

Senator Judith Zaffirini



Reports to the Families of District 21

Dear Friends:

Spend yourself on the work before you, well assured that the right performance of this hour's duties will be the best preparation for the hours and ages that will follow it. These beautiful and inspiring words by Ralph Waldo Emerson personify my motivation for focusing on the task at hand in representing the families of Senate District (SD) 21 and of our great state.

Consistent with our practice of not simply preparing, but, rather, over-preparing, my staff and I already are collaborating with colleagues and constituents to craft legislation for the 82nd Legislative Session that convenes on Jan. 11.

Often the lives and livelihoods of Texans depend on our success. Literally. When we secure funding or pass legislation for medical education, immunization, AIDS medication, clean and plentiful water, capital punishment and other critical issues, we literally make life or death decisions.

Senator Judith Zaffirini Reports to the Families of District 21 reaches out to our 17 counties, namely, Atascosa, Bee, northeast Bexar, Dimmit, Duval, Frio, Jim Hogg, Karnes, La Salle, Live Oak, McMullen, San Patricio, Starr, Webb, Wilson, Zapata and Zavala. It is as much a progress report as it is an invitation to participate in the legislative process.

Our district is larger than nine states and more populated than four. From our fast-growing cities to our vast ranchlands, our needs may differ, but our values are the same: faith, family, hard work and treating others with respect. We believe in improving educational opportunities for all and share a strong commitment to our very young and very old.



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– **Senator Judith Zaffirini**

Count on me to continue to prioritize early and higher education; health and human services, including for persons with disabilities; job creation; and public safety. As the second-highest ranking state senator, Chair of the Senate Higher Education Committee, and a member of the Legislative Budget Board and of the Senate Finance, Health and Human Services, Economic Development and Administration Committees, I am uniquely positioned to have a positive impact on these issues.

What's more, as the ranking member of the Redistricting Committee, I will work to ensure that our South Texas communities stay together and that every person has an effective voice in government.

As always, I thank Lt. Gov. David Dewhurst for these important appointments. Equally important, I thank you for your interest and invite you to join our collaboration.

You can subscribe to my e-newsletter via my website and can “friend” me via www.facebook.com/judith.zaffirini. For those who prefer other communication channels, we will continue to respond to every letter, email and telephone call.

Your feedback is essential to my meeting my top priority in the Texas Senate: improving the lives of the families of our district and of our great state. My prayer is that the Lord will continue to bless us with peace and harmony and health and happiness—and inspire us to excel and to succeed.

Judith Zaffirini

Judith Zaffirini
State Senator, District 21
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PROTECTING TEXAS CHILDREN is among Senator Judith Zaffirini's top priorities in the Texas Senate. She is shown in photograph 1. with Terry Pichardo and her daughter, Esperanza, of Frio County and in 2. with Lauren Perez of Dimmit County.

Senator Zaffirini Champions Children's Issues

Protecting children is among Senator Judith Zaffirini's lifelong commitments. In 2010 she accepted the Amerigroup Foundation's Champion for Children Award because, as a mother and educator, she understands that quality early education, health care and safety are critical to ensuring a child's success.

Demonstrating her dedication to vulnerable children, for example, in 2010 she urged a statewide review of the Texas Early Childhood Intervention Program (ECI). The evaluation will help ensure children

with disabilities can access a wide array of necessary services.

Safeguarding Texas children on our roadways also is one of Senator Zaffirini's priorities. In 2009 she passed legislation requiring that child passengers younger than eight and shorter than four feet, nine inches, be secured in safety seats. The new law allows fines of \$25 to \$250 for violations.

"Drivers have additional responsibility when they carry precious cargo," Senator Zaffirini said.

Understanding that quality early education leads to excellence in higher education, Senator Zaffirini passed legislation making pre-kindergarten accessible for many families and creating a pre-k quality rating system.

Hoping to expand on that success, she is crafting legislation that will encourage public-private partnerships to help make pre-kindergarten accessible statewide.

