

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

RODNEY ELLIS



2008 REPORT FROM SENATOR ELLIS



Dear Neighbor,

I hope you and your family are doing well and have enjoyed the summer. I want to take this opportunity to update you on significant developments in this interim of the Texas Legislature and how they affect you as a constituent of Senate District 13.

We face many challenges for the future of our state in the upcoming legislative session. But these challenges also present us with tremendous opportunities to move Texas forward and make progress in areas like health care, energy and the environment, education, housing, and criminal justice. Working together, I believe we can utilize the new energy in politics to overcome the challenges we face and bring about meaningful change in Senate District 13, Texas, and throughout America.

In the pages that follow you will read about my efforts to stand up for the people of Texas as I prepare to represent you in the upcoming legislative session. I've been working hard this interim to create responsible energy and environmental policy in the face of rising gas and energy prices, and increasing pollution. I'm fighting to provide all Texas families access to affordable and quality health care. I'm standing up to ensure each child has an opportunity to achieve their potential through quality educational opportunities. I've continued my push to increase public safety and fairness in our criminal justice system. And I've worked to provide sales tax relief and fair wages for working families struggling to make ends meet.

Please note that wherever you see a blue shaded box inside this newsletter, you will find a phone number to call or a website to visit to get more information about the government programs highlighted in that section.

I also want to take this opportunity to thank you all for your support and the honor of allowing me to serve you in the Texas Senate. If you have any questions regarding the issues in this newsletter, or other matters you feel the office needs to address, please feel free to call my office at (713) 236-0306 or email rodney.ellis@senate.state.tx.us. I look forward to hearing your feedback. I'm confident, working together, we can make this a better state for all Texans.

Sincerely,

2008 Legislative Report

Senator Ellis' 2008 Legislative Report

★ Education

Education is the essential building block to a better future. Ensuring all Texas children have access to quality educational opportunities is integral to building a sound foundation for our state's progress and economic prosperity. Senator Ellis continues to fight to make that opportunity a reality through efforts to improve our schools, reward hard working teachers, and provide students the assistance they deserve to help them achieve the dream of a college education.

Making College Affordable

The rising cost of college tuition is making it increasingly difficult for many Texas families to send their children to college. Since the deregulation of tuition in 2003, tuition at Texas' public universities increased by an average of 52%. Senator Ellis has proposed numerous measures to make college more affordable, including capping tuition increases and refunding increased tuition costs.

TEXAS Grant Program

Senator Ellis authored landmark legislation in 1999 to create the TEXAS Grant program to provide more qualified Texans the opportunity to go to college. The TEXAS Grant program is designed to provide tuition and fees to students in need of financial assistance, who have excelled academically and taken the required curriculum.

The program is a clear success. Since it's creation, 382,924 grants have been awarded to help qualified students attend college. Unfortunately, beginning in 2003, funding cuts to the Texas Grant program and the rising cost of tuition resulted in the denial of aid for many qualified students. In the coming school year a projected 90,798 students will not receive the grant they earned. Senator Ellis fought tirelessly to restore those funding cuts, and was partially successful in securing aid for an additional 35,000 deserving students for 2008-09. However, despite those increases, we are still far short of where we need to be. Senator Ellis will continue to push for full funding for TEXAS Grants to ensure every eligible and deserving student has the opportunity to attend college.

To obtain more information about the TEXAS Grant program, or for information on state financial aid options for your college and college-bound students go to www.collegefortexans.com or call the Texas Financial Aid Information Center at (888) 311-8881.

Texas Legislative Internship Program

On Thursday, August 7th, Senator Ellis was joined by friends and family to honor the 19th anniversary of the passing of his friend and mentor, Congressman Mickey Leland. In 1990, Senator Ellis created the Texas Legislative Internship Program (TLIP) in honor of Congressman Leland's legacy. Since the TLIP's inception, more than 300 young people have received the opportunity to make a difference in the world of politics and public policy. Interns have worked in the offices of members of the Texas Legislature, U.S. Congress, state agencies, nonprofit organizations, and for publications like Texas Monthly magazine.

For more information about TLIP, call the Mickey Leland Center on World Peace and Hunger at 713.313.7370 or go to www.rodneyellis.com.



