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Straus Names Select Transportation Committee

AUSTIN—Texas House Speaker Joe Straus named nine legislators Friday to the House Select Committee on Transportation Funding, Expenditures and Finance.

The committee, created during a 2013 special legislative session, will examine a variety of issues related to transportation funding. For example, Members will look at the reliability of current funding sources, the use of debt in transportation financing, use of the state highway fund for other agencies and appropriations to the Texas Department of Transportation.

Straus has identified transportation and other infrastructure-related issues as critically important in light of Texas' rapid growth and economic success. The state's population is growing twice as fast as the rest of the country, and Texas continues to be the national leader in job creation.

"Transportation is a top priority for the Texas House," said Straus, R- San Antonio. "This committee will take an extensive, objective look at the transportation solutions that best suit our people and our growing economy."

Rep. Joe Pickett of El Paso will chair the committee, which will also include Reps. Larry Phillips of Sherman, Armando "Mando" Martinez of Weslaco, Lyle Larson of San Antonio, Ruth Jones McClendon of San Antonio, Sergio Munoz Jr. of Palmview, Dan Huberty of Houston, Paul Workman of Austin and Ron Simmons of Carrollton.

"These Members have an important job ahead of them," Straus said. "Their work in the coming months will prepare the entire House to lead on transportation issues when the next legislature begins. I have every confidence in this diverse, capable committee."

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4.22.14 Public Education Committee Hearing

This past Tuesday, April 22, the House Public Education Committee met to consider the fifth interim charge regarding underperforming schools. Specifically, the interim charge instructed the committee and its members to review successful strategies and methods that have improved student achievement at chronically underperforming schools. In addition to this, the committee was asked to identify alternatives that could be offered to current students who are attending these schools and determine how to turn these schools around. Finally, the committee was instructed to identify the benefits and concerns with alternative governance of underperforming schools.

There were several very interesting panels with witnesses from all over Texas and the United States in attendance. Dr. Kerstin Carlson Le Floch from the American Institutes for Research (AIR), was one of the first panelists to speak. Dr. Le Floch is a principal researcher at AIR, specializing in school improvement, state accountability policies, and Title I implementation. At present, Dr. Le Floch directs the Study of School Turnaround for IES, a large-scale case study investigation of the implementation of the School Improvement Grants under ARRA. Dr. Le Floch's research has already found several critical factors that can influence a successful school turnaround. She provided great expertise and a huge amount of information, which will be invaluable to our state in order to help raise the standard of underperforming schools.

Overall, the hearing was very successful. The committee members have a much better understanding of how to best implement school turnaround standards, so that all of our students have an opportunity to be as successful as possible. For more information on the panelists, as well as information on the upcoming Public Education Committee hearings, please visit the House Committee website, [here](#).

Humble ISD Registering for 2014-2015 Kindergarten Classes

Humble ISD schools have announced dates to register for 2014-2015 kindergarten classes. Many schools also have scheduled open houses, or Kindergarten Roundups, in April and May to help parents learn about the kindergarten program. Students must be 5 years old or older on Sept. 1 to be in kindergarten. After-school care is available for a fee at all Humble ISD schools through the Lake Houston Family YMCA. Monday August 25, 2014, will be the first day of school. [Information for individual schools](#)

Parents who are new to Humble ISD will need to register their student(s) online. [Learn more about online New Student Registration](#). After enrolling online, parents contact the student's school to complete the enrollment process.

Bring the following documentation to your child's school to complete registration:

- official birth certificate (or legal document to establish age and identity, [see list of acceptable documents](#))
 - immunization records
 - parent's driver license for identification purposes
 - last report card from the previous school (if applicable)
 - previous school's mailing address (if applicable)
 - proof of residency in Humble ISD shown by lease, deed, current electric, gas or water bill ([see list of acceptable documents](#))
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Almost 80 percent of 5th and 8th graders pass on first attempt at STAAR

AUSTIN – Almost 80 percent of 5th and 8th graders successfully passed the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR®) mathematics test on their first attempt in April, according to numbers released today by the Texas Education Agency.

