



**JULY 29, 2009 - AUSTIN, TEXAS**

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### **SHAPIRO RECEIVES AVID'S VISIONARY LEADERSHIP AWARD**

Senator Shapiro recently received AVID's Visionary Leadership Award for her "relentless pursuit of college readiness standards." AVID stands for Advancement Via Individual Determination and is a fourth-through twelfth-grade system to prepare students in the academic middle for four-year college eligibility. These students are mostly low-income students who are capable of completing a college-prep curriculum but are falling short of their potential.



*Senator Shapiro with Berkner High School AVID graduates*

The core component is the AVID elective, which supports students as they tackle the most rigorous classes. AVID's teaching strategies, curriculum, and trainings are used not only in the AVID elective class, but by subject-area teachers in the entire school.

In 1992, AVID started with one high school and 32 students in the AVID system. AVID now expects to have 4,369 schools in the system by next year.

AVID's Award Program noted:

*"Senator Florence Shapiro has been a champion for children and public education in Texas since she was elected to the Texas Senate in 1993. Currently serving as Chairman of the Senate Education Committee, her unwavering focus to ensure that all students in Texas are academically prepared to continue their education in a post secondary institution has resulted in progressive legislation and additional funding for Texas high schools.*

*Senator Shapiro has been a supporter of AVID since her first visit to an AVID classroom in the Richardson Independent School District. Her landmark legislation, passed in 2006, created a high school allotment for Texas school districts that allowed districts to implement programs like AVID that provide the academic support and instruction necessary to prepare students for entrance into institutions of higher education and encourage students to pursue advance academic opportunities."*

### **TEENS IN TEXAS HELP DRIVE DOWN FATAL CRASH RATE**

A new report by the Texas Transportation Institute finds that Texas' rate of fatal teen crashes is dropping faster than in any other state. Since 2002, when 625 teen drivers were

involved in fatal crashes, Texas' numbers have come down each year. In 2007, 419 fatal crashes involved teen drivers.

Researchers have looked at 37 states which put restrictions on teen drivers' licenses and found Texas is the only state in the country which has seen the number of teen drivers involved in fatal crashes drop for five years in a row.

Since 2002, Texas teens have to spend six months with a learner's permit before getting a license. In addition, they have to spend another six months with other restrictions, including a prohibition against driving between midnight and 5 a.m. Also, the use of cell phones by young drivers has been outlawed.

For more information, please visit [TTI](#).

### **ECONOMIC ROAD BACK FOR TEXAS LESS ROCKY**

A Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas forecaster recently reported that initial jobless claims, which economists watch closely for signs the recession is easing, have fallen from their peak of early 2009. And in Texas, he says, the state's economy hasn't been sinking for nearly as long as the rest of the national economy so, potentially, a slightly quicker rebound could be in store for the state.

In the past two weeks, analysts have seen a potential sign of national recovery in a 0.7 percent June increase in the U.S. leading economic index. This statistic represented the third consecutive monthly increase for the index, which is made up of ten components, including interest rate spreads, building permits, stock prices, manufacturing hours, initial jobless claims and the money supply.

Still, analysts warn that the national jobless rate could peak at close to 11 percent next year. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the highest jobless rate since World War II was 10.8 percent in 1982.

### **STATE NEWS**

#### **SHAPIRO APPLAUDS NEW DARS AUTISM SERVICES GRANTS**

Senator Shapiro recently joined with the Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services ([DARS](#)) to announce the selection of two new grant recipients to provide high quality services, including Applied Behavioral Analysis, for children with autism between the ages of 3 and 8 in San Antonio and Austin.

"I am pleased that more children will benefit from the early and intensive autism services that these providers offer," Senator Shapiro said. "This program will help us identify the service delivery models that best serve children with autism and will enable us to strengthen the state's efforts to serve this growing population."

The program began in 2007 when DARS awarded \$5 million in state general revenue, through a competitive procurement process, to four service providers. Senator Shapiro fought for additional funding in the 81st Regular Session that enabled DARS to expand the program.

Any Baby Can of San Antonio will provide services in Bexar County and the surrounding contiguous counties. The Center for Autism and Related Disorders, located in Austin, will provide services to the greater Austin area. The four existing providers, located in the North Texas and Harris County areas, will extend their services for two more years.

"The number of children with autism continues to grow, so it's vital that we provide avenues for access to proper educational and behavioral interventions that can help them achieve success throughout their life," Senator Shapiro said. "Through Applied Behavioral

Analysis and other behavioral therapies, this program helps address some of the most prevalent challenges of children with autism."

### **TEXAS RECEIVES APPROVAL FOR \$2 BILLION IN FEDERAL EDUCATION FUNDS**

Texas recently received more than \$2 billion under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) of 2009 that will flow to public schools. Texas will be eligible to apply for another \$1 billion this Fall. The funding is being made available per Texas's successful completion of Part 1 of the State Stabilization Application, which was made available on April 1st.

