legislative Medal of Honor

Each session, the Texas Legislature is privileged to have the opportunity to honor a Texas hero of the United States military. Pursuant to statute, the Legislature may award the Texas Legislative Medal of Honor to a member of the state or federal military forces "who voluntarily performs a deed of personal bravery or self-sacrifice involving risk of life that is so conspicuous as to clearly distinguish the person for gallantry and intrepidity above the person's comrades."

The Chairs of the House Defense & Veteran's Affairs Committee and the Senate Veteran Affairs and Military Installation Committee and includes the Adjutant General, the Lieutenant Governor and the Speaker of the House. the committee will consider proposed candidates by colleagues in the House and Senate on the standard of extraordinary merit. thereafter, a person will be nominated by a majority vote of all the members of the Nominating Committee. The Legislature will then direct the Governor by concurrent resolution to award the Texas Legislative Medal of Honor to the final nominee. If you know a Texas military Veteran you would like to suggest for a Texas Legislative Medal of Honor nomination, please contact the Office of State Representative Dan Huberty for more information.



Image of the Texas Legislative Medal of Honor

Committee Updates

State Affairs

On Wednesday, April 3, the State Affairs Committee heard a diverse set of bills ranging from House Bill (HB) 3355, which addresses Cable Operators and Electric Cooperatives to insider trading bill and even a freedom of religion resolution. HB 3355 by Committee Chair Bryon Cook would require both parties to set rates, terms, and conditions for attachments in a just and reasonable manner and establish a mediation process for them, should an issue arise.

This past Wednesday, the committee heard two telecommunications bills by Chairman Harvey Hilderbran. The first, House Bill (HB) 3383, would authorize a company receiving fixed monthly support amounts as determined by the Public Utility Commission (PUC) to continue to receive that amount until after a public notice and hearing. The second, HB 3384, would provide small or rural phone companies with funding that is not tied to access line count. Representative Eddie Lucio also introduced a fireworks bill that would define the tiered levels of fireworks restrictions, based on soil saturation. Also, Representative Huberty's HB 2049, a cogeneration bill, was voted favorably out of the committee and sent to the House Calendars committee.

Public Education

On Tuesday, April 2, the Public Education committee met to discuss 25 bills that were set to hearing. This was the largest number of bills the committee has heard in a single meeting this session. The bills dealt with issues ranging from the collection of data on students who receive citations while on a school campus to professional development training for school administrators and teachers. Representative Huberty had the opportunity to lay out his bill, HB 866, dealing with the administration to public school students in certain grades of state-administered assessment instruments. This bill is meant to subtract from the significant number of tests that students across the state take every school year.

Last Tuesday, the committee met again and heard 21 new bills. Activity has picked up considerably and will continue to be busy through the end of session. Representative Huberty was a Co-author and a Joint Author on two of the bills that were voted out of the committee this week, HB 773 by Representative Dale and HB 628 by Representative Farney. Representative Dale's bill relates to the ability of the board of trustee members to obtain student information. The bill also specifies the protection of students personal information such as social security numbers and addresses. Representative Farney's bill simply requires open-enrollment charter school to have their students recite the pledges of allegiance to the United States flag and the Texas state flag. Both bills will now head to the House for further debate. The committee also heard a substantial amount of testimony on HB 2983 by Representative Dutton. This bill is the Texas Education Agency (TEA) Sunset Review bill relating to the functions and continuation of the agency. There were many resource witnesses called from both the Sunset Advisory Commission and TEA. This bill is of the utmost importance to ensure that the agency overseeing public education is continuing to focus on what should be the top priority, the students of Texas.