Senator Ellis poses with the 2007 TLIP class.

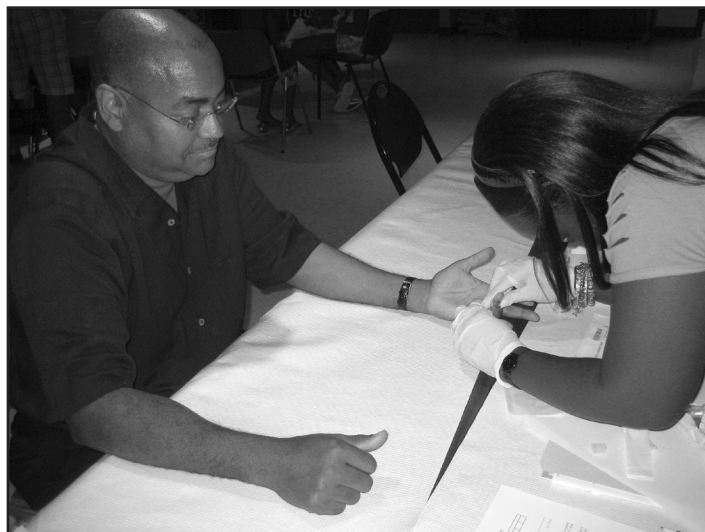
★ Health Care

Ensuring all Texans have access to affordable and quality health care is one of Senator Ellis' top priorities

Health Care for Kids

Texas is among the nation's leaders in the number of residents without health insurance, and has the highest rate of uninsured children in the nation, with one in five children – a total of 1.5 million – lacking coverage. In the effort to ensure all Texans have access to affordable and quality health care, Senator Ellis has proposed legislation to provide universal health care for all Texas families and fully restore funding to Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) that was cut in 2003. CHIP provides low-cost health coverage to uninsured children. Senator Ellis and his colleagues were successful at partially restoring the funding cuts, providing 127,000 more children access to health insurance. Of the 1.5 million uninsured children in Texas, 850,000 are eligible for but not enrolled in the CHIP or Children's Medicaid.

To enroll a child in CHIP, or find out more information, please call 1-877-543-7669, or go to <http://www.chipmedicaid.org>



Senator Ellis was at the Sunnyside Multi-Service Center on June 27th to participate in National HIV Testing Day and support the effort to raise awareness and reduce the stigma associated with getting tested.

HIV Prevention

Senator Ellis has been a consistent advocate for HIV awareness, prevention, and treatment. The Center for Disease Control recently released a study citing that HIV infections rates are an astounding 40% higher than previously estimated. In Harris County alone there were 7,642 residents living with HIV in 2006, by far the county with the highest rate in Texas. In the effort to prevent the spread of HIV, Senator Ellis plans to propose legislation to increase treatment, and expand testing and awareness through streamlining testing procedures as part of routine health check-ups.

Smoke Free Workplace

Senator Ellis remains committed to Texans' rights to a smoke free workplace. Preventing smoking in buildings would significantly reduce exposure to a major health risk. Secondhand smoke is the cause of an estimated 35,000 to 45,000 deaths each year and more than one million illnesses in children each year, and is a known cause of cancer, heart disease, low birth weight, and chronic lung ailments.

The statewide ban has garnered bipartisan support and has become a major focus of the American Cancer Society, the American Heart Association, the American Lung Association, and the Lance Armstrong Foundation.

Senator Ellis' 2008 Legislative Report

★ Housing

Protecting Our Homes

Owning a home is one of the key aspects of the American dream. Unfortunately, for many Texas families that dream is being shattered due to rising home foreclosure rates. Foreclosures in Harris, Montgomery and Fort Bend counties shot up 21 percent in 2007, and as of April 2008, 37 percent of all foreclosures in the Houston area were right here in Senate District 13.

Those numbers aren't just statistics; they are the homes of our friends, neighbors, and family members. They need a little help—like many of us do in hard times, which is why Senator Ellis is fighting for policies to protect Texas homeowners and authored the state's most comprehensive housing legislation since 2003 in the last session.

