

SENATOR
MARIO GALLEGOS
CAPITOL UPDATE FALL 2005



Dear Neighbor,

The 79th Legislative Session and subsequent special sessions were dominated by efforts to create a new public school finance system.

Unlike previous sessions, there was not a budgetary shortfall, and much of the budgetary pressures from the previous session were replaced by a new effort to pay for schools.

The Legislature struggled back and forth with creating a plan that would provide teacher pay raises, pump much needed money into our schools and, at the same time, reduce property taxes.

Each of these priorities requires the state to raise new money, and the Legislature responded by attempting to restructure the tax code and close loopholes.

My primary concern, during the course of these discussions, was to ensure that we did not end up hurting working families or limit our schools' ability to provide for a quality education for our children.

In the midst of this debate on schools, teachers and education, there were nearly 3,700 bills filed in the House of Representatives and more than 1,800 bills filed in the Senate.

I worked hard to craft legislation that would safeguard communities and consumers, revitalize neighborhoods and enhance working conditions for our first responders.

Bills that I authored will help get rid of nuisance bars in the middle of our neighborhoods, establish management districts so that neighborhoods can take control of their own localities, and allow fire fighters to continue their public service "Fill the Boot" campaigns across the state.

As with all legislative sessions, there is still work to be done during the interim and I look forward to continuing to work for my constituents in Senate District 6 – and all Texans, for many years to come.

It is a privilege to serve as your State Senator and I am honored to be in Austin working for our community's interests.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Mario Gallegos, Jr.".

Mario Gallegos, Jr.

Finance Report from Senator Gallegos

SCHOOL FINANCE

In late November of last year, a district court judge ruled that Texas' school finance system was unconstitutional. As a consequence, the actions of the 79th Legislature were overshadowed by the lawsuit that was appealed to the Texas Supreme Court.

The Supreme Court has not ruled on this case, yet the Legislature has already begun the process of completely revamping our school finance system – something that hasn't been done in more than a decade. After three special sessions and two regular sessions, the Legislature failed to provide a meaningful education finance bill.

Senator Gallegos believes he and his colleagues have a duty to ensure that a plan accomplishes certain things, both for our schools here in Harris County and the rest of the state. Any overhaul of the way our public schools are funded should provide better pay for teachers and fund the schools and districts that need the most help.

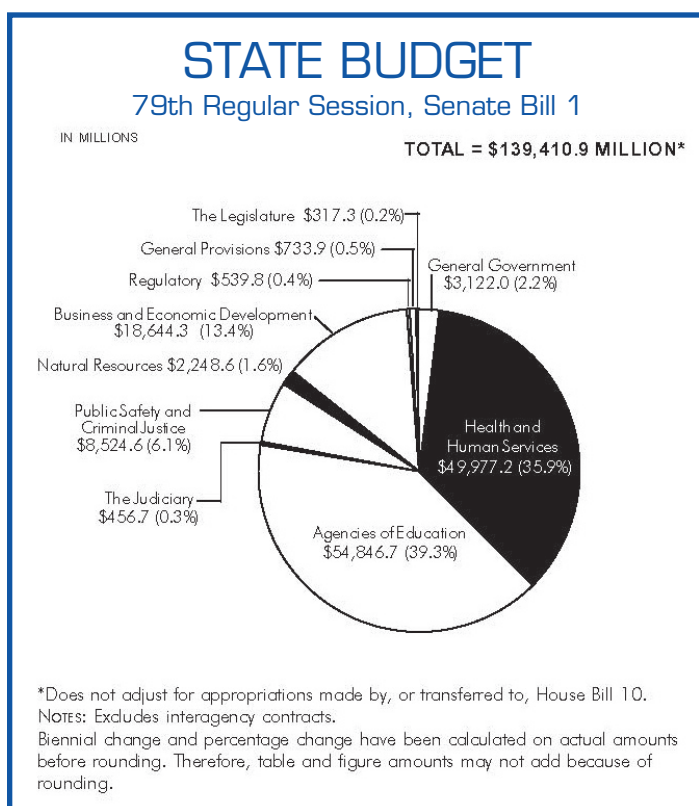
The bills that were placed before Senator Gallegos for final consideration during the regular and special sessions were simply not good enough. The Legislature can do better, and every child in Texas deserves a fair, equitable plan that funds education.



