

# Senator Judith Zaffirini



## Reports to the Families of District 21

### Dear Friends:

Representing Senate District 21 in the Texas Senate continues to be an amazing opportunity to make a difference for our families.

Although every issue that the Texas Legislature addresses impacts all Texans, the most important always are education and health and human services, with an emphasis on higher education, early education and services for persons with disabilities.

Our district is blessed with educators who understand that education is a right, not a privilege, and that every student should have access to excellence at all levels, from early through higher education.

Providing high quality early education programs will help first graders begin a successful journey through academia. Promoting literacy is a worthy goal that encompasses ensuring that students read and write at grade level. Preventing dropouts and precluding behavioral problems are challenges that require our collaboration with educators and parents.

Access to excellence in higher education is made possible by wonderful universities and community colleges in our district and beyond.

Health and human services are equally important in our district, especially programs for the very young, the very old and persons with disabilities. Because there are countless worthy services and limited funds, we must prioritize safety net programs.

Securing funding for Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) is as important as immunization, AIDS medication and services for per-



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get Board and Senate Committees on Education, Health and Human Services, and Administration.

*Senator Judith Zaffirini Reports to the Families of District 21* is intended not only to strengthen lines of communication, but also to inform you how Texas government works for you and how you can be more involved in the legislative process, particularly issues that are most important to you.

Please contact me via my Capitol or district offices if you have suggestions or need additional information.

My prayer is that the Lord will continue to bless us and to inspire us to excel as we strive for a better Texas for our families.

*Judith Zaffirini*

**Judith Zaffirini**

State Senator, District 21

[www.zaffirini.senate.state.tx.us](http://www.zaffirini.senate.state.tx.us)

sons with chronic and catastrophic diseases, including cancer, diabetes and heart ailments.

The interim at hand affords us the opportunity to address these and other issues as we prepare for the 2009 Legislative Session that convenes on Jan. 13. It is the time for anyone, especially local elected officials, to work with us in planning legislative and funding priorities.

Fortunately, Lt. Governor David Dewhurst appointed me to the best possible positions from which I can continue to make a difference: Chair, Higher Education Subcommittee; Chair, Finance Higher Education Subcommittee; Vice Chair, Finance; and member, Legislative Bud-



**SOUTH TEXAS TROOPS** deploy to Afghanistan. Senator Judith Zaffirini thanks U.S. Army National Guardsman, SSG. Peter Litman, and his colleagues for their courage and devotion to protecting our country.



**FATHER LUKE** Thirunelliparambil, pastor, receives Senator Judith Zaffirini's Senate proclamation memorializing the 100-year anniversary of Our Lady of Victory Catholic Church in Beeville.

## Senator Zaffirini Sponsors SD 21 State Board Nominees

Sixty-one residents of Senate District 21 currently serve on Texas boards and commissions. Twelve of them recently were nominated by Governor Rick Perry and sponsored by Senator Judith Zaffirini for appointments and should be confirmed during the 2009 Legislative Session.

Seven are newly nominated, and five will serve additional terms.

New appointees include Dr. John Clader, Jourdanton, State Board of Veterinary Medical Examiners; Dr. Antonio Falcón, Rio Grande City, Texas Parks and Wildlife Commission; and John J. Flieller, Floresville, San Antonio River Authority.

Appointed to the Nueces River Authority are Amy Clark, Floresville;

John Galloway, Beeville; Gary Jones, Beeville; and Curt Rabbe, Poth.

Re-appointed to third terms are Darrell Brownlow, Floresville, Evergreen Underground Water Conservation District; W. Scott Bledsoe, Oakville, Nueces River Authority; and Lydia Saenz, Carrizo Springs, Office of Rural and Community Affairs Board of Directors.

Re-appointed to second terms are Charles Real, Marion, Texas Animal Health Commission; and Roxanna Tom, Campbellton, Nueces River Authority.

When residents of SD 21 initially are nominated by a governor, Senator Zaffirini meets with them. Her criteria for sponsorship include qualifications; character references; ability to attend

meetings; commitment to represent the needs and interests of SD 21 and to balance them with those of the state; and a history of honesty, integrity and good judgment.

Anyone interested in serving on state boards and commissions should complete a state appointment application, obtained by contacting the governor's appointments staff via 512/463-1828 or [www.governor.state.tx.us](http://www.governor.state.tx.us) and mailing it with a resume to P.O. Box 12428, Austin, TX 78711.

"Senatorial courtesy" means that the Senate will confirm only nominees who are sponsored and supported by their respective senators. Confirmation requires a two-thirds vote of the Senate membership.