If you need more information on obtaining personal help with a foreclosure, please contact the federal HOPE NOW program at 1.888.995.4673 or visit www.hopenow.com. To obtain local assistance, contact Acorn of Texas, a community organization, at 713.868.7015 or online at www.acorn.org/texas. For more information on the state's first-time homebuyer program, contact the Texas Department of Housing at 1.800.525.0657 or www.tdhca.state.tx.us.



Senator Ellis, Senator Barack Obama, and Mr. Ralph Everett call for policies to promote clean energy at the Congressional Black Caucus meeting in Washington, D.C.

★ Energy and the Environment

Energy is a hot topic these days. Rising gas and electricity prices, and the clear evidence of the effect of pollution and climate change, make it imperative that we quickly develop and advance energy alternatives.

Senator Ellis is leading the way to ensure the people of Senate District 13 have the affordable and clean energy policies they deserve, and Houston and Texas remain at the forefront of the energy field. Senator Ellis has authored legislation to promote alternative and renewable energy, create a sales tax holiday for energy efficient products, and require more fuel efficient vehicles. He is also working to bring high-paying green jobs to Houston.

Senator Ellis has fought to secure help to provide relief to families struggling to pay their energy bills, through establishing the system benefit fund to create the LITE-UP program. The LITE-UP program provides funds to families struggling to pay high electric bills from May through September for families earning 125% or less of federal poverty level.

For more information on the LITE-UP program call 1-866-454-8387.

As a member of the National Commission on Energy Policy and Co-Chair of the Commission to Engage African Americans on Climate Change, Senator Ellis is working to ensure low income families and minority voices are heard in the climate change and energy debates.

And as Chair of the Senate Government Organization Committee, Senator Ellis is conducting interim studies on how the

state can maximize energy efficiency efforts through the State Energy Conservation Office (SECO), and how to adopt high performance building standards that can cost-effectively lower utility costs and energy usage for public buildings.

The deployment of alternative energies and energy efficiency has an added benefit: the creation of "green jobs." Texas can create millions of green jobs if we aggressively pursue alternatives like solar, wind, and geothermal energy, advanced hybrids and electric vehicles, and increased energy efficiency.

The bottom line is that when it comes to climate protection, there are strategies that can protect the planet, create jobs, and save money at the same time.

Senator Ellis co-authored legislation to help Texans replace old cars with more efficient, newer ones. If you have an old car that still runs, and you make less than \$63,600 (for a family of four), the state will give you \$3,000 toward the purchase of a new car, or \$3,500 toward a hybrid. For more information, call 1 800 913 3321. (If you cannot afford a new vehicle, you can call the same number for up to \$600 in repair assistance.)

Texas' Clean Energy Future

Energy efficiency and renewable energy provide viable, clean alternatives to fossil fuels, save consumers money on fuel costs, and could create thousands of jobs. Here are some of the technologies that are changing the way we generate and use power:

- ★ **Solar Power** - Enough sunlight hits the earth in a single hour to provide all of the energy the world uses in a year. The technologies to capture that energy are improving and becoming more affordable every day. Texas needs to provide rebates and other tax incentives to those who choose to purchase solar panels.
- ★ **Plug-in hybrid vehicles** - The Legislature should also provide incentives to those who choose to buy hybrids and plug-in hybrids, which can go 20-60 miles on an electrical charge without using a drop of gasoline. Several companies are developing plug-in hybrids that should be available by 2010.
- ★ **Wind Power** - Texas has more installed wind than any state in the nation, but we shouldn't slow down. In July, new transmission lines were approved to bring more clean, fossil-free energy into our cities and population centers. The wind in Texas blows more strongly at night which means it could be an excellent source of power to charge the batteries in plug-in hybrid vehicles. Imagine it: instead of paying to put gasoline in your car, you could pay a fraction of the cost to fuel up with a clean, renewable source of power generated right here in Texas.

