



Fall 2013

## *The Capitol Report*

### **Dear Constituents and Friends,**

*The 83rd Session of the Texas Legislature at its start, carried an aura far different from the ominous 82nd. Texas, faster than most states, was moving to shake the snares of two successive biennia that were weighted down by the Great Recession. Accordingly, state budgets for 2010-11 and 2012-13 bore the signs of a nation and state beset by economic woe. The impact of the recession on the 2010-11 budget was buffered by the much-maligned federal stimulus. But unabashedly, state budget writers welcomed a \$12 billion infusion in federal funds that helped keep Texas afloat.*

*Even before the 2011 Session began, lawmakers knew the shelf life of stimulus dollars were near expiration as we found ourselves peering into a \$21 billion budgetary chasm. State agencies were instructed to shave their budgets by 10 percent and funding for public education was cut by \$5.4 billion; a fact that helped land the state in court for the sixth time in 20 years. Local districts faced closing campuses to make ends meet. Smartly, dollars were maintained for Health and Human Services so that cuts made in one item would not cause costs to balloon elsewhere. But we also signed a \$4.8 billion Medicaid I.O.U. to the federal government. Tough choices must be made when your mantra is, "No new taxes!"*

*The 83rd Session also marked a changing of the guard, particularly in the Senate. When the gavel sounded on January 8, five new senators were sworn-in with another soon to join to fill the seat once occupied by my colleague and friend, Sen. Mario Gallegos who passed away in 2012. A new Senate Finance chairman would begin the difficult task of connecting the dots between hundreds of billions in state agency funding requests with the Comptrollers' biennial Budget Revenue Estimate.*

*All was well and we sang around the Capitol campfire. We agreed that funding would be restored for education. We paid our Medicaid tab and budgeted for population growth. There was consensus to address Texas' need for a statewide water plan. But the final month of the Regular Session brought with it dark clouds of political ideology as bills on Voter ID, redistricting and women's health and abortion rights began to dominate debate, ultimately leading to three contested and costly special sessions.*

*Still, there were numerous legislative accomplishments that will pave the way to a brighter Texas future, including significant reforms to education and Health and Human Services. Pay for state workers grew, while the budget for prisons shrank by \$100 million.*

*As we move forward, what Texas needs most is an educated workforce and more people to become knowledgeable about how to advocate for what is truly in their best interests. I take it as my duty to speak for those who cannot or do not know how to speak for themselves. I do it because it is the right thing to do and because you elected me to speak on your behalf. It is a sacred duty, and Carol and I thank you for the privilege.*

*Royce West*



State Senator Royce West & Mrs. Carol West

# CAPITOL REPORT

## The Budget - A little bigger, a lot better

The \$21 billion budget shortfall we experienced in 2011 almost made the \$10 billion deficit we faced in 2003 look like a walk in the park. But the good fortune of sitting on the largest petroleum reserves in the country - including the recent bonanza of natural gas unearthed by fracking - meant that state revenues would not be down for long.

Texas collected about \$2 billion more in taxes on oil and natural gas production than over the previous two years. It was part of an overall 15 percent increase in sales tax receipts over FY12-13 that helped the Texas economy recover much faster than anticipated. According to the Comptroller, an estimated \$20 billion more in revenue would be available for the 2014-15 budget. But there was also the matter of a few unpaid bills.

Through HB10, a supplemental appropriations bill, Texas paid a \$4.5 billion tab owed the federal government for Medicaid, including CHIP. Deferred payments totaling \$1.75 billion helped ease the pain inflicted previously on public schools. HB10 also appropriated \$630 million for the Foundation School Program. A revision made after the 2011 Budget Revenue Estimate was released found \$8.8 billion in unencumbered funds available to spend from the 2012-13 budget.

Texas spends about 80 percent of its budget in just two areas; education and health and human services. During the 2014-15 biennium, \$37.5 billion in general and dedicated revenue will be spent on public school funding. Another \$15.7 billion will be spent on higher education. While the \$3.4 billion appropriation increase is short of the \$5.4 billion cut last session, we returned to our normal public school funding formula and included money for enrollment growth, which was not funded for FY12-13. Formula funding for colleges and universities also was raised nearly \$250 million over last session.

Funding for medical schools was increased by \$239 million to address Texas' shortage of doctors and nurses, particularly those serving rural areas. We also raised the state's contribution to teacher retirement by \$330 million.

Combined state and federal funds for the five Health and Human Services agencies totals \$73.9 billion for 2014-15, about \$30 billion of it is general revenue. Texas spends or administers some \$60.2 billion on Medicaid and CHIP, almost 30 percent of the state's total budget.

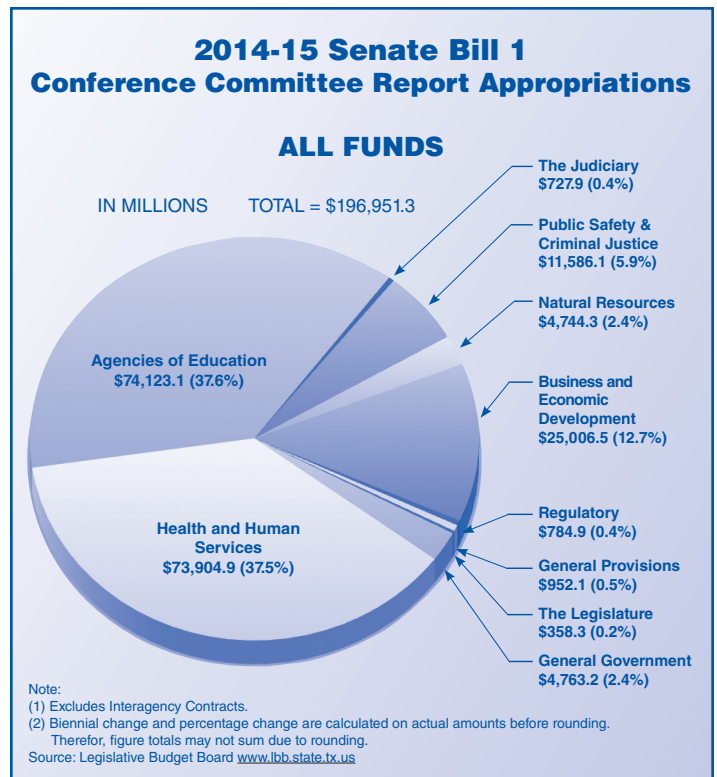
Business and Economic Development expenditures comprise about 13 percent of the budget. The Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT), its largest agency, is budgeted at \$20.95 billion. But what distinguishes TxDOT from other cost drivers is that funding for transportation is largely user-generated.