"Count on me to promote quality pre-kindergarten programs for all Texas children," Senator Zaffirini said.

Trade Flourishes, Border Safety A Priority

The first half of 2010 signaled a banner year for trade in Senate District 21: More than \$73 billion in trade passed through the Laredo customs district alone.

"Trade is flourishing, and South Texas is leading the way," said Senator Judith Zaffirini, a member of the Senate Committee on Economic Development. "Promoting trade in our region will continue to create jobs and lift the burden created by the recession."

An advocate for strengthening international commerce, she has passed legislation encouraging trade compacts with Mexico, creating a Laredo port authority and establishing centers for enterprise and economic development.

She also secured \$9.9 million for the Western Hemispheric Trade Center at Texas A&M International University.

Public safety always is a priority, and law enforcement has honored Senator Zaffirini for her leadership. While reports circulated of "pirates" accosting fishermen on the Mexican side of Falcon Lake, related fears

about violence spilling into Texas were not realized. Senator Zaffirini helped secure \$274.4 million for border security in 2007 and \$6.9 million for a Regional Emergency Operations Center in 2009.

In 2010 communities along the Rio Grande suffered devastating flooding associated with Hurricane Alex. Ten SD 21 counties were designated disaster areas, though Starr, Zapata and Webb were hit hardest.

"We must continue to help communities rebuild and limit the effects of future flooding," Senator Zaffirini said.

During the flooding and its aftermath she remained in close contact with local officials and with state agencies, who collaborated in providing emergency support.



JIM HOGG COUNTY Sheriff's Department Sgt. David Gutierrez and Senator Judith Zaffirini discuss law enforcement needs and the importance of safety in the border region.

Innovative Job Creation Program Shows Positive Results

By Lieutenant Governor David Dewhurst

As Texas enters the second decade of the 21st Century, I'm optimistic about the future of our great state and our nearly 25 million citizens. We begin this decade with an economy that remains the envy of virtually every other state in America, ready to meet the challenges we face and unlimited opportunity for our future.

Today more Texans are employed than ever before. We have a Rainy Day Fund that will total approximately \$10 billion. Our state's population is growing by an estimated 1,100 to 1,300 new persons per day. Additionally, many of the most respected national business magazines rank Texas as the number one state in America to do business and find jobs. CNN reported recently that six of the 21 most "recession-proof cities" in America are right here in Texas. All of this signals a bright future for our state, but only if we continue working together to ensure our state remains attractive to businesses that want to create jobs and help Texans succeed.

That is why over the past several months I've been traveling the state promoting a great new job creation program I got the Legislature to fund in 2009. It is called Texas Back to Work and it's being administered through the Texas Workforce Commission.

Here is how it works. An employer considering hiring new workers is eligible for incentives up to \$2,000 per person to help offset the cost of hiring a Texan receiving unemployment benefits, or a Texan who has exhausted all of their available unemployment benefits. The program is already showing posi-



Texans have been put back to work by nearly 1,200 companies all across the state. What's more, those numbers continue to increase.

– Lt. Gov. David Dewhurst

tive results; as of August more than 3,720 unemployed Texans have been put back to work by nearly 1,200 companies all across the state. What's more, those numbers continue to increase.

Initially the Legislature appropriated \$15 million dollars for Texas Back to Work in the 2010-2011 state budget, with the goal of helping 7,500 Texans gain jobs. I expect thousands more Texans and businesses to benefit from this program, however, since the Texas Workforce Commission recently secured an

additional \$24.3 million in federal grant money to extend the program.

Employers interested in participating in the program should contact their local workforce development board for information regarding the options available to them. A list of local workforce centers can be found via <http://www.twc.state.tx.us/news/txback-2work.pdf>.