Easy Ways to Save Energy

Here are some simple steps you can take to lower your energy costs and consumption:

- ★ Use compact fluorescent light bulbs (CFL's). They use 75% less energy than standard incandescent bulbs. One 60 watt bulb used three hours per day, when changed to a CFL, will save about \$10 per year.
- ★ Turn off computers when not in use. Also, plug computers and TV's into a power strip and turn off the power strip when they're not in use.
- ★ Lower the thermostat on your hot water heater to 120 degrees.
- ★ When replacing appliances or consumer electronics, look for the Energy Star label.
- ★ Drive sensibly. Rapid acceleration wastes gas. Also, keep your tires inflated and change air filters regularly as these steps will increase your miles per gallon.
- ★ Properly weatherize your home. Homes often lose a great deal of energy because they aren't properly weatherized.

The Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs will do a free analysis of homes of families who earn 125% or less of the federal poverty level (\$26,500 for a family of four) and will make needed repairs for free. For more information, call 1-888-606-8889.

Senator Ellis' 2008 Legislative Report

★ Improving Our Justice System

Improving the criminal justice system to ensure safety, justice, and fairness for all Texans remains one of Senator Ellis' top priorities. Responsible public safety policy requires more than just the appearance of being tough on crime; it's imperative Texas utilizes more smart on crime policies to improve the effectiveness and reliability of our justice system.

Increasing Public Confidence and Reliability

Texas leads the nation with 34 wrongful convictions proven by DNA. This shameful statistic is clear and convincing evidence that our criminal justice system is broken, and it's time we took the necessary steps to fix it. In that spirit, Senator Ellis has taken on the responsibility of chairing the board of the Innocence Project, and continues to advocate legislative reforms dedicated to ensuring Texans have a system of justice they can have confidence protects the innocent, brings the guilty to justice, and is instilled with the fairness and integrity that justice demands.



Senator Ellis discusses key reforms with nine wrongfully convicted Texans, and criminal justice experts at a historic gathering in the Texas Capitol.

Protecting the Constitutional Right to Counsel

The promise of adequate representation, that every person accused of a crime stands equal before the law, is at the root of the American democratic ideal of justice, and is essential to ensuring fairness in our legal system. Unfortunately, many impoverished Texans remain effectively denied their constitutional right to counsel in our courts. Through the passage of the Fair Defense Act in 2001, securing the assistance for Texas counties to provide legal representation to the poor, and his recent efforts to establish an independent public defender office in Harris County, Senator Ellis has fought to end this inequity throughout his tenure in office, and continues the push to ensure that all Texans, regardless of their economic status, are treated equally under our law.

Crime Prevention and Substance Abuse Treatment

Senator Ellis advocates reforms to reduce drug crime in our communities, save taxpayer dollars, and preserve precious prison space for hardened criminals. Texas currently has 20,000 inmates locked up solely for drug possession at an enormous cost to taxpayers. Senator Ellis authored the comprehensive Substance Abuse Treatment and Crime Prevention Act to divert eligible non-violent, low-level, substance abusers to treatment programs proven to be more effective and efficient at reducing crime and drug use than incarceration.

★ Free Press

Senator Ellis authored the Free Flow of Information Act to ensure news sources and information are protected, balancing the public's right to know the truth from an independent press and the state's duty to uphold justice. Thirty-three other states and the District of Columbia currently have a law protecting journalists and their sources, and it's time for Texas to do the same. The press plays a vitally important role in our democracy and must be protected from government intimidation.

Tribute to Fallen Soldiers of Senate District 13

This section is dedicated to those who made the ultimate sacrifice - their lives. There are no words that can properly express our gratitude to the fallen and their families.

Leija, Hector
Dunn, Terrence D.
Jones III, Roy L.
Soto, Danny R.
Salinas, Eric D.
Edwards, William L.
Johnson, Rodney J.
Fraser, David M.
Medlicott, Matthew S.
Garrison, Benjamin J.
Ray, Jeremy E.
Perez, Orlando A.
McIntosh, Scott A.
Molina, Joshua A.
Candelo, Steven I.
McCormick, David P.
Cole Jr., Timothy B.

★ Ending the Genocide in Sudan

At the beginning of this year, SB 247 went into effect. This new law requires the state's public retirement systems to divest companies supporting the genocidal regime in charge of Sudan. Senator Ellis authored this historic law which adds Texas' voice to the international chorus condemning the ongoing genocide.

★ Unclaimed Stimulus Checks

According to the Center for Public Policy Priorities, more than 55,000 veterans and retirees are eligible to receive a combined \$16.4 million in unclaimed stimulus checks.