In order to receive funds, the state provided assurances that it will collect, publish, analyze and act on basic information regarding the quality of classroom teachers, annual student improvements, college readiness, the effectiveness of state standards and assessments, progress on removing charter caps and interventions in turning around underperforming schools.

Texas is also required by the Department of Education to report the number of jobs saved through Recovery Act funding, the amount of state and local tax increases averted and how funds are used.

To see the applications from Texas and other states for initial funding under the State Fiscal Stabilization Fund Program, please visit [U.S. Department of Education](#).

### **JULY SPECIAL SESSION ACCOMPLISHMENTS: TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE FUNDING**

The recently concluded Special Session focused on transportation infrastructure funding. The Governor gave the legislature three specific tasks to address: Continuing several state agencies that were set to begin shutting down this year, including the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT), authorizing TxDOT to issue general obligation bonds approved by the voters, and extending the authority for TxDOT to use comprehensive development agreements.

Various state agencies were set to close down in September of this year. But Senate Bill 2 of the special session continued these agencies that would otherwise have begun to shut down. These agencies include the Texas Department of Transportation, the Texas Department of Insurance, the Texas Racing Commission, the Office of Public Insurance Counsel, and the Texas State Affordable Housing Corporation.

In November 2007, the voters of Texas overwhelmingly supported a constitutional amendment to allow TxDOT to issue bonds, up to \$5 billion, backed by the general revenue of the state to build more roads. House Bill 1 was filed in the special session to give TxDOT the statutory authority to issue \$2 billion of the bonds. The bill specified that TxDOT would use this funding for highway improvement projects. In the end, the legislature decided to send \$1 billion to the State Infrastructure Bank, a revolving fund which uses innovative financing methods to leverage more dollars for transportation projects.

The final task of the special session involved Comprehensive Development Agreements (CDAs), a tool that allows for private development of and, in some cases, private investments in transportation projects. The authority for TxDOT to use this tool is set to expire in August of this year. While legislation was filed in the special session to continue this authority, with explicit restrictions, the legislature ultimately decided that the issue deserved more discussion than a special session can provide. Neither Senate Bill nor House Bill 3 were passed out of their respective committees.

Though the special session only lasted two days, the legislature was able to accomplish two important initiatives that will keep Texas transportation infrastructure funded until the next legislative session in January 2011.

## **WOUNDED VETERANS GET BREAK ON TAX BILLS**

Disabled veterans in Texas will qualify for total homestead property tax exemptions if the Department of Veterans Affairs has determined that they are unable to work or if they are receiving 100 percent disability compensation for physical or psychological problems related to their military service. The new law also increases exemptions for veterans with disability ratings of 30 percent, 50 percent or 70 percent. Many states offer similar tax breaks.

## **DISTRICT NEWS**

### **SHAPIRO HELPS OPEN SCI-TECH DISCOVERY CENTER**

After a decade in development, the Sci-Tech Discovery Center recently announced that it will open doors this Fall in Frisco. With a mission to inspire a new generation of innovators, scientists and educators, Sci-Tech will serve these individuals and families in and around the Collin County area.

Senator Shapiro was invited to speak at the announcement stating, "This center is a world-class science discovery center which will inspire generations. I believe that limitless opportunities are realized by education and this educational center will move forward the dreams of the next generation of innovators in the world of science from among Collin County and our region as a whole."

Sci-Tech Discovery Center officials recently signed a lease provided by the City Of Frisco Community Development Corporation to occupy approximately 11,000 square feet of space in the city owned building located at 8000 North Dallas Parkway in Frisco, just south of Frisco Square and the George A. Purefoy Municipal Center, which houses Frisco City Hall and the Frisco Public Library.

Responding to community demand for a cultural and educational destination, the Sci-Tech Discovery Center, Inc., was established as a non-profit, educational organization in 2004 after the concept was studied with the community as a multi-year initiative of the Junior League of Plano.

To validate the plan to build and endow a high-quality science and technology museum in Collin County, Sci-Tech hosted preview exhibits in the summers of 2004 and 2005 to demonstrate that the residents of our area would embrace such a facility. Over 25,000 voted "yes" and, since then, Sci-Tech has delivered numerous outreach programs in preparation for establishing a permanent home in Collin County.

### **SHAPIRO TAKES PART IN MY FRIEND'S HOUSE DEDICATION**

Senator Shapiro recently helped dedicate My Friend's House in Collin County. My Friend's House is a project of CITY House. CITY House protects children and strengthens families by helping children, youth and families resolve physical and emotional crises. They provide a complementary suite of intervention and prevention services at no cost to clients.

