



# Tommy Williams

## Texas Senator

**State Senate District 4**  
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TRANSPORTATION & HOMELAND SECURITY, CHAIR  
FINANCE  
INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS & TRADE  
SELECT COMMITTEE ON REDISTRICTING  
STATE AFFAIRS

**TOMMY WILLIAMS**  
TEXAS STATE SENATOR  
DISTRICT 4

*Dear Friends,*

I hope you and your families are doing well and somehow coping with this unusually hot Texas summer.

I wanted to take a moment to update you on the recently concluded session of the Texas Legislature.

This session was dominated by the state budget. Texas faced a large budget shortfall, and tough choices had to be made. Just like you and your family, the state also had to tighten its belt in these tough economic times. My goal was to shrink the overall size of government and government spending, and still provide critical state services to education and health care.

I believe we accomplished that goal by passing a balanced budget that significantly cut state spending and did not include tax increases. As a member of the Senate Finance Committee and the Budget Conference Committee, I took seriously my commitment to protect Texas taxpayers.

The following Session Highlights are intended to inform you about this and other major state issues dealt with by the Legislature.

It was also a privilege this session to serve as the Chairman of the Senate Transportation and Homeland Security Committee. Border security and immigration reform issues also received much attention this session, and I worked hard to ensure we got results that were right for Texas.

It is my honor to serve you in the Texas State Senate. I look forward to visiting with you and your family as I travel around the district. Also, I strongly encourage you, your family, and friends to visit my capitol office any time. We can also arrange individual and group capitol tours if notified in advance of your visit.

Sincerely,

Tommy Williams



*Senator Williams and his wife Marsha on the opening day of the 82nd Legislative Session.*

**P.S. If you are not subscribed to my "E-Newsletter" and would like to be, please visit [www.williams.senate.state.tx.us](http://www.williams.senate.state.tx.us) to register.**

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# LEGISLATIVE SESSION HIGHLIGHTS

## *Balanced Budget - No Tax Increases*

Texas faced a \$25 billion budget shortfall when the legislative session began. In the end, through long hours of testimony, heated debates, and negotiations, the Legislature passed a **balanced budget without raising taxes**. Tommy was again a key player on the Finance Committee, and the taxpayer's watchdog in budget negotiations.

The 2012-13 biennium budget represents a \$15.2 billion (8.1%) decrease from the 2010-11 budget. The **cut in state spending** is roughly the same as the decline in the Texas private sector output experienced during the past few years' recession. Tough times call for tough decisions. The new budget will continue to fund essential services and leaves \$6.5 billion in the state's rainy day fund.

## *Reforming Entitlements - Increasing Medicaid Efficiency*

This session, the Legislature directed its aim at reforming entitlement programs. By expanding managed care and streamlining inefficiencies in the Medicaid program, Texas will realize \$467 million in savings. The legislation establishes the framework for the development of new health care collaboratives, and directs the Health and Human Services Commission to establish new Texas Medicaid and CHIP reimbursement models rewarding innovation, cost-efficiencies, and performance. Tommy served on the committee that developed this legislation and worked tirelessly to ensure essential services were maintained while still achieving the necessary savings.

## *Public Education*

The Legislature **increased overall spending** for education this session. In order to help local school districts manage during tough economic times, Tommy fought to eliminate several unfunded mandates on school districts and give them more flexibility in how they manage their workforce. The Legislature also restored and enhanced a variety of local control decision

making powers to local school districts so they can create efficiencies to better manage costs.



Senator Williams explaining a portion of the Voter ID bill on the Senate floor.

## *Fighting Voter Fraud*

Voter Photo ID legislation is essential to ballot box security. Tommy again led the successful effort bringing the Voter Photo ID bill to the

Texas Senate for a vote. The legislation will protect the integrity of elections by requiring a valid Photo ID when voting in Texas elections. Approved IDs include: TX Driver's License, State ID Card, Military ID, Concealed Handgun License, Passport, and Citizenship ID.

## *Loser Pays Tort Reform*

Tommy strongly supported this tort reform legislation aimed at reducing the number of frivolous lawsuits in our courtrooms. The new law will create predictability and ease the cost burden on small businesses.

## *Prescription Drug Abuse*

Tommy continued his work to stop the growing availability of illegal prescription drugs. Illegal prescription drug abuse has created a serious public health issue and the diversion of illegal prescription drugs has become an increasing concern. Tommy passed multiple measures to help stop this growing epidemic.



Senator Williams and Senator Nichols welcome two young friends to the Senate Chamber.