If you or someone you know has not received a stimulus check, please call your local IRS Taxpayer Assistance Center at (281) 721-7021.

★ Back-to-School Tax Holiday

2008 was another successful year for the back-to-school sales tax holiday. Consumers saved over \$50 million this year, bringing the total since Senator Ellis passed the legislation creating the holiday in 1999 to over a third of a billion dollars. This year's holiday was particularly timely as both consumers and retailers have been struggling in these difficult economic times.

Senator Ellis pushed last session to add new items to the list of tax exempt items and successfully added backpacks. He will try again next session to add computers, additional school supplies, and to expand the holiday on energy efficient products and appliances.



Senator Ellis promotes the annual back-to-school sales tax holiday with Representatives Coleman, Noriega, and Cohen.

Register to Vote in November

★ Defending Democracy & The Right to Vote

Protecting the right to vote is as essential as any right to liberty citizens of this country possess. That is why Senator Ellis opposes intentional efforts to restrict that right, such as calls for an additional photo ID requirement that would make it more difficult for elderly and low-income Texans to vote. That additional obstacle could severely suppress legitimate voter turnout, and there is no evidence that such measures actually prevent voter fraud.

Senator Ellis strongly supports legitimate efforts to protect voter integrity, stop voter fraud, and increase voter participation, such as backing up electronic voting machines with a paper trail and improving poll worker training.

**You must be registered using your current address to vote!
Register Now to Vote in November!**

If this is your first time to vote, or if you have moved since you last voted, you must register using your current address in order to vote in November. If you are registered now, you should have an orange voter registration card with your correct home address. If you don't have your card, you can check to see if you are correctly registered by going to: www.tx.gov/harris/voter/voter.asp, or if you live in Fort Bend County, go to: <http://vote.co.fort-bend.tx.us/WebVoter>.

If you are not registered, or are registered at an old address, you can register by simply filling out and mailing the application below. If you have any doubt about whether you are registered correctly, you should go ahead and send in the application. The deadline to mail applications is October 6! If you wait for the election to register, it will be too late for you to be able to vote.

Teens who will turn 18 on or before Election Day need to sign up by October 6 even if their birthday is after October 6. Teens can register up to two months before turning 18, so that their registration will be in effect in time for Election Day.

You may make additional copies of the application below. If you have any question about registering or voting, please call our office at 713-236-0306 or email us at: rodney.ellis@senate.state.tx.us

Este formulario está disponible en Español. Favor de llamar sin cargo a la oficina del Secretario de Estado al 1-800-252-8683 para conseguir una version en Español.

Fill out, clip, place in an envelope and mail to:

**Voter Registrar
P.O. Box 3527
Houston, TX 77253-3527
Or**

**Fort Bend County Elections
4520 Reading Road
Rosenberg, TX 77471-2133**

Be sure to check these Yes/No boxes. Your application will be rejected if you leave them blank!

Use your legal name exactly as it appears on your driver's license.

Put your home address in "residence address".

Don't put anything in "mailing address" unless you can't receive mail at home.

You MUST enter Texas driver's license number if you have a license.

Use your social security number ONLY if you do not have a Texas driver's license or Texas ID card.