The initial 2014 mathematics passing rates for more than 650,000 5th and 8th graders reflect an improvement compared to the 2012 first administration passing rates.

More than 75 percent of 5th and 8th graders successfully passed the STAAR reading assessment on their first attempt in April. The initial 2014 reading passing rates for more than 700,000 5th and 8th graders remained relatively stable compared to the 2012 first administration passing rates.

Under state law, Texas students in grades 5 and 8 must pass the STAAR reading and math tests to be promoted to the next grade. A second administration of the STAAR grade 5 and 8 mathematics and reading assessments is scheduled in May.

Additional information regarding the initial administration of these STAAR assessments can be found on the Texas Education Agency website at <http://www.tea.state.tx.us/staar/rpt/sum/>.

DPS Offers Safety Tips for Wildflower Fans This Spring

AUSTIN – Springtime in Texas is known for the beautiful wildflowers that blanket the fields and roadsides across our state, including the state flower, the Bluebonnet. Here are a few tips to help everyone enjoy the wildflower season safely and lawfully.

While there is no law against picking the state flower, laws do exist against damaging or destroying rights-of-way and government property. So even though picking a few flowers may be okay, individuals should not dig up clumps of flowers or drive their vehicle into a field of flowers.

Flower fans must also consider laws against criminal trespassing and make sure they are not on private property when stopping to enjoy or take photos of the wildflowers. Individuals should also be cautious of snakes, fire ants and other potential dangers while observing wildflowers.

DPS encourages motorists to be mindful of laws against impeding traffic and exercise caution when slowing down to enjoy the view; and if you decide to stop, choose areas with light traffic conditions.

For the safety of yourself and others, consider the following tips:

- Signal before leaving or entering the roadway.
- Park off the roadway (off of improved shoulders), parallel to the road in the direction of traffic.
- Don't cross lanes of traffic on foot to get to the flowers.
- Obey signs that prohibit parking on a particular stretch of roadway.

Remember that failure to follow the rules of the road any time of the year could earn you a ticket. So be careful, be practical and be sure to abide by our laws while enjoying the Texas wildflowers this and every year.

DPS Reminds Texans to Use Online Driver License Services, Mega Centers this Summer

AUSTIN – The Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS) is encouraging residents to beat the summer rush at driver license offices across the state by renewing their license or identification card early or online. The summer months are typically one of the busiest times of year at driver license offices, and many eligible Texans can skip the trip to the office completely via online renewal of their license, identification card or change of address at Texas.gov.

“With students and families out of school or off work, Texas driver license offices tend to be especially busy during the summer months,” said DPS Director Steven McCraw. “Many Texans are eligible to take advantage of our customer-convenient options for online and phone renewal of licenses and identification cards, and are encouraged to visit high-capacity driver license mega centers in metropolitan areas if needed.”

If a trip to a driver license office is necessary, customers in the major metro areas should visit mega centers in their area. Located in the Austin, Dallas, Fort Worth, Houston and San Antonio metropolitan areas, driver license mega centers offer high-capacity facilities and technology designed to improve efficiency and customer service. Mega centers feature an innovative queuing system that offers customers the convenient option to reserve a spot in line before going to the office. Customers can virtually enter the line via cell phone, online or using a land line.

To be eligible to renew online, the card holder must be a U.S. citizen and the expiration date on the card must be within one year. When the card is renewed, the expiration date on the new card will be six years after the current card’s expiration date, whether customers renew early or not.

Additionally, in order to renew online, the card cannot have been expired for more than two years. Requirements for renewing online are available at Texas.gov, the official website of the State of Texas. Customers can also renew by phone at 1-866-357-3639. The [eligibility requirements](#) for phone renewal are the same as for online renewal. The fee is the same for online, in-person and telephone renewals.