**SD 21 LEADERS** discuss issues with Senator Judith Zaffirini. Shown are (L-R) Judith A. Solis, Starr County; Romeo Salinas, Zapata; Kathryn Hawkins, Frio; Francisco Castaneda, Dimmit; Terri Robertson, La Salle; Senator Zaffirini; Linda Perez, Wilson; Margaret Hensley, Karnes; Tom Walker, McMullen; Mary Hickok and Telia Diaz, Karnes; Edwin Miles, Bexar; Rosa Santos, Webb; and Aurora Gonzalez, San Patricio.

## Next Legislative Session Offers Challenges and Opportunities

By Lieutenant Governor  
*David Dewhurst*

The 2007 Legislative Session was one of the most successful to date for the people of Texas, providing a strong foundation upon which the House and Senate can build. Looking forward to the 2009 Session, I believe the legislature has a great opportunity to make our state's future even brighter by supporting the principles that have created unprecedented economic growth and opportunity in Texas.

Today, many states are struggling with huge budget deficits, job losses, tax increases and deep budget cuts. Texas, however, is a different story. We've added more than a million new jobs over the last five years, and our economy is outpacing the rest of the country. We've erased our budget deficit and now have a budget surplus, and we've made record investments in our public schools and universities. This shows what's possible by working together and putting Texas first.

To continue this trend, I want to make tax relief a top priority in the 2009 Session. Many home and business owners have seen their tax bills go up as their property values have risen, despite the legislature passing more than \$14 billion in property tax relief last year. I believe we must bring skyrocketing appraisals back down to earth by reducing appraisal caps or local government revenue increases to just five percent.

Next, I want to ensure that our transportation system is the best in the country. I'm committed to working with lawmakers and transportation officials to provide necessary



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**-Lt. Gov. David Dewhurst**

funding for road construction and maintenance projects. Over the last four years, the Texas Department of Transportation received \$34 billion to build and maintain roads, and last year voters approved Proposition 12, which provides \$5 billion in new construction bonding capacity.

With the population of Texas expected to reach 36 million by 2040, we must develop long-term transportation solutions. I'm willing to listen to any idea that serves the State of Texas, including toll roads, but any new toll road in Texas must be built with the maximum practical and financial benefit to the people of

Texas, not out-of-state or foreign construction companies.

Another issue critical to our future is guaranteeing young Texans the best education possible so they can compete in an increasingly global economy. Last year we made a record investment in our public schools, increasing funding in the current two-year budget by \$1.2 billion. We provided more than \$200 million for educational facilities in low-income school districts so students have safe, clean and functional schools that make them proud.

We also made a record investment in higher education, increasing funding for Texas universities by \$1.5 billion in the 2008-2009 budget. We worked to increase funding for student financial aid by \$145 million, or 35 percent, to help offset the cost of higher education and make college more accessible to low- and middle-income students. What's more, next session, I'm going to ask legislators to develop a more predictable, affordable tuition system, so

parents and students can plan and budget for their education.

I have an ambitious agenda for Texas next year, and I know we have a lot of work ahead of us. By breaking through partisan lines and putting Texas first, we've been able to build consensus around solutions and make real progress. All that remains is to stay the course and work together. By doing so, there are no limits to what we can achieve.

**Lieutenant Governor David Dewhurst, R-Houston, is President of the 31-member Texas Senate, a position he has held since January, 2003.**

# Senator Judith Zaffirini's Agenda Reflects Priority Needs, Interests of SD 21 Families

Education and health are top priorities for the Texas Legislature, as are issues such as the cost of gasoline, taxes, food costs, tuition rates, healthcare costs, child protective services, high crime rates and the well-being of children in the juvenile justice system. Working with colleagues to improve legislation and funding for these and countless other issues is a priority for Senator Judith Zaffirini, particularly as they impact the families of Senate District 21.

## Uninsured Texans Need Health Care

Nearly one of every five children in Texas lacks health insurance. Of the 1.4 million uninsured children in our state, 700,000 are eligible for Children's Medicaid or the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP), but are not enrolled.

As the Senate's chief negotiator for the health and human services part of the budget, Senator Zaffirini helped secure \$89.5 million that allowed 130,000 children to enroll in CHIP during the current biennium. This funding also provides 12-month continuous eligibility for most children who are eligible for CHIP, doubles the asset test limit from \$5,000 to \$10,000 and deducts child-care expenses when calculating income.

In 2009 Senator Zaffirini will introduce legislation to intensify outreach and application assistance, striving to ensure that every eligible child can access CHIP or Children's Medicaid and to provide options for buying into CHIP on a sliding scale. What's more, state funding for these programs must be increased so federal dol-

lars are not left on the table for other states.