## *Protecting Coastal Residents - Texas Windstorm Insurance Reform*

Facing another predicted active hurricane season, it was necessary for the Legislature to reform the Texas Windstorm Insurance Association (TWIA) so rate payers along the Texas coast can be protected and serviced in a fair and timely manner. These much needed reforms include: increased consumer protections, strengthened claim solvency process, and improved transparency of operations and oversight. The legislation also includes provisions to help cut down on expensive frivolous lawsuits.

## *Protecting Private Property & Water Rights*

Building on previous eminent domain reforms, Tommy co-authored legislation strengthening private property rights for all Texans. The bill establishes stricter penalties for not negotiating in good faith; demands adequate compensation for diminished access; provides a buy-back provision allowing landowners to repurchase their land for the original sale price if the land is not used for its intended purpose; and clarifies eminent domain must **only** be exercised for public use. Tommy also supported legislation that will clarify private landowner ownership of groundwater.

# LEGISLATIVE SESSION HIGHLIGHTS

## TOMMY WILLIAMS CHAIRED THE TEXAS SENATE TRANSPORTATION AND HOMELAND SECURITY COMMITTEE THIS SESSION

*Here are a few highlights:*

### *Tightening Texas' Border Security*

In response to the increasing criminal threats along our international border, the Legislature **doubled** border security funding. These measures will increase the state trooper work day from 8 hours to 9 hours, meaning more hours patrolling the border and our major highways. The funding also provides additional state-of-the-art equipment including a high-altitude surveillance aircraft, fiber optic scopes, case management tools, and expanded waterborne operations.

### *Requiring Proof of Legal Residence for IDs & Drivers Licenses*

Tommy helped pass an important measure to deal with the criminal, illegal alien problem and ensure the security and accuracy of state ID's and driver's licenses. The Department of Public Safety is now authorized, by state statute, to **require proof of lawful presence** in the United States **before** issuing a Texas State ID or Texas driver's license.

### *Infrastructure to Ensure Economic Growth - Transportation Funding & Highways*

Good roads keep our state's economic engine humming. Under Tommy's leadership, the Legislature approved issuing the remaining \$3 billion dollars in Proposition 12 bonds approved by voters in November 2007. The funds will be used to maintain roads, add capacity to the most congested highways, and repair antiquated bridges.



*Senator Williams discussing a proposed amendment.*



*Senator Williams discusses transportation issues with a witness while chairing the Transportation and Homeland Security Committee.*

### *Improving Regional Mobility*

The Legislature also authorized the Texas Department of Transportation to enter into several public-private partnership projects, including State Highway 99 (Grand Parkway), State Highway 249, US 290, and State Highway 288, all in the Houston area. Tommy also sponsored legislation establishing the same speed limit for daytime and nighttime and raising the speed limit to 75 miles per hour on state highways or US highways outside urban districts. The Texas Department of Transportation would be required to conduct traffic and engineering studies in order to evaluate if such an increase in speed would be reasonable and safe.

### *Cleaner Air & Less Foreign Oil - Texas Clean Transportation Triangle*

Tommy passed legislation to create the Texas Clean Transportation Triangle, a strategic plan to create a sustainable network of natural gas refueling stations along the Texas Triangle, the highway system connecting Houston, San Antonio, Austin and Dallas/Fort Worth along I-10, I-35, and I-45. The legislation paves the way for wider-scale deployment of natural gas vehicles (NGVs) in the Texas market - a lower cost, domestically-produced, and cleaner fuel option for Texas businesses, cities, and consumers.

## DELIVERING RESULTS ON LOCAL INTERESTS

*Every session Tommy makes sure local district concerns are addressed. This session was no exception:*

- ★ Several years ago, the San Jacinto River was named one of America's Most Endangered Rivers. Tommy authored legislation to ensure rogue sand mining operators do not endanger the water quality of the San Jacinto or other rivers.
- ★ After receiving numerous constituent complaints, Tommy wrote a bill prohibiting public school districts from building or operating hotels. Texas public schools are charged with educating children to become productive citizens and are not charged with operating hotels. Tommy believed it was ludicrous to think schools should ever be in this type of business ~ school districts should never take resources from their core mission of educating children.
- ★ Tommy supported legislation preventing businesses from punishing or firing an employee when legally storing a firearm inside their car in the parking lot. This protects the 2nd amendment rights of all working Texans and ensures those who legally choose to protect themselves can do so as they travel to and from work.
- ★ Constituents also voiced their strong concern over electronic waste, and Tommy supported legislation establishing the television equipment recycling program. TV manufacturers will now be required to take back and recycle a percentage of their Texas market-share and provide consumers with convenient alternatives to the current practice of disposing of TV's in our Texas landfills.



*LEGISLATIVE HIGHLIGHTS*

**THE 82ND LEGISLATURE  
2011**

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