Certainly there are challenges ahead, but I believe an excellent workforce, a predictable pro-growth business climate, and strong job creation helped make Texas the last state to enter the national recession and is helping make us among the first to come out. We also must not lose focus on the other fundamentals that have helped largely insulate our state from the national economic downturn: low taxes, disciplined state spending, and investing in our future by preparing the Texas workforce of tomorrow through excellent systems of public and higher education.

I am already busy preparing for the 82nd Legislative Session which begins in January, 2011. The first ses-

sion of the new decade will be critical to our state's future, and I'm glad to have my friend, Senator Judith Zaffirini, helping lead the Texas Senate as we tackle the difficult issues before us. We have proven that working together, we can and will turn our challenges into opportunities that will continue to make Texas the best place in America to live, work and raise a family.

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

Promoting Health & Human Services is Cornerstone of Senator Zaffirini's Service

Promoting good health for all Texans is a passion and vocation for Senator Judith Zaffirini, a member of the Senate Health and Human Services Committee since 1987.

"It is my privilege to champion critical health and human services, especially for the very young, the very old and persons with disabilities," Senator Zaffirini said. "Because of the national economic climate, it is more important than ever to work purposefully on behalf of South Texas families who need assistance in this arena."

In 2009 Lt. Gov. David Dewhurst appointed Senators Zaffirini and Tommy Williams, R-The Woodlands, to co-chair the Food Stamp Eligibility Workgroup to address Texas' food stamp eligibility crisis.

"We are delighted to report significant progress," Senator Zaffirini said. The Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) is processing almost 94 percent of cases on time, and there are fewer than 2,200 delinquent cases statewide. This is an impressive improvement from last fall, when the agency was processing fewer than 59 percent of food stamp cases on time and had more than 42,000 cases pending.

"Lt. Gov. Dewhurst and other Senate leaders were instrumental in our adding 850 field workers who made a difference," she added. "During the peak of the crisis, each eligibility staffer worked an average of 45 hours of overtime per month. Because of their success in clearing the backlog, Commissioner Tom Suehs and I proudly



GERTRUDE HAVERLAH welcomes Senator Judith Zaffirini to the Campbellton Community Hall in Atascosa County.

nominated Texas' eligibility staff for the Texas Public Employees Association's Unsung Heroes Award. Not surprisingly, they won.

"I also was delighted that Laredo's eligibility office was the most improved. We celebrated with a luncheon, and I baked their dessert."

Respectful Language Advances

Senator Zaffirini believes strongly in treating everyone with dignity and respect. Accordingly, during the 2011 Texas Legislative Session she will redouble her efforts to pass legislation promoting respectful language for persons with intellectual disabilities by eliminating the "R-word."

"Respecting others reflects our values and our commitment to basic human decency," she said. "The 'R-word' is extremely hurtful and demeaning to persons with intellectual and developmental dis-

abilities, and its use presents significant barriers to community inclusion."

Twenty-one states have removed all variations of the word "retarded" from statutes and replaced them with respectful language referencing persons with intellectual disabilities. Meanwhile, the U.S. Senate has approved Rosa's Law, a bill to eliminate the terms "mental retardation" and "mentally retarded" from federal health, education and labor laws.

Texas should not lag behind. In 2009 Senator Zaffirini authored legislation requiring variations of the word "retarded" to be removed from Texas statutes. Although Senate Bill (SB) 1395 was heard by the Senate Health and Human Services Committee, it was never scheduled for a vote. She plans to refile this respectful language legislation in 2011.

"Fortunately, we don't need to wait for new legislation to eliminate the 'R-word' from everyday speech," Senator Zaffirini said. "We can start immediately by increasing public awareness while modeling appropriate language."

To find out how you can help promote respectful language, visit www.r-word.org. More than 135,000 persons have visited the site and pledged their support.

Organ Donor Registrations Surge

When Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote, *The greatest gift is a portion of thyself*, he could not have imagined how his words would apply so perfectly and profoundly to organ and tissue donors. Because of legislation passed by Senator Zaffirini, the number of generous Texans registering to donate life is increasing dramatically.