Senators Gallegos and Lindsay discuss the restoration of health and human services benefits included in the 79th Session budget.

Senator Gallegos will continue to work to ensure that any future plan passed by the Legislature benefits those children who need help the most.

APPROPRIATIONS



2006–07 biennium total \$139.4 billion, and represent a \$12.8 billion, or 10.1 percent, increase from the 2004–05 biennial level.

Included in the budget are pay raises for state troopers, increased funding for health and human services programs for children and seniors, restoration of many of the cuts from last session and new money for education and the universities in and around Senate District 6.

Of note, the budget restored hearing aids, mental health professional services, and podiatry benefits for adult Medicaid clients (78% of whom are elderly or disabled). The budget also restores CHIP vision and dental care, and mental health coverage to 2003 levels, and assumes a revamped premium policy that will be simpler and more affordable for families.

While this is not a perfect budget that returns the state to pre-2003 levels, Senator Gallegos believes it is a step in the right direction.

Senator Gallegos will continue to work on reversing cuts made, for example, returning to a 12 month, continuous eligibility process for both Medicaid and CHIP and restoring the System Benefit Fund for energy assistance to low-income customers.

The budget outlook for the 79th Legislature is much healthier than two years ago. The state saw a budget surplus, and there was less of a need to make painful cuts to our social services. Appropriations for the

Safeguarding Privacy and Communities

- ★ **Senate Bill 200** - Protects residents of certain communities by authorizing the county to ensure that fire protection personnel have access in the event of an emergency.
- ★ **Senate Bill 280** - Places power back in the hands of residents by enabling them to file suit against salvage yards for dangerous and unsightly conditions in order to keep their neighborhoods clean.
- ★ **Senate Bill 1850** - Addresses the nuisance that some bars have created in our neighborhoods. These bars have taken root in the midst of homes, schools, churches and parks attracting drug dealing, prostitution and violent crimes. This bill makes it harder for these bars to do business by requiring them to pay more to become licensed and hits them with stiffer penalties if they violate the law.
- ★ **House Bill 580** - Authorizes the county to clean-up hazardous materials when they have been leaked, spilled, released, or abandoned and recoup the cost from the responsible party.
- ★ **House Bill 2451** - Improves public safety, which was the intent of the bill's author Representative Joe Moreno, by creating a criminal charge for mixed beverage permit holders or private club permit holders which serve, sell, or allow the consumption of distilled spirits, beer, or wine after hours.
- ★ **House Bill 2553** - Protects consumer privacy by requiring mobile phone providers to get permission from customers before selling or sharing their mobile number with would-be telemarketers.

Revitalizing Neighborhoods

- ★ **House Bill 467** - Provides the basis for significant funding for distressed areas in Harris County. This bill, authored by Representative Kevin Bailey, makes available relief for urban colonias, areas which often do not have access to running water or electricity.
- ★ **House Bill 1458** - Creates the Airline Improvement District, which will allow the community to take control of their neighborhood and enact positive reforms for neighborhood beautification and revitalization.

★ **House Bill 3528** - Changes the law which created the Greater Greenspoint Management District to better reflect the new demographics of the District.

★ **House Bill 3550** - Allows the Aldine Improvement District to provide financing for infrastructure within its boundaries.

Working with First Responders

★ **Senate Bill 245** - Protects the Muscular Dystrophy Association's partnership with local Fire Departments to conduct Fill the Boot campaigns.

★ **Senate Bill 716** - Permits payroll deduction for municipal police officers, a similar right that was previously passed for fire fighters by Senator Gallegos last session.

★ **Senate Bill 879** - Makes changes to the Texas Commission on Fire Protection in order to provide for more grant money to be given to local Fire Departments.

★ **Senate Bill 1421** - Gives a hiring preference for entrance into the Houston Fire Department to sons and daughters of fire fighters killed in the line of duty.

★ **House Bill 1009** - Improves security features at the Port of Houston by allowing the port to access information from a visitor's driver's license in order to efficiently manage and track these first time or infrequent visitors without disrupting port operations.

