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THE SENATE OF TEXAS JUAN "CHUY" HINOJOSA

Dear Friend,

Legislative sessions always bring surprises, and this spring's session was no different. Lieutenant Governor David Dewhurst appointed me the vice chairman of the Senate Finance Committee, and the tone of the session changed for me. In addition, I filed over 100 bills this session and worked on the Sunset Advisory Commission as well as the Senate Agriculture and Rural Affairs, Criminal Justice, Jurisprudence, and Natural Resources Committees.

I go into each session with education, health care, and transportation as some of my top priorities. I am very proud to announce that this session we delivered on these issues, including the reopening of the McAllen Women's Cancer Clinic, initial funding for an engineering school at Texas A&M--Corpus Christi, and increased funding for The University of Texas Marine Science Institute, The University of Texas--Pan American, and the Regional Academic Health Center (RAHC), to name a few.

In addition, I helped to secure over \$170 million for transportation projects in Senate District 20. These projects will create jobs, promote economic development, and better connect our district with the rest of Texas. This ensures that our region will continue to grow.

In January, we faced serious problems and had limited resources to solve them. As vice chairman of the Senate Finance Committee, my goal was to ensure that Texas used the federal stimulus package wisely. I wanted to avoid creating a continuing dependence on future federal aid when possible. That decision is characteristic of the fiscal prudence shown by the state legislature this session, and these measures are good public policy that will help to build a fairer and more prosperous Texas.

This summary is a reminder of how important you are to the legislative process in Texas. Democracy in Austin cannot work without participation by our local community. Many of the bills I filed this session came directly from your ideas. I encourage you to think of how you can share our community's point of view and continue to communicate with me. Together, and only together, can we make our community a better place. If you ever have anything you would like to share with me, please feel free to contact my office, send me an email, or reach me on my website.



Semper Fi

Senator Juan "Chuy" Hinojosa
State Senator, District 20

P.S. If you would like to subscribe for electronic updates from me, please visit www.hinojosa.senate.state.tx.us

how to

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Writing a \$182 Billion Budget

Each legislative session the legislature writes a two-year balanced budget. This session we wrote a \$182 billion budget, with federal stimulus funds providing a \$12 billion boost that put Texans to work on infrastructure projects. Many of these projects were shovel-ready. The only thing missing was the funding, and we sent

allow school districts to serve an estimated 17,000 additional students.

In health care, I obtained funding necessary to reopen the McAllen Woman’s Cancer Clinic. I secured a \$6.5 million increase for the Regional Academic Health Center, taking South Texas one step closer toward establishing a medical school in the region. I dramatically increased funding for Alzheimer’s research in Texas. I am also happy about restoring funding for the Stark Diabetes Centers (part of which will be located in Corpus Christi) after the funding was vetoed last session.

To spur job creation, I secured \$1 million for a small business incubator at the Texas A&M--Corpus Christi campus. I also secured \$1.3 million in Texas Career Opportunity Grants to help low-income Texans enter the job market quickly and \$500,000 for the Women’s Institute for Technology employee training to help single mothers acquire skills and training necessary for today’s workplace. The University of Texas Marine Science Institute in Port Aransas will receive \$700,000 in new funds to help protect our Gulf Coast, one of the single most important natural resource assets in South Texas and a valuable economic generator in Nueces County.

Here are a few projects I funded for the Coastal Bend and the Rio Grande Valley:

money to those communities, creating jobs this year and going into the future.

As vice chairman of the Finance Committee, I dedicated my work to making resources available to provide a healthy workforce. I believe this to be necessary for our community to realize its potential in the Texas marketplace. Senate District 20’s workforce is second to none, and identifying opportunities to leverage state funding to attract and increase private investment for my constituents was a high priority for me. Here are a few of the highlights that I was able to achieve in the areas of education, health care, and job creation.

In education, I increased funding for The University of Texas--Pan American by \$6.3 million and delivered on a \$4 million promise to fund a new engineering program at Texas A&M--Corpus Christi. Primary and secondary education received a \$1.9 billion boost in new funding. Texas expanded prekindergarten programs with a \$25 million funding increase, a 14 percent increase over the 2008-09 biennial amount. This will



Senator Hinojosa attended a reception thanking supporters of the Mechanical Engineering Program at Texas A&M--Corpus Christi that begins this fall; (from left) State Rep. Abel Herrero, State Sen. Juan “Chuy” Hinojosa, freshman engineering student Edy Valdes, State Rep. Todd Hunter, State Rep. Solomon Ortiz, Jr., and University President Flavius Killebrew.