In 2009 she authored and passed SB 1803 to increase donor registrations and hope for potential recipients. The bill requires Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS) employees to ask customers one question: Would you like to register as an organ donor? This is amazingly simple, but it works—and saves lives.

Since January, 2010, when DPS began asking every customer that question, registrations at DPS offices increased from 32,929 to 62,239 in May—nearly double! What a difference one question makes!

"The need for donors is urgent and growing," Senator Zaffirini said. "I am delighted that thou-



LIVE OAK COUNTY veterans Dennis Zamzow and Rudy Peña of VFW Post 6119 greet Senator Judith Zaffirini in George West.

sands of Texans are demonstrating their generosity by registering as organ donors at local DPS offices. No gift is greater than the gift of life."

A registered organ donor, Senator Zaffirini long has promoted organ donation in Texas. In 2005 she collaborated with the late Rep. Glenda Dawson, R-Pearland, to author and pass House Bill (HB) 120, establishing the official Texas organ and tissue donor registry. After Rep. Dawson, an organ recipient, died in 2006, the senator passed SB 1500, renaming the registry in her memory.

Awareness is critical. SB 1803 also requires the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) to include information about organ and tissue donation with auto registration renewal mailings.

What's more, it eliminates the unwieldy two-signature requirement for persons who register

via the department's website. As a result, the number of online registrants increased substantially.

Organ donation information can be obtained via www.DonateLifeTexas.org.

Texans Enjoy Independence

"This year also is a milestone in our longtime effort to ensure that Texans with intellectual or physical disabilities receive quality care in their preferred settings," Senator Zaffirini said. "Since 2001 more than 20,000 Texans have participated in the state's successful Money Follows the Person program, allowing them to move out of nursing homes and to live independently or with relatives.

"As a member of the Legislative Budget Board and Senate Finance and Health and Human Services Committees, I continually find ways to facilitate moving persons with disabilities out of institutional settings and into the community, if they so desire. It is a tremendously positive development that so many older Texans and Texans with disabilities are now living independently or with their loved ones."

In 2005 she sponsored and passed HB 1867 by Rep. Elliott Naishtat, D-Austin, ensuring that funding follows persons who leave nursing homes and require community-based services.

"Our Texas program has been so successful that it is a model for other states," Senator Zaffirini said.



KARNES COUNTY OFFICIALS gather to review legislative issues with Senator Judith Zaffirini. They are (L-R) District Judge Stella Saxon, County Commissioner James Rosales and County Road & Bridge Administrator Jeffrey Wiatrek.



LA SALLE COUNTY LEADERS Juan Dominguez and Eva Dominguez discuss mutual interests with Senator Judith Zaffirini. Ranching, hunting and oil and gas are important economic drivers for South Texas.

State Faces Unprecedented Budget Shortfall

When state legislators return to the State Capitol in January, 2011, to craft the 2012-13 budget, we will face an unprecedented funding shortfall created by the national economic downturn, which has dampened business activity in Texas and possibly worsened the structural deficit in the state's biennial budget.

"Just as families across the state have had to make difficult decisions about

their household budgets, so must we decide what the state can do without and what spending is absolutely essential," said Senator Judith Zaffirini, the second highest-ranking member of the Senate Finance Committee, which crafts the Senate version of the biennial budget.

To address the budget shortfall, legislators will consider utilizing the Rainy Day Fund, generating new

revenue and cutting spending. The Rainy Day Fund is expected to surpass \$9 billion by the end of the 2011 fiscal year. Spending it requires a two-thirds vote of the Texas Senate and House of Representatives, a high threshold that will be difficult to reach, particularly because of bipartisan opposition.

Because not generating additional revenue could result in deep and potentially damaging spending cuts, in January, 2010, the Legislative Budget Board, on which Senator Zaffirini serves, asked all state agencies to trim their current budgets. This resulted in \$1.2 billion that may be used to offset shortfalls in sales tax and other revenues during the current biennium.