★ **House Bill 1634** - Increases penalties for arson and committing arson while manufacturing methamphetamines. Also allows for the prosecution of offenses similar to those that killed Captain Grady Burke of the Houston Fire Department in the line of duty in 2005.

★ **House Bill 1928** - Authored by Representative Joe Moreno that adds county jailers to those individuals who receive health benefits after they are exposed to contagious diseases on the job.

★ **House Bill 2892** - Allows fire fighter employee associations across the state to discuss contracts with city officials. This was a goal of state fire fighters for more than three decades.



Senators Gallegos and Van de Putte and Representative Joe Moreno welcome Coach Jimmy Duffer and the Charles H. Milby High School basketball team to the State Capitol for recognition after winning the Class 5A State Basketball Championship.

VOTERS REGISTRATION

INSTRUCTIONS FOR COMPLETING APPLICATION FOR VOTER REGISTRATION

Please complete all of the information on the application. Print in ink or type. If you have any questions about how to fill out this application, please call the Secretary of State's Office toll free at 1-800-252-VOTE (8683), TDD 1-800-735-2989.

- Name** - Give your full name including first, middle and last. If you have changed your name, give former name.
- Residence Address** - Include street address, city, state, and zip. If you do not have a street address, give a description of the location of where you live.
- Mailing Address** - If mail cannot be delivered to your residence, give a mailing address.
- Gender, Social Security Number, Telephone Number, and Driver's License Number or Identification Number** are optional. The social security number is solicited by authority of sec. 13.122 and will be used to maintain the accuracy of the registration records. Your voter registration application is open to the public.
- City and County of Former Residence** - If you were previously registered in another county in Texas, complete this box.
- Agent** - An agency may apply for voter registration for another person as long as that person is related to the applicant as husband, wife, father, mother, son or daughter. The agent must also be a registered voter or have submitted an application for registration. Indicate the relationship of the agent on the application. Indicate relationship next to signature.
- Sign Your Name**. If you cannot sign your name next to the X, a person may witness you making your mark. Give the name and address of the person who witnessed your mark above the signature line. If you cannot make a mark, have the witness state the applicant could not make a mark. You do not need a witness if you can sign your name.
- Indicate by checking the appropriate box above your signature if this application is a new registration, a change of name or address, or request for replacement certificate.**

GENERAL VOTER REGISTRATION INFORMATION

You may register to vote at any time. You must be at least 17 years and 10 months old to register. Your voter registration will become effective 30 days after it is received or on your 18th birthday, whichever is later. **YOU MUST BE A U.S. CITIZEN TO REGISTER.** If you move to another county, you must re-register in the county of your new residence.

If you decline to register to vote, the fact that you have declined to register will remain confidential and will be used only for registration purposes. If you do register to vote, the office (if applicable) at which you submitted a voter registration application will remain confidential and will be used only for voter registration purposes.