Texas Voter Registration Application		For Official Use Only	
Prescribed by the Office of the Secretary of State		VR17.08E.12	
Please complete sections by printing LEGIBLY . If you have any questions about how to fill out this application, please call your local voter registrar or the Secretary of State's Office toll free at 1-800-252-VOTE(8683), TDD 1-800-735-2989, www.sos.state.tx.us .			
1 These Questions Must Be Completed Before Proceeding			
Check one <input type="checkbox"/> New Application <input type="checkbox"/> Change of Address and/or Name <input type="checkbox"/> Request for a Replacement Card			
Are you a United States Citizen? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No			
Will you be 18 years of age on or before election day? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No			
If you checked 'no' in response to either of the above, do not complete this form.			
Are you interested in serving as an election worker? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No			
2 Last Name	First Name	Middle Name (If any)	Former Name
3 Residence Address: Street Address and Apartment Number. If none, describe where you live. (Do not include P.O. Box, Rural Rt. or Business Address)		City	State
4 Mailing Address: Street Address and Apartment Number. (If mail cannot be delivered to your residence address.)		City	State
5 Date of Birth: (mm/dd/yyyy)		6 Gender (Optional) <input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female	
<input type="text"/> / <input type="text"/> / <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/>		7 Telephone Number (Optional) Include Area Code () - <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/>	
8 Texas Driver's License No. or Texas Personal I.D. No. (Issued by the Department of Public Safety)		If no Texas Driver's License or Personal Identification, give last 4 digits of your Social Security Number	
<input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/>		XXX-XX- <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/>	
<input type="checkbox"/> Check if you do not have a Texas Driver's License, or Texas Personal Identification No.		<input type="checkbox"/> Check if you do not have a Social Security Number	
9 I understand that giving false information to procure a voter registration is perjury, and a crime under state and federal law. Conviction of this crime may result in imprisonment up to 180 days, a fine up to \$2,000, or both.			
I affirm that I <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • am a resident of this county and U.S. Citizen; • have not been finally convicted of a felony, or if a felon, I have completed all of my punishment including any term of incarceration, parole, supervision, period of probation, or I have been pardoned; and • have not been determined by a final judgment of a court exercising probate jurisdiction to be totally mentally incapacitated or partially mentally incapacitated without the right to vote. 			
<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 100%; height: 20px; display: flex; align-items: center; justify-content: center;"> X </div>		<div style="border-bottom: 1px solid black; width: 100%;"></div>	
Signature of Applicant or Agent and Relationship to Applicant or Printed Name of Applicant if Signed by Witness and Date.		Date	

Senator Rodney Ellis

District 13
Harris and Fort Bend Counties
P. O. Box 12068 Austin, Texas 78711

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HELPFUL TOLL-FREE NUMBERS

Cancer Information Service	(800) 4-CANCER
Child Support Hotline	(800) 252-8014
Consumer Protection Hotline	(800) 621-0508
Governor's Assist. Hotline	(800) 843-5789
Elections Division	(800) 252-VOTE
Social Security Administration	(800) 772-1213
Lawyer Referral Service	(800) 252-9690
Crime Victim Clearinghouse	(800) 848-4284
Immunization Hotline	(800) 252-9152
Medicaid Hotline	(800) 252-8263
CHIP	(877) KIDS-NOW
Nursing Home Complaints	(800) 458-9858
First Time Home Buyers	(800)792-1119
SSI/Food Stamp Hotline	(800) 248-1078
Injured Worker Hotline	(800) 252-7031
Child Care Information	(800) 862-5252
Unemployment Hotline	(800) 558-8321
Texas Dept. of Criminal Justice	(800) 535-0283

HELPFUL RESOURCES ONLINE

Senator Ellis
www.rodneylellis.com

Texas Senate
www.senate.state.tx.us

City of Houston
www.houstontx.gov

Texas Comptroller
www.window.state.tx.us

Texas Legislature Online
www.capitol.state.tx.us

Center for Public Policy Priorities
www.cppp.org

Innocence Project
www.innocenceproject.org

National Commission on Energy Policy
www.energycommission.org

HOW TO CONTACT SENATOR ELLIS

*Senator Ellis is committed to high quality, effective constituent service.
That is why he has offices across the district to better serve you.*



Houston:
440 Louisiana,
Suite 575
Houston, Texas 77002
(713) 236-0306

Fort Bend:
2440 Texas Parkway,
Suite 110
Missouri City, Texas 77489
(281) 261-2360

Alief:
11110 Bellaire Blvd.,
Suite 220
Houston, Texas 77072
(281) 564-2228

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Austin, Texas 78711
(512) 463-0113
1-888-870-9996
Dial 711 for Relay Calls

E-mail: rodney.ellis@senate.state.tx.us
www.capitol.state.tx.us

THE TEXAS SENATE IS AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER AND DOES NOT DISCRIMINATE ON THE BASIS OF RACE, COLOR, NATIONAL ORIGIN, SEX, RELIGION, AGE OR DISABILITY IN EMPLOYMENT OR THE PROVISION OF SERVICES.