



STATE REPRESENTATIVE
JAMES WHITE

CORRECTIONS - CHAIR
INTERNATIONAL TRADE &
INTERGOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

DISTRICT 19
HARDIN, JASPER
NEWTON, POLK, TYLER

March 13, 2017

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

For more information contact:
Saul Mendoza, Chief of Staff
(512) 463-0490

85th Legislature Meets Bill Filing Deadline
- Weekly Legislative Update 3/13/17 -

(Austin, TX) - The State Legislature saw an increase in activity this week as Members rushed to meet the bill filing deadline. I am proud to have filed various bills addressing reforms to our adult and juvenile criminal justice systems, strengthening our child protective services, increasing access to mental health services, championing families, growing our local prosperity, and protecting Second Amendment rights.

During the previous week, I met with the leadership of the Alcohol & Drug Abuse Council (ADAC) of Deep East Texas. Methamphetamine, heroin, and cocaine addictions are having a devastating effect on rural East Texas communities. Drug addiction is destroying too many young lives and families. This epidemic is sapping the economic vitality and quality of life from our communities. ADAC is working on the front lines in the fight against addiction. They have a strong set of legislative proposals and I am supportive of the passage of these recommendations.

Faith and family are two institutions that Southeast Texans champion. Many pastors came to their Texas Capitol last week to promote pro-family and pro-faith public policy. From Southeast Texas, pastors from Polk, Jasper, and Hardin counties attended pastor oriented briefings on legislation that protects our 1st Amendment religious freedoms and fosters strong families. I had the opportunity to visit with these pastors and I expressed my support in protecting our constitutional religious freedoms and promoting commonsense decency in our communities.

In Hardin, Jefferson, and Orange counties, the Spindletop Center does a fabulous job in assisting our fellow citizens with mental health and intellectual disabilities. The dedicated servants of the Spindletop Center also do a great job advocating for effective policies on mental health and intellectual development. A delegation from Spindletop came to Austin and provided me an in depth briefing on the needs in Southeast Texas. I am appalled that federal and state laws allow employers to pay our fellow citizens, who have intellectual development challenges, \$0 .01/hour (one cent). I immediately marched to the Texas House chamber and signed on as a coauthor to



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House Bill (HB) 2409. If it becomes law, HB 2409 will require employers to compensate our fellow citizens with intellectual development disabilities in a dignified and respectful manner.

Moreover, I told this delegation of Spindletop advocates that the Legislature has budget limits just like our households in Southeast Texas. However, the State of Texas has the resources and wealth to do the things we need to do. I will not support a defective interpretation of fiscal conservatism that supports leaving the disabled and children in the lurch so that politicians can campaign on growing the rainy day fund to \$12 billion in two years. In fact, spending on developmental and preventive therapies on the front end is immensely more cost effective than the costly results due to poor outcomes in health, education, and the criminal justice system. I salute the work that Spindletop performs for those in our community with mental health and intellectual and developmental disabilities in Southeast Texas.

In addition, I was delighted to have Jayden Caruthers and his grandparents come to their Capitol for a Texas Home School Coalition conference. I am always thankful that they make the trip to Austin and make time to come visit me. Jayden is a smart young man and I look forward to many more visits from him.

Along with my committee assignment as Chairman of the House Committee on Corrections, I sit on the House Committee on International Trade and Intergovernmental Affairs. This committee met for the first time last week. This is my first time to serve on the committee and I look forward to working with Chairman Rafael Anchia in growing our local prosperity with international trade and building our interstate relationships. During the hearing, we heard updates from Secretary of State Rolando Pablos, the Mexican Consulate, the Canadian Consulate, the Texas Office of State-Federal Relations, and the Governor's Economic Development Office.

Furthermore, I was able to present two of my bills before the Corrections committee. House Bill (HB) 104 will provide notification and protection to victims that have experienced traumatic events at the hand of violent offenders if the victim or family members of deceased victims choose to opt into the program. The other one is HB 553, which will establish a task force to strengthen existing programs and create new opportunities to provide education and technical skills training to people confined in Texas prisons. HB 553 will enhance the rehabilitative mission of the criminal justice system and heighten the importance of making our incarcerated inmates perform work tasks.

School finance is one of my top priorities this session. This week the House Committee on Public Education heard testimony on Chairman Dan Huberty's HB 21. Although I do not sit on the committee, I am carefully watching this legislation and have reached out to the



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superintendents and educators in House District 19 seeking their input. Though I am encouraging him to proceed on a bolder path, I am supporting Chairman Huberty's reform efforts and hope to see reforms come out of committee that House Members can consider on the floor soon.

The Capitol of Texas belongs to you and visiting the Capitol during the biennial legislative session is a great experience. To assist in arranging your visit please call Saul Mendoza, my Chief of Staff, at (512) 463-0490 or at saul.mendoza@house.texas.gov.

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