Prescribed by the Secretary of State 17.97 BPM1.1-97		VOTER REGISTRATION APPLICATION (SOLICITUD DE INSCRIPCION DE VOTANTE)		Additional Information	For Official Use Only	
					PCT	Cert. Num.
						EDR
Last Name (Apellido usual)		First Name (NOT HUSBAND'S) (Su nombre de pila) (Siendo mujer: no el del esposo)		Middle/Maiden Name (If any) (Segundo Nombre/Apellido de Soltera (si tiene))		Former Name (Nombre anterior)
Residence Address: Street Address and Apartment Number, City, State, and ZIP. If none, describe where you live. (Do not include P.O. Box or Rural Rt.) (Domicilio: Calle y n° mero, n° mero de apartamento, Ciudad, Estado, y Código Postal. A falta de estos datos, describa la localidad de su residencia.) (No incluya su apartado postal ni su ruta rural.)						
Mailing Address, City, State and ZIP: If mail cannot be delivered to your residence address. (Dirección postal, Ciudad, Estado y Código Postal) (Si es imposible entregarle correspondencia a domicilio.)					Gender (Optional) (Sexo) (Opcativo) <input type="checkbox"/> Male (Hombre) <input type="checkbox"/> Female (Mujer)	
Date of Birth: month, day, year (Fecha de Nacimiento): (mes, día, año)		City, County, and State of Former Residence (Ciudad, Condado, Estado de su residencia anterior)		Social Security No. (Optional) (Número de Seguro Social) (opcativo)		
Check appropriate box: I AM A UNITED STATES CITIZEN <input type="checkbox"/> Yes (SI) <input type="checkbox"/> No (No) (Marque el cuadro apropiado: Soy Ciudadano/a de los Estados Unidos)						
I understand that giving false information to procure a voter registration is perjury, and a crime under state and federal law. (Entiendo que el hecho de proporcionar datos falsos a fin de obtener inscripción en el registro de votantes, constituye el delito de perjurio o declaración falsa y es una infracción sancionable por ley federal y estatal.)						
I affirm that I (Declaro que soy) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> am a resident of this county; (residente del condado) <input type="checkbox"/> have not been finally convicted of a felony or if a felon I am eligible for registration under section 13.001, Election Code; (que no he sido condenado/a en definitiva por un delito penal, o en caso de tal condena, que estoy habilitado/a para inscribirme, a tenor de lo dispuesto por la sección 13.001 del Código Electoral) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> have not been declared mentally incompetent by final judgment of a court of law. (no se me ha declarado mentalmente incapacitado por orden judicial.)						
				TX Driver's License No. or Personal I.D. No. (Issued by TX Dept. of Public Safety) (Optional) (Número de su licencia tejana de manejar o de su Cédula de Identidad expedida por el Departamento de Seguridad Pública de Texas) (opcativo)		
				Telephone Number (Optional) (Número telefónico) (opcativo)		
Check one (Marque el cuadro) <input type="checkbox"/> New (Nuevo) <input type="checkbox"/> Change (Cambiar) <input type="checkbox"/> Replacement (Reemplazar)						
				_____/_____/_____ Date (fecha)		
Signature of Applicant or Agent and Relationship to Applicant or Printed Name of Applicant if Signed by Witness and Date. (Firma del/de la solicitante o de su apoderado/a y que parentesco tiene el/la apoderado con el/la solicitante. Si la firma es de un(a) testigo, escriba el nombre del/de la solicitante usando letra de molde y ponga la fecha.)						

(Detach along dotted line, complete, stamp and mail)

Major Legislation of the 79TH Regular Session

Asbestos Litigation Reform

Senate Bill 15 sets a standard of impairment prior to the filing of an asbestos or silica lawsuit but removes the statute of limitations on these types of lawsuits. It will allow for truly sick victims of asbestos and silica exposure to have their day in court.

Life Without Parole

Senate Bill 60 eliminates life with the possibility of parole in a capital case and creates a new life without parole sentence for capital defendants who do not receive the death penalty.

One-Stop Licensing

Senate Bill 96 allows for the creation of an Internet site that provides a “one-stop shopping” source for occupational licenses.

Identity Theft Prevention

Senate Bill 122, which Senator Gallegos co-authored, prevents identity theft by protecting the consumer’s personal information from being leaked and helps victims recover from the offense quicker. It also requires businesses to report to consumers breaches in security involving consumers’ personal information and allows the Texas Attorney General to pursue these cases.

Workers’ Compensation Benefits for Fire Fighters

Senate Bill 310, which Senator Gallegos co-authored, will now allow fire fighters who are hurt on the job to recover workers’ compensation benefits for certain diseases, including heart disease, tuberculosis, respiratory illness, and cancer if they were caused in the line of duty.

U.I.L. Competition

Senate Bill 658 prohibits U.I.L. area, regional, or state competitions from being held the week of or the week before TAKS testing.

Women’s Preventative Health Care

Senate Bill 747 allows for Medicaid coverage of women’s preventive health and family planning services, increasing access to these services and allowing the state to draw down additional federal Medicaid funding. Senator Gallegos was proud to be a co-author of this bill.

Juror Pay Raise

Senate Bill 1704 raises the pay for jury service from \$6 a day, the lowest rate in the country, to \$40 a day, making it easier for minority and low-income workers to participate in the jury process.