SENATE DISTRICT 20 PROJECT FUNDING HIGHLIGHTS 81ST LEGISLATIVE SESSION

INSTITUTION/PROJECT	AMOUNT	DESCRIPTION
Texas A&M--Corpus Christi	\$5.3 million	Formula funding increase
The University of Texas--Pan American	\$6.3 million	Formula funding increase
Texas A&M Health Science Center	\$1 million	Biosecurity and import safety
Texas A&M--Corpus Christi	\$4 million	New engineering program
Regional Academic Health Center	\$6.5 million	Funding increase
Texas A&M--Corpus Christi	\$1 million	Coastal Bend business incubator
The University of Texas--Medical Branch	\$1 million	McAllen Cervical Dysplasia and Cancer Clinic
Rio Grande Border Security Training Center	\$1 million	Funding for frontline border security
Texas Department of Agriculture	\$20 million	Boll weevil mitigation (Rio Grande Valley 1 of 5 hot spots)
Texas Commission on Environmental Quality	\$6 million	Ballard Pits Superfund clean up in Nueces County
Texas Department of Agriculture	\$1.6 million	Zebra Chip Research and Prevention
Coastal Bend Community College	\$500,000	Mobile Simulation Lab - Nursing Program
The University of Texas Marine Science Institute	\$700,000	National Estuarine Research Reserve

TOTAL: \$54.9 million

Senate Bill 1, General Appropriations Act
House Bill 4586, Supplemental Appropriations Act

— Honoring and Remembering Our Heroes —

This session we gave special recognition to the men and women who have dedicated their lives to military and public service. First, Texas will now celebrate Dr. Hector P. Garcia Day on the third Wednesday in September. Dr. Garcia, a physician, war veteran, and civil rights leader, left a legacy for all Mexican-Americans to appreciate and preserve. At a time of profound social unrest, Dr. Garcia confronted discrimination through peaceful protest and legal recourse. Dr. Garcia witnessed the blatant denial to Mexican-Americans of those inalienable rights spoken of in the Declaration of Independence. Dr. Garcia fought tirelessly for half a century to change hearts and minds, creating a better environment in which persons from all over can thrive.

Another hero, Pedro Cano, served in World War II and received acclaim for his actions when he defended his platoon by moving alone into open fire. Armed with a bazooka and grenades, he single-handedly killed an estimated 30 German soldiers. I sponsored a resolution honoring Private Cano posthumously, conferring on him the Texas Legislative Medal of Honor.

Additionally, I sponsored a joint resolution proposing a constitutional amendment that requires Texas to partner with the Department of Veterans Affairs and other federal agencies to open a Veterans Affairs Hospital in the Rio Grande Valley. House Joint Resolution 7 and its companion bill (H.B. 2217) would allow the state to contribute money, property, and other resources for the maintenance and operation of a veterans hospital.

I also authored a Senate Resolution urging Congress to restore the presumption of a service connection for Agent Orange exposure to Navy and Air Force veterans who served on the inland waterways and territorial waters and in the airspace of Vietnam. This resolution

communicates the Texas Legislature's desire that Congress grant Vietnam veterans the benefits earned in combat.

With an increasing number of active duty military service members falling victim to home foreclosures, I sponsored legislation prohibiting the sale, foreclosure, or seizure of property owned by a military service member while the service member is engaged in active duty or during the nine months after the date on which that service period ends.

As a salute to Texas' 3,400 soldiers who lost their lives in Vietnam, Texas will celebrate Vietnam Veterans' Day on March 29. More than 58,000 members of



Senator Hinojosa announced the unveiling of the Dr. Hector P. Garcia Memorial Highway signs. Present at the event were, left to right: Wanda "Daisy" Garcia, Rep. Abel Herrero, Patsy Vasquez (American GI Forum official), Sen. Hinojosa, Cecilia Garcia Akers, Dr. Dahlia Garcia, Rep. Solomon Ortiz, Jr., Jim Akers, and Rep. Todd Hunter.

the U.S. armed forces gave their lives to the cause in Southeast Asia. I believe that this holiday will encourage Texans to join each other in observing this solemn day of commemoration.

Growing Our Farms and Protecting Our Natural Resources

South Texas has a large agricultural industry and vast amounts of natural resources, and I made it a priority to address the needs and concerns of these two important sectors of the district's economy.

I authored Senate Bill 2456 creating the Brush Country Groundwater Conservation District. This district will include a northern portion of Hidalgo County and Brooks, Jim Wells, and Jim Hogg Counties. Groundwater conservation districts are responsible for the development and implementation of regional groundwater use plans. Much of Texas already belongs to groundwater conservation districts. By joining this newly created district, the landowners in these counties can participate in creating a groundwater management plan that safeguards their water for the future.