Licenses must be renewed in person every 12 years, so an updated photo can be taken and eyesight can be tested. If residents need to come into the office to renew, they can do so within one year prior to the expiration date, which means they can pick a time that is convenient for their schedule.

Customers may obtain a replacement driver license or identification card online if they are able to provide the 20 character code on the front of their current license or card.

Lake Houston Sports and Recreation Foundation Happenings

The Lake Houston Sports and Recreation Foundation (LHSRF) was just selected by the Houston-Galveston Area Council to help implement a plan to control bacteria levels in Lake Houston.

The LHSRF also helped secure funds from the Texas Department of Wildlife and the City of Houston of almost \$220,000 to help control and knockout the exploding water hyacinth problem on the Lake.

This spring the LHSRF will stock another 100,000 Florida Hybrid Largemouth Bass bringing our total to 210,000 in the last three years.

The LHSRF has completed our vegetation nursery to introduce beneficial vegetation that will help improve water clarity and improve wildlife on Lake Houston.

Our motto "Lake Houston is a valuable asset worth protecting."

Select Driver License Offices Open Saturdays to Issue Election Identification Certificates

AUSTIN – The Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS) in advance of the upcoming primary runoff election will be offering Saturday hours at select driver license offices throughout the state to issue Election Identification Certificates (EIC) only. DPS will also be deploying mobile stations to various locations across Texas in an ongoing effort to ensure Texans have access to EICs. Additionally, select county locations will be issuing EICs at the local level.

The 2014 primary runoff election in Texas is May 27, with early voting from May 19 - 23.

Texans can obtain an EIC at:

- Any of the more than 220 Texas driver license offices during regular business hours
- Select driver license offices on Saturdays from 10 a.m. – 2 p.m. (EIC transactions only)
- DPS EIC mobile station locations (EIC transactions only); locations can be found at <http://www.dps.texas.gov/DriverLicense/documents/EICDPSrun.pdf> and VoteTexas.gov
- Select county locations issuing only EICs at the local level, which can be found at <http://www.dps.texas.gov/DriverLicense/documents/EICCountyrun.pdf>

Most residents already have an acceptable form of photo identification needed for voting and will not need or qualify for an EIC. If an applicant already has any of the following documents, they are *not* eligible to receive an EIC:

1. Texas driver license – unexpired or expired no longer than 60 days at the time of voting
2. Texas personal identification card – unexpired or expired no longer than 60 days at the time of voting
3. U.S. passport book or card – unexpired or expired no longer than 60 days at the time of voting
4. Texas concealed handgun license – unexpired or expired no longer than 60 days at the time of voting
5. U.S. Military identification with photo – unexpired or expired no longer than 60 days at the time of voting
6. U.S. Citizenship Certificate or Certificate of Naturalization with photo

To apply for an EIC, applicants must visit one of the locations listed above and complete an application for a Texas Election Identification Certificate (DL-14C).

To qualify for an EIC, an applicant must:

- Bring documentation to verify U.S. citizenship and Identity
- Be eligible to vote in Texas (Bring a valid voter registration card or submit a voter registration application through the Texas Department of Public Safety)
- Be a Texas resident
- Be 17 years and 10 months or older

To avoid delays or complications, DPS urges potential applicants to make sure they have the necessary documentation before arriving at the office.

The EIC receipt an individual receives will include their photo and can be used for voting until the permanent card is delivered by mail.

The EIC is free of charge to qualifying applicants and is valid for six years. There is no expiration date for an EIC for citizens 70 years of age or older. The EIC can only be used for the purpose of voting in an election and may not be used as personal identification.

For more information on the requirements, exemptions and process for obtaining an EIC, please visit: <http://www.txdps.state.tx.us/DriverLicense/electionID.htm>.

For more information on voting in Texas, visit the Secretary of State's website: www.votetexas.gov.