Workers’ Compensation Overhaul

House Bill 7 provides for a complete overhaul of the workers compensation system in Texas by abolishing the current Texas Workers’ Compensation Commission and creating a new division at the Texas Department of Insurance to oversee the Texas workers’ compensation system. Amendments to the bill added by Senator Gallegos in the Senate will help protect laborers across this state by requiring safety notices and educational materials to be in English and Spanish. His amendments also will provide workers a better opportunity to report hazardous work sites, without fear of retaliation from their employers.

Prevention of Credit Scoring

House Bill 412 prohibits a telephone company from using an individual’s credit score and credit history to deny or price basic phone service.

Hazlewood Act Expansion

House Bill 503 updates the Hazlewood Act, which allows for college tuition and fee exemptions for certain military personnel and their children, to include those service personnel fighting the War on Terror.

Online Sexual Predator Identification

House Bill 2228 creates an offense against an individual who engages in conversations over the Internet with the intent of meeting a minor for sexual activity.

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USEFUL STATE GOVERNMENT WEBSITES AND TOLL-FREE NUMBERS

Comptroller Of Public Accounts(800)252-5555 www.window.state.tx.us	Texas Commission for Civil Rights(888) 452-4778	Cash and Nutrition Assistance(800) 252-9330
Texas Tomorrow Fund(800)445-GRAD www.texas tomorrowfund.org	Texas Department of Aging and Disability Services www.dads.state.tx.us	Medicaid Eligibility for Elderly & Disabled(888) 834-7406
Early Childhood Intervention	Area Agencies on Aging(800) 252-9240	SSI-related Food Stamp Benefits.....(800) 248-1078
ECI Care Line(800) 250-2246	Consumer Rights/Services(800) 458-9858	Texas Department of Criminal Justice www.tdcj.state.tx.us
General Land Office	Complaint and Intake Management ..(800) 458-9858	Crime Victim Clearinghouse.....(800) 848-4284
www.glo.state.tx.us	Medicaid Estate Recovery Program... (800) 458-9858	Offender Status Line(800) 535-0283
Environmental Hotline(800) 832-8224	State Long Term Care Ombudsman Office(800) 252-2412	Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs www.tdhca.state.tx.us
Recycling Line(800) 998-4GLO	Texas Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services www.dars.state.tx.us	Hotline(800) 792-1119
Office of Consumer Credit Commissioner	General Information.....(800) 628-5115	Texas Department of Insurance www.tdi.state.tx.us
Consumer Credit Helpline(800) 538-1579	Texas Department of Family and Protective Services www.dfps.state.tx.us	Information and Assistance(800) 252-3439
Office of the Attorney General	Texas Abuse/Neglect Hotline.....(800) 252-5400	Division of Workers' Compensation
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Consumer Protection Hotline(800) 621-0508	Texas Youth Hotline(800) 210-2278	Texas Department of Public Safety www.txdps.state.tx.us
Crime Victim's Compensation.....(800) 983-9933	Foster Care and Adoption Inquiry Hotline (800) 233-3405	Emergency Roadside Assistance(800) 525-5555
Public Information and Assistance (800) 252-8011	Texas Department of State Health Services www.dshs.state.tx.us	Missing Persons Clearinghouse(800) 346-3243
Office of the Governor	Immunizations(800) 252-9152	Texas Crime Stoppers Hotline(800) 252-TIPS
www.governor.state.tx.us	Substance Abuse Services.....(866) 378-8440	Texas Medical Board www.tsbme.state.tx.us
Citizen's Assistance Hotline.....(800) 843-5789	WIC(800) 942-3678	Consumer Complaint Hotline(800) 201-9353
Citizen's Opinion Hotline(800) 252-9600	Texas HIV/STD Infoline.....(800) 299-AIDS	Texas Veterans Commission www.tvc.state.tx.us
Public Utility Commission(512)936-7000	Family and Community Services(800) 422-2956	Veterans Hotline(800) 252-VETS
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Consumer Protection Division(888)782-8477	Texas Health and Human Services Commission www.hhsc.state.tx.us	Unemployment Insurance Hotline(800) 558-8321
Texas No Call List Registration (866) TXNOCAL www.texasnocall.com	24-Hour Information and Referral Network 211	Governor's Job Bank www.twc.state.tx.us/jobs/gvjb/gvjb.html
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