"Texas' economic health depends on our ability to attract business and economic development, which, in turn, depends on an educated and healthy population," Senator Zaffirini said. "Investments in public and higher education and in health and human services result in significant economic multipliers for communities and the state, yielding a great return on investment.

"While the easy way to address the budget shortfall would be to slash all programs and services by a given percentage, the responsible way requires a thoughtful exercise in cutting wherever possible, while protecting safety net programs and preserving vital investments in Texas' future. I urge residents of Senate District 21 to voice your views about what should be cut and what should be preserved and to make your perspectives known to me and to your respective state representatives."



VISITING CONSTITUENTS is important to Senator Judith Zaffirini. She is shown in photograph 1. with Duval County Tax Assessor-Collector Carlos Montemayor of San Diego and in 2. with McMullen County ISD Board Member Warren Wheeler of Tilden.

Texas Deer Industry Names Senator Zaffirini Alpha Doe

When the Texas Deer Association named Senator Judith Zaffirini their *Outstanding Legislator* and *Alpha Doe*, members recognized her ardent leadership in the wildlife arena. A longtime supporter of hunting and the white-tailed deer breeding industry, she cites their recreational value and positive economic impact to South Texas.

A Texas Parks and Wildlife Commission study concluded that hunting activities in our state annually generate more than \$2.6 billion in retail sales, support more than 44,000 jobs and create almost \$1.5 billion in salaries and earnings.

Her longtime efforts to promote deer harvesting are highlighted by her passing a bill that authorizes white tail deer breeding activities by scientific breeders, supporting a bill that created a select committee to study the economic impacts of the Texas deer breeding industry and successfully urging the Texas Parks and Wildlife Commission to modify the deer release date under the Deer Management Permit program.

"Persons from all over the world bring revenue to South Texas because of our excellent deer hunting," Senator Zaffirini said.

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TEXAS AGRILIFE EXTENSION SERVICE partners from SD 21 counties honor Senator Judith Zaffirini for her leadership on agricultural education issues. They are (L-R) Marcel Valdez, Zavala; George Gonzales, Webb; Kyle McManus, Bee; Kathy Farrow, San Patricio; Bettie Pundt, Wilson; Yolanda Morado, Starr; and Morgan Taplin, Bexar. AgriLife operates critical community-based programs in all 17 SD 21 counties.

SHEC's Quest: Excellence in Higher Education

As Chair of the Senate Higher Education Committee (SHEC), Senator Judith Zaffirini is a leader in expanding higher educational opportunities for all.

Because Texas faces a significant budget shortfall, top statewide officials recently directed colleges and universities to reduce their spending by 10 percent.

"It is more important than ever to invest in Texas' future by strengthening higher education," Senator Zaffirini said. "Quality

post-secondary education increases civic participation, lowers demands on social programs, enhances the competitiveness of Texas' economy and strengthens families."

In 2009 Lt. Gov. David Dewhurst created the Senate's first independent committee devoted to higher education and appointed Senator Zaffirini its Chair. An ardent advocate for Texas institutions of higher education, she holds B.S., M.A. and PhD degrees from The

University of Texas at Austin, each with a 3.9 grade-point average. Married at 18 and self-supporting since 17, she understands the challenges faced by working and married students.

Under her leadership the committee has moved swiftly and purposefully to improve access and affordability without sacrificing excellence. The SHEC held hearings regarding diverse topics ranging from financial aid and endowments to accountability and affordability.

The committee also is monitoring legislation by Senator Zaffirini and Representative Dan Branch that created a pathway for Texas' emerging research universities to become national research universities. Because the recession has exacerbated the burden of paying for college, Senator Zaffirini will prioritize bills to increase college affordability in 2011, including by reining in tuition and textbook costs.

Workgroup's Focus: Financial Aid

As costs continue to rise and state funding covers a diminishing percentage of higher education's operational costs, many students must rely on financial aid.