## Life is Ultimate Gift

More than 8,000 Texans are waiting for lifesaving organ transplants. A new name is added every 13 minutes to the national transplant waiting list. What's more, an average of 17 persons die every day while waiting for an organ, and in 2007 more than 450 persons in Texas died waiting for a donation of life.

Many lives can be saved by every Texan who registers. A single donor can save up to eight lives through organ donations and enhance the lives of more than 50 persons through tissue donations.

The Glenda Dawson Donate Life Texas Registry is the official centralized list of Texans who want to be organ donors. Texans can register online, as did Senator Zaffirini, or at the Texas Department of Public Safety.

"It was my pleasure to collaborate with Rep. Glenda Dawson, R-Pearland, in passing HB 120 (2005), which created the registry," Senator Zaffirini said, "and to pass SB 1500 (2007), which re-named the registry in her memory." Dawson,



MISS ROMA, Victoria Anastacia Salinas, welcomes Senator Judith Zaffirini to the Annual Roma Fest at a luncheon honoring dignitaries and guests.



VALENTINE DAY QUEEN, Rosa Elva Barrientos, greets Senator Judith Zaffirini during the coronation gala and dinner dance honoring her and her court in Crystal City.

who endured years of dialysis treatments before receiving a kidney from her younger sister in 1987, died 12 days after the registry was launched officially in 2006.

## Crime Plagues Our Families

Recent revelations regarding the conditions at the Texas Youth Commission (TYC) resulted in a renewed focus on reforming the current system. Overcrowding and a corrections officer shortage plague TYC and the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ). Unfortunately, youth from SD 21 committed to TYC typically are sent to a unit far from home, although, ideally, they should be close to home so that families may visit and facilitate their recovery.

SD 21 is the home of eight TDCJ adult facilities.

"It is imperative that incarcerated children receive the education, psychological and mental health treatment they require so that they can join our communities upon their release in better condition than when they entered TYC," Senator Zaffirini said. "If Texas children are graduated from TYC to an adult prison instead of high school, we will have failed them.

"Restorative and rehabilitative justice must be a top priority so that Texas children do not enter the 'prison pipeline' and suffer a life of crime and incarceration. The schoolhouse, not the jailhouse, should be the focus

of our efforts. In the long run, the strength of a community lies in prevention, intervention and rehabilitation that ultimately results in a safer community and stronger Texas."

Justice and due process mean punishing criminals appropriately and swiftly, as well as protecting the innocent.

"Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere." Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. never spoke

truer words. With the recent news of DNA exonerations throughout Texas, legislative initiatives must ensure that justice is served for victims, their families and persons accused falsely. We must punish criminals, not the innocent. The efforts spearheaded by Senator Rodney Ellis, D-Houston, to reform the criminal justice system to prevent further wrongful convictions and the miscarriage of justice is a worthy undertaking that Senator Zaffirini supports.

Tough laws and proper penalties for the guilty rank high on legislative priorities. Victims of crime will be protected and will have the guarantee that justice will be served. "The citizens and families of Senate District 21 have the right

to live in the safest, healthiest community possible," Senator Zaffirini said.

## Ag Issues Top SD 21 Agenda

Texas may be increasingly metropolitan, but agriculture remains our state's second-largest industry, generating approximately \$73 billion annually for the Texas economy.

Largely rural, Senate District 21 is blessed with agricultural leaders who regularly communicate their issues effectively.

"Because they articulate the importance of funding and legislation that impact issues as varied as water quality and availability, tick eradication, rabies control, carcass disposal, deer management, brush control, zebra chip disease and cattle raising," Senator Judith Zaffirini said, "they empower legislators to carry their banner equally effectively."

Representatives from organizations including the Texas Deer Association, Texas and Southwestern Cattle Raisers Association, Texas Farm Bureau, soil and water conservation districts, and underground water districts meet regularly with the senator both at the Capitol and in their home counties.

"Private property rights are of critical importance to landowners," she said, "as is rural economic development. Whether the issue is storing low-level radioactive waste on public rather than private land or ensuring the eminent domain authority is not abused, these leaders will lend their wisdom and counsel to decision-makers and influence the outcome."



TEXAS AND SOUTHWESTERN CATTLE RAISERS Association members meet with Senator Judith Zaffirini at their annual Region 5 meeting. Shown are (L-R) Sid Williams, Zane Williams, and Jim Gates, Frio; Senator Zaffirini; Marty Harris, McMullen; Dr. Jason Trial, Atascosa; Joe Wheeler, McMullen; and Buck Hamilton, Duval.



