

T E X A S S E N A T O R

MARIO GALLEGOS

Dear Neighbor,

With the close of the 77th Legislative Session, key legislative priorities, now signed by the Governor, were addressed that will enhance the lives of all Texans. At a time when there was little money available to accomplish these important goals, my colleagues and I were able to secure the necessary funding to address many of these priorities.

In my capacity as Chairman of the Senate Hispanic Caucus I was able to highlight issues important to the Hispanic community, which are



quickly becoming issues important to all Texans. Residents of Senate District 6 and the entire population of Harris County will reap the benefits of legislation I passed, or worked towards passing, during the 77th Legislative Session. Legislation pertaining to affordable teacher health insurance, medicaid simplification, higher education funding, and enhanced benefits for our senior community were among the most important priorities addressed this passed session.

Harris County will soon profit from legislation that I authored allowing the Port of Houston to become one of only four Coffee Exchange Ports in the country. Passage of Constitutional Amendment *Proposition 3* will allow the Port to be designated as a Coffee Exchange Port and will provide much needed economic development, increase property taxes collected by school districts and create jobs for Senate District 6 and Harris County.

I served as Co-Chair of the Interim Committee on Redistricting which traveled the state and heard testimony from all corners of Texas. Unfortunately, the 77th Legislature fell short of the necessary votes to pass a redistricting plan during the regular session. I am disappointed that the final legislative boundaries for both the State Senate and House of Representatives had to be adopted by the Legislative Redistricting Board which did not have the luxury of hearing from more Texans.

Members of the legislature spent many hours debating, compromising and drafting a plan for each chamber that addressed the specific desires of the people they represent. It is my sincere hope that as this process makes its way through the system, the ideals of fair and equitable representation outweigh those of partisan politics. As with all legislative sessions, there is still work to be done during the interim and I look forward to continuing to work for the citizens of Senate District 6 – and all Texans.

It is a privilege and an honor to serve our community's interests as your State Senator.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mario Gallegos Jr." The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Mario Gallegos, Jr.



Senator Gallegos at a Senate State Affairs Committee hearing during session.



Budgeting Priorities

The 77th Legislature approved a \$113.8 billion dollar budget. The biennial budget increased funding by \$11.8 billion, an 11.6% increase over the FY 2000-01. The majority of the new funding is dedicated to health and human services and education. Overall, the 2002-2003 appropriations bill includes \$5.1 billion more for health and human services programs, and \$200 million more for the TEXAS Grant Program — which will help nearly 100,000 Texas students go to college over the next two years.

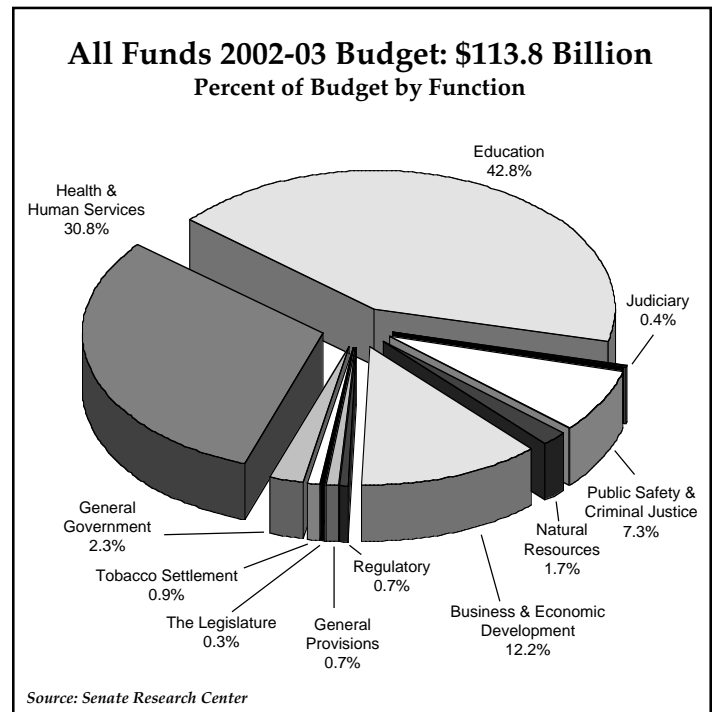
For public education, the Committee Substitute to Senate Bill 1 earmarks \$2.52 billion for teacher health insurance, discretionary funding for school districts, new and existing facilities, and other vital education needs.