Their services include an emergency shelter for teens (age 10 to 17 years), an emergency shelter for children (newborn to 9 years), family counseling, life skills education, parenting skills group, and crisis intervention.

My Friend's House is Collin County's only teen homeless shelter which provides, among the essential services listed, 24 beds for residents who have experienced abuse, neglect and abandonment. CITY House and HomeAid/Home Builders Care are sponsors of My Friend's House.

## **UT SOUTHWESTERN'S *CENTER TIMES* HIGHLIGHTS SHAPIRO'S RESOLUTION OF DR. KERN WILDENTHAL**

A recent article in UT Southwestern's online newsmagazine, [Center Times](#), lauds Sen. Shapiro's Senate Resolution of former UT Southwestern President Dr. Kern Wildenthal. Shapiro passed Senate Resolution 565 during the 81st Legislative Session, commending Dr. Wildenthal for his longtime commitment to The University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center.

The article highlights Dr. Wildenthal's career and profound achievements for UT Southwestern, including overseeing the quadrupling of UT Southwestern's size; having four Nobel laureates on the faculty; and increasing the endowment from \$40 million to \$1.4 billion during his tenure as president.

Senator Shapiro stated on April 8th on the floor of the Texas Senate: "It's very obvious that all of us have high esteem for you - not just for the work that you do, which has been extraordinary, but for the man that you are. We are so appreciative of all you've done, not only for this generation but for future generations of Texans."

### **FLORENCE'S FOCUS**

#### **SHAPIRO SPEAKS AT FIRST JACOB FOX FOUNDATION FUNDRAISER - REMINDER NOT TO LEAVE CHILDREN UNATTENDED IN VEHICLES**

During these days of rising heat, we should all think about this fact: Studies prove that within just 10 minutes, the temperature inside a car can rise 20 degrees which can quickly become deadly in 105-degree heat.

Already this year, twenty-one children in the United States have died due to vehicular hyperthermia. Sadly, Texas has lead the nation with the most vehicle-related hyperthermia deaths during the past decade.

These facts underscore the importance of Senate Bill 572, which I authored and has been signed by the Governor. The legislation is called Jacob's Law, named after a precious young boy, Jacob Fox, who lost his life far too soon because of gross negligence: He was left in a hot van by his daycare providers who were supposed to be watching out for him.

This bill now requires daycare providers, who transport children, to take part in training that will teach them simple techniques which can be used to avoid such a tragedy.

The minimum standards in this law will improve the safe transport of our children by teaching daycare providers about the proper use of safety restraints, vehicle maintenance, proper behavior during transport, loading and unloading procedures, and safe accounting for each child and their well-being.

All too often, people mistakenly think for just a few minutes, they can leave their children, pets, and elderly or disabled in a hot car. That assumption is wrong and, too often, proves deadly.

All children in Texas will be served due to Jacob's Law. It is too late to bring back Jacob but his memory moves us forward, and so does the law named after him.

For more information, please visit the [Jacob Fox Foundation](#) online.

### **FOR YOUR INFORMATION**

#### **RENT MOVIES SO WHY NOT TEXTBOOKS?**

Higher education costs are always a concern to parents and students and, in this economy, finding ways to save is a necessity. Chegg.com is an online service designed to help with the rising cost of textbooks. Chegg rents books to students, which significantly cuts down

on a student's book bill. For example, a macroeconomics textbook that retails for \$122 has been found on Chegg.com for \$65 while an organic chemistry book retailing for \$123 lists on the site for \$33.

While Chegg primarily rents books, it also adds liquidity to the market by collecting books from sellers at the end of a semester and renting, or sometimes selling, them to other students at the beginning of a new semester. For students that rent textbooks, they see an automatic savings at the beginning of the semester. When the semester ends they don't have to worry about selling back books at a fraction of their value. While this service is not for everyone, it is definitely worth checking out for parents and students looking for ways to save money on textbooks.

### **TEXAS FILM COMMISSION: ABC SERIES 'THE DEEP END' WILL FILM IN NORTH TEXAS**

Thirteen episodes of the new ABC television series, *The Deep End*, will film in North Texas. Texas Film Commission Director Bob Hudgins says that \$20 million will be spent in North Texas for the duration of the filming. While the deal is still not complete, negotiations are under way to film *The Deep End* at the Studios at Las Colinas.

The show's backdrop is a Los Angeles law firm. ABC.go.com describes the series as: "Sterling Law is one of LA's most prestigious law firms. Each year, it recruits four new young lawyers from the finest law schools worldwide. It will nurture, guide and shape these recruits into the best lawyers they can possibly be or else."

During the 81st Legislative Session, the Legislature increased filming incentives to lure Hollywood to Texas with over \$60 million being funded into the Texas film, TV and video game industries.

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