TEXAS DEER ASSOCIATION Region 8 members invite Senator Judith Zaffirini to their "Get to Know Your Legislator" meeting. Shown (L-R) are (Front row) Debbie Chisholm, Atascosa County; Senator Zaffirini; Karl Kinsel, Bexar; (Second row) Marty Berry, McMullen; Charlene Long, George Long and Beth McDonald, Atascosa; Will Pressley, Jim Wells; Ernest Ramon, Bee; Bill Glendening, Dimmit; (Back row) Tommy Dugger, Live Oak; Gerald Lieck, Bexar; Michael Tarugott, Terry Retzlaff and Grey Hall, Atascosa; and Clint Graff, Frio. Jimmy Hasslocher of San Antonio is TDA's president.



VAQUERO FESTIVAL activities in Jim Hogg County include a parade and events for persons of all ages. Agapito Silguero congratulates their Grand Marshal, Senator Judith Zaffirini.

## Senator Zaffirini Chairs Higher Ed

Senator Judith Zaffirini chairs not only the newly created Senate Finance Higher Education Subcommittee, but also the Senate Higher Education Subcommittee. Lt. Gov. David Dewhurst created the new subcommittee in 2008 and charged it to study and make recommendations regarding higher education funding, structures and growth.

Committee members will focus on funding research, financial aid, flagship institutions and tuition de-regulation.

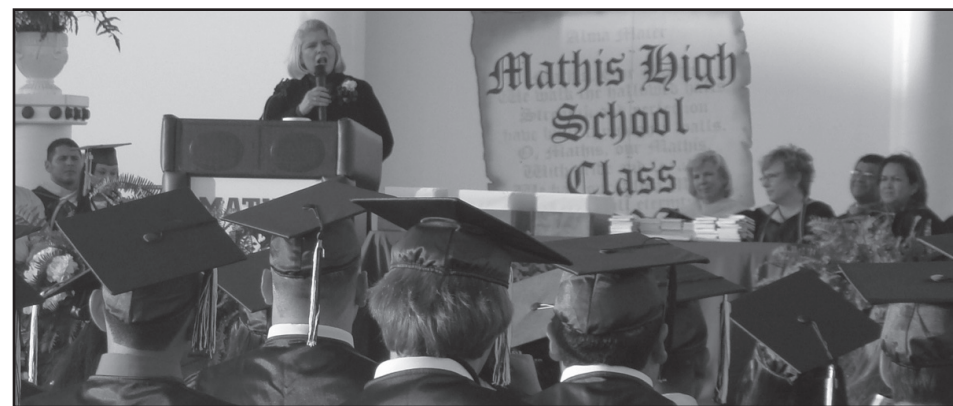
“I am delighted to chair both committees,” said Senator Zaffirini, who holds B.S., M.A. and PhD degrees from The University of Texas at Austin and has 13 years of teaching experience, including at the university level.

She continues to chair the Senate Higher Education Subcommittee, which will examine ways to improve quality, increase affordability and expand access to higher education so that more students may succeed and complete their studies.

“We must set high expectations for our students, faculty, and ad-

ministration and provide them with the resources necessary to succeed,” Senator Zaffirini said. “By focusing on increasing access while striving for excellence in instruction and research, we can ensure that every student has quality higher education prospects.

“The interim at hand provides an opportunity for both subcommittees thoroughly to review important issues and challenges and to make recommendations to enhance higher education substantially. Together we can develop policy recommendations that can have a positive impact on students for generations to come.”



HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION ceremonies throughout SD 21 are cause for celebration. Senator Judith Zaffirini congratulates the Mathis High School Class of 2008 in San Patricio County.

## Senate Finance Leaders Hear Competing Needs for Adequate Funding

The myriad of state programs and legislative efforts require adequate funding to be successful. As Vice Chair and a seven-term member of the Appropriations Conference Committee that writes the final draft of the state’s budget, Senator Judith Zaffirini understands the ever-changing dynamics facing state agencies and their needs for state funding.

Despite efforts to account for inflation, many state agencies face real budget crises due to increases in fuel, utilities, construction supplies and materials. “The Legislature must understand how these costs will affect and compete for the limited resources we appropriate to crucial areas such as higher education, public education, and health and human services,” Senator Zaffirini said.

To ensure that state agencies and programs are properly funded, hearings are held on an ongoing basis to hear testimony from all state agency representatives and include the opportunity for public testimony.

Finance priorities include Medicaid rates and projections, waiting lists for seniors and persons with disabilities, public hospitals, infrastructure needs of public schools, property tax rates for school districts, state and local options for transportation funding, child protective services and a wide range of other issues.