Teacher Health Insurance

Teacher health insurance was a top priority for the 77th Legislature. Strong leadership and compromise allowed for passage of one of the most important bills this session. Senator Gallegos was a strong supporter of House Bill 3343 by Representative Sadler. H.B. 3343 represents a joint effort by both the House of Representatives and the Senate to establish a firm foundation for teacher health insurance. This piece of legislation requires the Teacher Retirement System of Texas (TRS) to establish group benefit plans, equivalent to state employees' Employee Retirement System (ERS) coverage, for every public school district, regional education service center, and charter school employee.

This will put Texas on the right track toward keeping existing teachers and attracting new ones. It will also send a message to our children, and the rest of the country, that Texas considers education a top priority.



Aldine ISD	\$25,100,348
Deer Park ISD	\$8,638,722
Galena ISD	\$8,319,670
Goose Creek ISD	\$12,237,344
Houston ISD	\$92,192,354
La Porte ISD	\$5,402,355
North Forest ISD	\$5,331,871
Pasadena ISD	\$16,558,181
Spring Branch ISD	\$11,765,897

LEFT: Total Amount of State Aid that House Bill 3343 (Teacher Health Insurance) distributes to school districts in Senate District 6 in the 2002-2003 biennium

Other key initiatives include:

- \$961 million increase in federal funds for the Texas Department of Transportation for road construction and other projects.
- \$542 million earmarked for Medicaid prescription drug and program cost increases and caseload growth.

CSSB 1 includes funding for proposed Medicaid reforms to streamline and simplify the enrollment process. A special joint House-Senate task force agreed to a plan that will provide coverage to the estimated 600,000 eligible children not currently served by Medicaid.

The \$11.8 billion increase in funding is needed to cover state government cost increases due to the states rapidly-growing population, rising health care costs, and key priorities established by the Conference Committee. The majority of this growth comes from other funds, such as federal funds, rather than state coffers.



Higher Education Funding

The University of Houston System continues to attract a growing number of students, and maintains its position as one of the premiere University Systems in the state. Once again Senator Gallegos and the Harris County legislative delegation secured the necessary funding to allow the University of Houston System to continue meeting the growing needs of our community.

For the 2002-2003 biennium, the UH System will receive approximately \$364.6 million dollars in total funding which includes \$100 million dollars in tuition revenue bonds. The University of Houston Downtown will receive approximately \$59.8 million dollars. These appropriations will allow the system to continue to prepare its students to be the future leaders of our communities.

Texas Southern University, another traditionally strong academic and community stronghold, also received increased funding for the coming budget cycle. Texas Southern University will receive approximately \$114 million dollars for the 2002-2003 biennium. The budgeted amount includes \$79 million in tuition revenue bonds for the Mickey Leland / Barbra Jordan School of Public Affairs.

In another effort to increase funding for higher education, Senator Gallegos co-authored Senate Bill 737, the Senate Companion to House Bill 1839, relating to the creation of the Texas Excellence Fund to promote research and excellence at certain institutions of higher education. Currently, Texas ranks second in the nation in the total number of high-tech jobs and first in terms of jobs created since 1990. There is a need to expand upon the current research taking place at major research universities such as the University of Houston System.



Medicaid Simplification

During the 77th Legislative Session, access to healthcare for Texas children was the priority health and human services issue. This was an issue that affected children from across the state, especially those in underserved areas of Houston. With Senator Zaffirini taking the lead and Senator Gallegos lending critical support, the Legislature was successful in establishing a more streamlined system that provides easier access while maintaining the quality standard of care that Texans are accustomed to receiving.

S.B. 43 allows for self declaration of assets and eliminates any checks done by the Department of Human Services (DHS). It also eliminates the face to face interviews, allows families to apply for assistance via phone or mail, and provides for continuous eligibility from six

months to twelve. This provides easier access, a longer coverage period and less documentation to be filed on behalf of families.



DNA Testing

The first bill to pass both houses of the legislature was Senate Bill 3, co-authored by Senator Gallegos, and signed into law by Governor Perry on April 5, 2001. This landmark piece of legislation requires the preservation of evidence containing DNA and post-conviction DNA testing.

The use of DNA evidence to determine innocence or guilt in a criminal trial has garnered much of the public's attention as technology and public policy continue to move forward. The use of DNA evidence is beginning to play a major role in the criminal justice system. Several previously convicted Texans have been set free due to the inclusion of new DNA-related evidence that exonerated them. Passage of S.B. 3 provides law enforcement with an additional tool for keeping innocent people out of the criminal justice system.



Senator Gallegos speaking at a press conference with colleagues, including Lt. Gov. Bill Ratliff.