"Financial aid is a lifeline for many students," said Senator Judith Zaffirini, Chair of the Senate Higher Education Committee (SHEC). "Preserving this funding, especially for first generation and self-supporting students and for working families, is among my top priorities."

Financial aid options include loans, work-study, scholarships and the B-On-Time program created by Senator Zaffirini's Senate Bill 4 (2003). Also a priority for Lt. Governor David Dewhurst, B-On-Time provides zero-interest loans that convert to grants for students who maintain a B grade-point average and complete their degree programs timely or with no more than six excess hours.

During the interim SHEC members heard testimony about proposed financial aid changes. In response, Senator Zaffirini established a Financial Aid Workgroup. Comprising stakeholders, policymakers and experts, the workgroup continues to discuss proposals for reforming state financial aid programs to maximize student achievement.

"This is a wonderful opportunity to strengthen financial aid programs, prioritize student success and increase graduation rates," Senator Zaffirini said.

Financial aid information is available via www.collegeforalltexas.com.



YOUTHS OF THE YEAR from South Texas include (L-R) Annie Miller, Laredo; Ilyssa Saenz, Hebbronville; and Mario E. Zavala, Zapata. As Chair of the Senate Higher Education Committee, Senator Judith Zaffirini is proud to recognize high-achieving students.



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Zaffirini: Serving Constituents is Highest Honor

Senator Judith Zaffirini is a tireless leader for the families of Senate District 21 and of our great state. Accordingly, a diverse array of organizations have honored her with more than 650 awards and honors for her legislative, public service and professional work.

“Serving constituents in the Texas Senate truly is the highest honor,” Senator Zaffirini said. “It is an incredible challenge to make a difference, especially in making decisions that save lives, avert tragedies, strengthen families and create opportunities.”

In 2010 Senator Zaffirini received the Extension in the City Award from the Texas AgriLife Extension Service, which operates critical educational programs in all 17 SD 21 counties.

Zealous advocacy for children is a hallmark of her service in the Texas Senate. In 2010 she was awarded the Big Voices for Little Texans Award by Texas CASA for her support of foster youth.

What’s more, she was named a *Partner for Change* by the Rape Crisis Center and a *Child Passenger*



SENATOR JUDITH ZAFFIRINI believes strongly that success at the expense of family is failure. With her husband, Carlos Sr., and their son, Carlos Jr., she works hard to strengthen all Texas families.

Safety Champion by the University Health System.

The National Multiple Sclerosis Society named her a *Texas Visionary*, and the Institute for Economic Development at The University of Texas at San Antonio named her the *Champion of Business and Education*.

A trailblazer in many arenas, Senator Zaffirini is featured in 21 books and referenced in 33 others. Her inspiring story is captured in a publication for students at the Senator Judith Zaffirini Elementary School in Laredo, namely, *If Judy Pappas Can Do It, Anybody Can!*

Professional organizations, including the Press Women of Texas (PWT) and the Texas Public Relations Association (TPRA), repeatedly have recognized Senator Zaffirini’s achievements in communication. In

2010 TPRA bestowed its Best of Texas Merit Award for *Who Lives? Who Dies? Who Decides?*, her commencement address at Lamar University. She also won three first place and four second place awards in PWT’s 2010 communications con-

test, including a second place for the 2009-10 *Senator Judith Zaffirini Reports to the Families of District 21*.

The first Hispanic woman elected a Texas state senator, her career-long 100 percent voting record is unmatched in any state. Since January, 1987, she has cast 43,387 consecutive votes in the Texas Senate.

Honored by the Veteran Feminists of America as a trailblazing Texas woman, she has passed 579 bills and 52 substantive resolutions and co-sponsored and passed another 365 bills.

Devoted to lifelong learning, the educator and businesswoman owns Zaffirini Communications.

She and Laredo attorney Carlos Sr. celebrated their 45th anniversary in 2010. Carlos Jr. holds business and law degrees from The University of Texas at Austin.