The Texas citrus industry contributes an average of \$150-\$200 million per year to the state's economy. A substantial majority of citrus-producing acreage is located in Senate District 20, specifically in the Rio Grande Valley. Agricultural production and environmental protection go hand in hand. South Texas' natural resources are especially important not just to the

local economies in the form of agriculture and tourism revenue, but also to Texas' overall economic health.

I worked closely with farmers and the Texas Department of Agriculture to pass legislation preventing citrus greening and citrus canker. Texas growers can collaborate with the Department of Agriculture to identify exposure risks and to prevent citrus greening and citrus canker from establishing a foothold in Texas.

Texas growers and state officials can safely and effectively remove citrus plants that show signs of contamination. I also worked to include language in the comprehensive Texas Department of Agriculture sunset bill allowing for the creation of a Pest and Disease Management Corporation. This grower-administered, self-funded entity will help citrus growers to interact with agriculture officials and leading scientific experts to devise a proactive defense against citrus greening.

I also secured \$1.6 million for Zebra Chip research funding, ensuring that our potato farmers can combat this harmful disease that can cause devastation to the crop and our state's economy.

More Doctors = Better Healthcare and Margins Tax Relief for Small Business Owners

Texas is in desperate need of primary care doctors—doctors who can detect illness early and prevent more severe complications. Right now, most communities in Texas that lack primary care doctors absorb considerable expenses at the county hospital level because patients must go to the emergency room for their most basic medical needs.

I passed House Bill 2154 to increase the number of primary care doctors in border, rural, and inner-city communities and to offer relief to small business owners from the margins tax.

This legislation offers four years of tuition reimbursement for primary care doctors, with a maximum of \$160,000 in loan repayment assistance. That amount could zero out the average medical student loan debt of these new doctors, and their commitment to serving in the underserved areas could help them reach an even financial ground in just four years. It is estimated that 900 new primary care doctors will participate in this loan repayment program. This will help rural counties like Brooks and Jim Wells Counties benefit significantly from the arrival of more primary care doctors.

This loan repayment program will be paid for by closing a tax loophole that has cost the state millions in legal settlements. When the margins tax took effect two years ago, I received letters and phone calls from small business owners throughout South Texas, especially family businesses. Many asked for relief from the new tax, which was causing some business owners' tax bills to double.

I listened to your concerns and paid close attention to your suggestions, and relief is here. In closing the tax loophole to pay for the doctors loan repayment program, there was money left over. I used that money to reduce the margins tax's impact on small businesses.

As a result of House Bill 2154, the exemption for the margins tax rose from \$300,000 to \$1 million for the two tax years, beginning on September 1, 2009. After those two years, the exemption will be reset



Sen. Juan "Chuy" Hinojosa was presented the Legislative Champion award by the Texas Association of Community Health Centers in Alice at the Community Action Corporation of South Texas (CACOST). Pictured, left to right, are Dr. Vandana Kamat, Sen. Hinojosa, Dr. Diana Franco Bill, and José Camacho.

at \$600,000.

I know how important family businesses are to the South Texas economy. From the Port of Corpus Christi to the international ports of entry along the border, family businesses are the backbone of our economy.

Keeping Texas Safe

With a \$1.7 billion budget and facing controversy, the Department of Public Safety underwent legislative review by the Sunset Advisory Commission. As a member of the commission, I took on the role of reforming the agency. I authored legislation reforming the agency. That legislation will continue to keep our families and property safe.

In addition to passing the DPS sunset bill, I helped direct \$87.1 million dollars for border security operations, including funding 56 new troopers and 10 new Texas Rangers to the border. We also dedicated \$8 million to vastly improve technology along the border so that the state can map where crime is occurring and track gang activity.

We all know the challenges that our border communities face in regard to public safety. But protecting border communities means more than funding for law enforcement, I felt it was also important to add funding for the biosecurity initiative on the border that would give our public health professionals the tools they need to immediately recognize and respond to disease outbreaks, environmental threats, and natural disasters. That is why, as a member of the budget conference committee, I secured \$1 million to fund a biosecurity initiative at the Texas A&M Health Science Center in McAllen.



Sen. Juan "Chuy" Hinojosa attends the launch of the Biosecurity and Import Safety Initiative at Texas A&M Health Science Center in McAllen. Pictured, left to right, are State Rep. Veronica Gonzales, Sen. Hinojosa, and State Rep. Tara Rios Ybarra.

— **Paving the Way for a Better Quality of Life** —

Every session, I look for creative ways to create economic development. This session, I passed legislation to allow for the development of a major sports arena in Hidalgo County by using a portion of hotel

and motel tax revenues generated in the county. Under this amendment, our growing tourism industry could be used to lure a major sports team to South Texas by funding the construction of a sports arena.