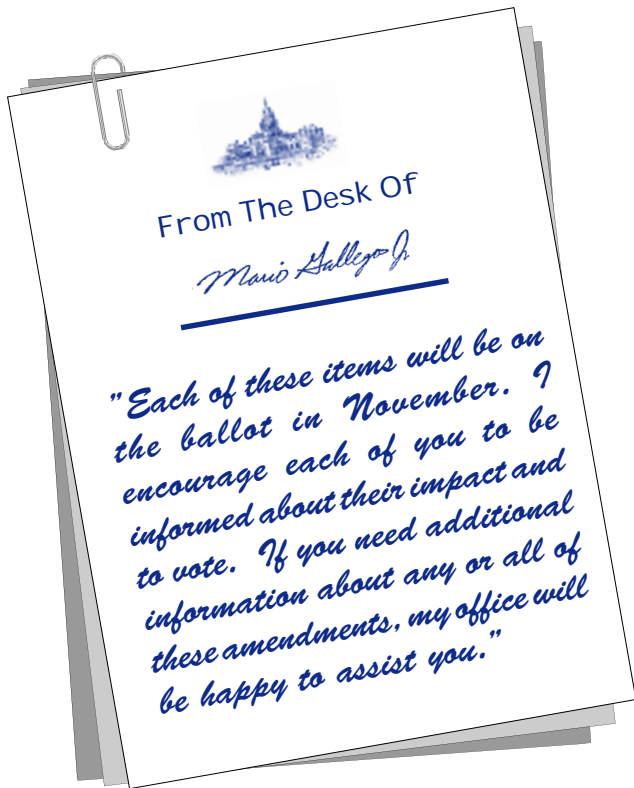
Hate Crimes

The 77th Legislature worked hard to forge a compromise and ultimately pass hate crimes legislation. Senate Bill 87, co-sponsored by Senator Gallegos, enhances penalties for crimes motivated by hate, prejudice, or bias and provides the means for obtaining resources and assistance for the investigation and prosecution of these crimes.

After several years of trying to pass similar legislation, the late Senator Tom Haywood crossed party lines to allow this issue to be debated on the Senate floor. Through his efforts, and those of Senator Gallegos, and others, hate crimes legislation passed both houses of the legislature and was signed into law.



CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS ON THE BALLOT IN NOVEMBER



Proposition 1

The constitutional amendment providing for clearing of land titles by the release of a state claim of its interest to the owners of certain land in Bastrop County.

Proposition 2

The constitutional amendment authorizing the issuance of state general obligation bonds and notes to provide financial assistance to counties for roadway projects to serve border colonias.

Proposition 3

The constitutional amendment to authorize the legislature to exempt from ad valorem taxation raw cocoa and green coffee that is held in Harris County.

Proposition 4

The constitutional amendment providing for a four-year term of office for the fire fighters' pension commissioner.

Proposition 5

The constitutional amendment authorizing municipalities to donate outdated or surplus firefighting equipment or supplies to underdeveloped countries.

Proposition 6

The constitutional amendment requiring the governor to call a special session for the appointment of presidential electors under certain circumstances.

Proposition 7

The constitutional amendment authorizing the Veterans' Land Board to issue up to \$500 million in general obligation bonds payable from the general revenues of the state for veterans' housing assistance and to use assets in certain veterans' land and veterans' housing assistance funds to provide for veterans cemeteries.

Proposition 8

The constitutional amendment authorizing the issuance of up to \$850 million in bonds payable from the general revenues of the state for construction and repair projects and for the purchase of needed equipment.

Proposition 9

The constitutional amendment authorizing the filling of a vacancy in the legislature without an election if a candidate is running unopposed in an election to fill the vacancy.

Proposition 10

The constitutional amendment to promote equal tax treatment for products produced, acquired, and distributed in the State of Texas by authorizing the legislature to exempt from ad valorem taxation tangible personal property held at certain locations only temporarily for assembling, manufacturing, processing, or other commercial purposes.

Proposition 11

The constitutional amendment to allow current and retired public school teachers and retired public school administrators to receive compensation for serving on the governing bodies of school districts, cities, towns, or other local government districts.

Proposition 12

The constitutional amendment to eliminate obsolete, archaic, redundant, and unnecessary provisions and to clarify, update, and harmonize certain provisions of the Texas Constitution.

Proposition 13

The constitutional amendment authorizing the legislature to authorize the board of trustees of an independent school district to donate certain surplus district property of historical significance in order to preserve the property.

Proposition 14

The constitutional amendment to authorize the legislature to authorize taxing units other than school districts to exempt from ad valorem taxation travel trailers that are not held or used for the production of income.

Proposition 15

The constitutional amendment creating the Texas Mobility Fund and authorizing grants and loans of money and issuance of obligations for financing the construction, reconstruction, acquisition, operation, and expansion of state highways, turnpikes, toll roads, toll bridges, and other mobility projects.