MOTIVATING STUDENTS from early to higher education to excel in the classroom and in extracurricular activities is a joyful priority for Senator Judith Zaffirini, an educator and businesswoman. She is shown above (L-R) with Dimmit High School cheerleaders and Dr. Ricky Alaniz, trustee; with Diamondback Little Leaguers in Pearsall; and with Liliana Yasmin and her mother, Daniela Galvan, in Duval County.



## Bookends of Education are Key to Better Future

As Chair of the Senate Higher Education and Higher Education Finance Subcommittees, Senator Judith Zaffirini embraces the opportunity to expand access to affordable higher education and enhance success. The route to higher education, however, begins with early childhood education.

“It is crucial to pay as much attention to the starting line as we do to the finish line. Serving as the foundation of a student’s educational career, these early beginnings must be of high quality and be well-funded,” Senator Zaffirini said.

“I look forward to continuing to champion early education and plan to file a comprehensive legislative package during the next legislative session,” Senator Zaffirini said.

“This package will improve professional development for early childhood educators, standards for pre-kindergarten classrooms,

reimbursement rates for childcare and transparency in oversight of early education.”

She believes now is the time to expand pre-kindergarten and prioritize the needs of Texas families. Some families are “priced out” of high-quality pre-kindergarten, while others are inadequately served by state-sponsored programs that are only half-day. Low-income parents especially face challenges in leaving work to transport their children to a caretaker’s home or a day care center during the work day.

Equally important, a report by the Bush School of Government and Public Service at Texas A&M University found that for every \$1 invested in high quality pre-kindergarten in Texas, local communities receive a return of least \$3.50.

Senator Zaffirini also will continue to fight for a voluntary, full-

day pre-kindergarten program for all Texas children. Because such implementation would occur incrementally, significant expansion of pre-kindergarten must begin now.

She looks forward to championing the “bookends of education” and ensuring that all Texans begin and complete their academic careers successfully.

Senator Zaffirini’s higher education priorities include providing tax holidays for college student textbooks. She authored and will re-introduce legislation to provide financial relief to college students by allowing them to purchase textbooks tax-free during the beginning of each semester.

During the 2005 regular legislative session and the 2005 and 2006 special sessions she proposed similar legislation to establish two 10-day periods during which students could purchase textbooks tax-free.

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## Senator Zaffirini Named Godmother of Texas Children

Because of Senator Judith Zaffirini's life-long leadership for children and their extended families, early childhood education organizations united to declare her the *Godmother of Texas Children*.

Honoring her as *La Madrina* were the Texas Migrant Council, Texas Early Childhood Education Coalition, State Center for Early Childhood

Development and Texas Early Education Model (TEEM). She also received the Child Advocate Award from Voices for Children in San Antonio and was named *Early Care & Education Champion* by the Texas Licensed Child Care Association.

As passionately committed to the elderly, persons with physical and intellectual disabilities and students of all ages, Senator Zaffirini was named *Long Term Care Champion* by the Texas Health Care Association and *Friend of Medicine* by the Texas Medical Association.

She also received the *Thanks to You* award from the Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance of Texas



**TRADITIONAL FAMILY VALUES** are the north star for Senator Judith Zaffirini and her husband and son, Carlos Sr. and Jr. She analyzes every issue and casts every vote from the perspective of its impact on the families of SD 21.

and the *Beacon Award* from Laredo Community College.

The second-highest ranking state senator, she has won more than 600 awards for legislative, public service and professional accomplishments.

In 2008 she won 10 statewide communication awards, including First Place for last year's *Senator Judith Zaffirini Reports to the Families of District 21*.

Other First Place awards from the Press Women of Texas were for her editorial supporting restoring the \$154 million vetoed by Governor Rick Perry for community college health benefits and a newspaper holiday message to constituents. Also winning statewide honors were her

speeches introducing Lt. Gov. David Dewhurst as Mr. South Texas, nominating Senator John Carona, R-Dallas, as President Pro Tempore of the Texas Senate and *Uniting Voices for Persons with Disabilities*.

The Texas Speech Association named her *Communicator of the Year*, and the Three Rivers Chamber of Commerce named her

*Elected Official of the Year*. LULAC named her *Señora Internacional*, and the Combined Law Enforcement Associations of Texas (CLEAT) named her the *Best of the Texas Senate*.

Distinguished by her 100 percent voting record, she's cast 38,530 consecutive votes since January, 1987, and deliberately broke her career-long 100 percent attendance record in 2003 to break a quorum and prevent Congressional re-redistricting that was harmful to SD 21.

Senator Zaffirini and her husband live in Laredo, where she owns Zaffirini Communications, and he practices law. Carlos Jr. is a graduate of the UT Schools of Business and Law.