Windstorm Insurance Reform

At the start of the session, the governor declared reform of the Texas Windstorm Insurance Association (TWIA) an emergency issue because funding was depleted by Hurricanes Ike, Dolly, and Rita.

But early versions of the bill contained huge surcharges and rate spikes for customers of TWIA. One early version of the bill would have increased rates up to 80 percent. We rolled up our sleeves and took a lead role in the negotiations. I felt that no bill would have been better than a bill that unfairly targeted coastal communities.

Along with other coastal legislators, I blocked punitive versions of the bill and reminded other senators that passage of a bad bill would have hurt not only the coast, but also the state as a whole.

In the final hours of the legislative session, a compromise was reached. This compromise reform will put TWIA on a firmer financial footing. With this reform in place and given the mild hurricane season Texas just went through, TWIA and Texas will be better able to weather future storms.



— **Cracking Down on Illegal Towing** —

Last year, many of you contacted me about towing companies in South Texas that were illegally towing cars. As I worked with the attorney general and the Texas Department of Licensing and Regulation to enforce the laws on the books, it became clear to me that towing laws needed to be strengthened. Texans needed more protections against having their cars hauled off without just cause.

We passed House Bill 2571 to increase fines and penalties for towing companies that violate the law and to give the state more authority over towing fees. More importantly, the bill makes it easier for vehicle owners to get their car back and places the burden on towing companies to justify a tow.

CONNECTING OUR FUTURE

Brief summary of major transportation projects and funding and what it means for the constituents.

SENATE DISTRICT 20 TRANSPORTATION PROJECT FUNDING 81ST LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Project	Amount
Highway 281 Falfurrias overpasses	\$67 million
Highway 281 Ben Bolt overpass	\$13.2 million
Highway 281 Premont overpass	(Planning)
Highway 281 George West overpass	(Planning)
Joe Fulton Corridor improvements	\$15 million
Ferry boats in Port Aransas	\$13.2 million
Edinburg Airport improvements	\$4.2 million
Highway 77 overpass in Nueces County	\$11.7 million
Owassa to Highway 281 road widening	\$4.1 million
Nueces County SH 357 road widening	\$10 million
Bryan Road and Trinity overpass	\$11 million
US 83 and Bryan Road overpass	\$10 million
23 rd Street to Hidalgo Bridge road widening	\$11.1 million

TOTAL: \$170.5 Million


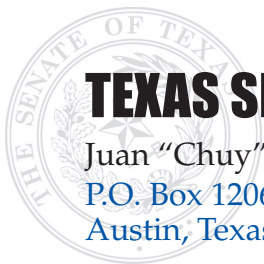


Photo courtesy of the Texas Transportation Institute.



TEXAS SENATOR

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TEXAS SENATOR JUAN "CHUY" HINOJOSA



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WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING about our Senator

Public Safety

"Senator Hinojosa has always demonstrated a willingness to listen to all citizens when it serves the interest of our communities and the State of Texas. I know he deeply cares and strives to further the goals of fair law enforcement, while keeping a true balance between maintaining public safety and protecting citizens' rights."

René Guerra

Hidalgo County Criminal District Attorney

Equal Access to Justice for All

"Low-income families in Texas rely heavily upon the agencies and organizations funded by the Texas Equal Access to Justice Foundation for civil legal assistance. We know that funding is always limited, but when the financial crisis of the past year decimated the IOLTA funds on which the Foundation relies, we were really worried that some agencies would not be able to provide any assistance at all. That would have been a real disaster. Fortunately, low-income families have a great champion in the Texas Senate by the name of Juan Hinojosa. The Texas Legislature does not always respond to the needs of the disadvantaged, but this time at least, Senator Hinojosa was able to help them understand the importance of investing in legal services for low-income Texans."

Juanita Valdez-Cox

Executive Director, La Union del Pueblo Entero

More South Texas Engineers

"We are very thankful to Senator Hinojosa for so generously and diligently supporting the start-up funding for the mechanical engineering program at Texas A&M University--Corpus Christi. This special item will help us create an outstanding program—one that will help us educate the engineers needed by Texas and the nation to be competitive. We are humbled by the trust he put in us."

Dr. Flavius C. Killebrew

President, Texas A&M--Corpus Christi

Protecting Our Children

"Senator Hinojosa's leadership was critical to securing additional funding for Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) to recruit, train, and supervise more volunteer advocates for children in CPS custody. Senator Hinojosa did more than help—he led the charge to ensure that the most vulnerable children in his district and throughout Texas get the help they need to find safe, permanent homes. With his help, we are able to move children from hurt to hope, from foster care to a home, from abuse and neglect to a brighter future."

Page Hall

Executive Director, Coastal Bend CASA