Proposition 16

The constitutional amendment prescribing requirements for imposing a lien for work and material used in the construction, repair, or renovation of improvements on residential homestead property and including the conversion and refinance of a personal property lien secured by a manufactured home to a lien on real property as a debt on homestead property protected from a forced sale.

Proposition 17

The constitutional amendment authorizing the legislature to settle land title disputes between the state and a private party.

Proposition 18

The constitutional amendment to promote uniformity in the collection, deposit, reporting, and remitting of civil and criminal fees.

Proposition 19

The constitutional amendment providing for the issuance of additional general obligation bonds by the Texas Water Development Board in an amount not to exceed \$2 billion.

★ Passage of Prop. 3 Will Name Port of Houston a Coffee Exchange Port

Senator Gallegos passed legislation that will help the Port of Houston become a leader in the coffee import business in the United States. S.B. 1574/SJR 47 creates an exemption from ad valorem taxation of raw cocoa and green coffee held in Harris County.

This issue is a constitutional amendment and will be on the November ballot as **Proposition #3**. If passed it will allow Harris County to become an exchange port for coffee on the New York Board of Trade. This exclusive designation is currently given only to New York, Miami and New Orleans. With a coffee exchange designation, Harris County will be qualified to import coffee from most Central and South American countries, as well as Mexico, the largest coffee exchange country. Harris County, with its proximity to Mexico and the rest of the coffee producing nations, can expect an increase in coffee storage.

The coffee will be stored in special warehouses, and would be subject to taxation. Exchange coffee may be imported into any Texas port, but it must be stored in Harris County. The New York Board of Trade limits the exchange area to one county to ease the inspection of the coffee and storage facilities by officials. Taxes on private warehouses, equipment, and other taxable items to handle the stored coffee as well as the new jobs created for the residents of Harris County will provide additional revenue to the various taxing jurisdictions.

★ Tax-Exempt Benefits for County Employees

The Texas Legislature unanimously adopted S.B. 802, authored by Senator Gallegos, enabling counties state-wide, with the approval of the commissioners court, to allow employees to set up a pre-tax account for qualified transportation benefits.

Recent federal legislation resulting from the Taxpayer Relief Act of 1987 and the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century have expanded the eligible expenses which may qualify for federal tax savings. Senator Gallegos hopes that with passage of this legislation, more county employees will take advantage of public transportation which in turn will ease congestion in and around the Harris County metropolitan area.

★ Texas Commission of Fire Protection

Fire fighter safety continues to be a legislative priority for Senator Gallegos. Senate Bill 382 comes as a direct result of the tragic deaths of Houston Fire Fighters Lewis Mayo and Kimberly Smith on Feb 14, 2000 and the three fire fighters that died in the River Oaks Church fire in Fort Worth in 1999. This bill, authored by Senator Gallegos, attempts to correct operational, and safety deficiencies that may have contributed to those fire fighters losing their lives by establishing various safety standards that comply with standards set by the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA).

The bill was developed by a joint consortium made up of the Texas State Association of Fire Fighters, the Texas Fire Chiefs' Association, the State Firemen and Fire Marshall's Association, Texas A&M, Texas Municipal League, the Fire Service Instructors, the State Fire Marshall and the Texas Commission on Fire Protection.

★ Greater Northside Management District

During the interim, businesses and community leaders from Senate District 6 gathered local support for a management district and requested that Senator Gallegos sponsor legislation to enable the creation of the Greater Northside Management District. Currently, there is no such development entity in the Greater Northside area of the City of Houston, one of the oldest and most historic areas in Texas.

House Bill 3634 creates the Greater Northside Management District to assist area businesses in building and maintaining growing infrastructure needs. The Management District will also provide improved security, additional street lighting, street/sidewalk improvements, landscaping, and maintenance. In addition, the District will aggressively market the area to real estate brokers and investors in residential and commercial housing, as well as small and medium size businesses contemplating relocation.

★ Residence of Long-Term Care Facilities Get Allowance Increase

Senator Gallegos sponsored legislation allowing an increase in the minimum personal needs allowance to Medicaid residents in long-term care facilities from \$45 to \$60 a month. This bill provides a much needed increase in the personal needs allowance for Medicaid beneficiaries who reside in nursing homes and other long-term care facilities.

Personal needs allowances are used for clothing and personal-care items that increase the quality of life for seniors in our community. As our senior community continues to grow we will have more challenges to overcome. Senator Gallegos is ready to continue to be the voice for the seniors of Senate District 6.



Senator Gallegos accepts a picture and t-shirt from Milby High School students who were recognized by the Senate for their efforts enrolling families in the CHIP program.

Senator Mario Gallegos

District 6
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MARIO
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