Combined, federal and state proceeds from gas taxes total more than \$14.55 billion. Tolls generate another half billion. Who pays gas taxes? You and me pay 38 cents per gallon to build and fix roadways, but even with the roughly \$8 billion allocated to TxDOT for maintenance, the agency says it needs another \$4 billion just to keep existing roads up to par. The \$2 billion for roads in a proposed constitutional amendment gets us about halfway there. Remember, some Texans hate new taxes even more than toll roads. The vote will come in November 2014.

Of \$6.25 billion in All Funds appropriated to the Texas Department of Criminal Justice, more than \$5 billion is spent on incarceration. Currently, about 151,000 inmates are behind prison and state jail bars. Approximately 402,600 adult offend-

ers serving probation costs the state about \$600 million. The 88,000 released to parole supervision will cost \$331 million over the next two years.

In 2012, per person, it costs the state \$18,264 a year for incarceration, \$1,091 for probation and \$1,395 for parole supervision. Compare that to \$4,800 per pupil for public schools, or with \$7,680 in average tuition costs at a state university. Add \$8,600 for a dorm room. Which would you rather pay?



### Education

A new chairman of Senate Education was off and running, full of ideas for changing Texas' public schools. Advocates, parents and teachers have denounced "teaching to the test" and criticized the emphasis placed on end-of-course examinations.

HB5 resolves this by reducing the number of required tests from 15 to five. End-of-course exams will be limited to English I and II, Algebra I, Biology and U.S. History. In addition, end-of-course exams will no longer count as 15 percent of a student's grade.

Texas high schools now have three graduation plans. HB5 creates a single foundation plan for graduation that allows students to tailor studies toward career or vocational interests. School curriculums will also be aligned with eligibility standards for TEXAS Grants and other financial aid programs. HB5 also establishes a rating system for school districts.

SB2 will restrict the number of open-enrollment charter schools allowed in Texas beginning in 2014, before reaching a maximum of 305 in 2019. The bill also gives the Commissioner of Education and the State Board of Education the authority to grant the opening of a new charter school. Under the bill, new charters will be authorized for five years. However, charters can be automatically revoked if schools do not meet academic and financial standards for three consecutive years.

HB2 also mandates a yearly report that compares the performance of charter schools to that of traditional public schools.

Anyone who has been around me would know that I'm constantly thinking of ideas, either about creating something new or to improve on the existing. It's because if you keep doing the same things, the same way, you'll get the same results.

With that in mind, I authored SB503 that will create an interdisciplinary council to find, develop and implement high-quality extracurricular academic programs for students. These concepts include longer school days and expanded school calendars. The programs would uncover best practices and address student deficiencies, promote science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) learning and seek support from business and charitable organizations.

HB1122, the companion to my SB681, authorizes the Dallas Independent School District to launch a pilot program that simultaneously will allow students to graduate following the



Sen. West with students from the Irma L. Rangel Young Women's Leadership Academy (Dallas-ISD). Retired former Dallas City Manager Mary Suhm (front left) was also recognized in the Senate that day.

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11th grade and move into career prep programs, while also expanding Pre-K programs. By allowing bright minds to graduate after 11th grade, funds saved can be spent on enhancing Pre-K.

Sometimes new concepts take time. So I'll be back in 2015 with ideas that I advanced this session with SB1718, SB1775 and SB1062. To address failing campuses, SB1718 would have created the option of a Texas Achievement School District. Under this proposal, any consistently, low-performing school could be placed by the commissioner into a special district headed by its own superintendent, who with specialized programs, is tasked with turning those campuses around.

SB1775 would have charged Regional Education Centers with compiling information on school capacity and college and career programs offered by traditional and charter schools. Students would be able to transfer to schools offering these courses. SB1062 would have provided funds to transport students who transferred under SB1775.

## School Finance - Back to Court

State District Court Judge John Dietz ruled in February that Texas' system for financing its public schools was unconstitutional because it inadequately funds the programs the state requires to properly educate its students, and inequitably funds school districts. Dietz also ruled that the current system no longer provides school districts latitude in setting local tax rates. Local taxes, along with state appropriations, fund public schools. The system he added, also amounts to a statewide property tax, which is unconstitutional under state law.

Part of Dietz's ruling was based on the fact that the state cut funding for public schools by \$5.4 billion in 2011. So it was no coincidence that the Legislature moved to restore funding during the 2013 Session. Whether or not it was enough will be the key.

Dallas, DeSoto and Duncanville school districts will join more than 600 other districts and other parties as plaintiffs in court come January 2014.

## Higher Education

The 83rd Session was also kinder to Texas colleges and universities in contrast to the resources available two years ago. Nearly every category of higher education funding was increased, including a collective \$250 million boost in formula funding for all four year institutions.

To address the growing shortage of doctors and nurses, we added \$3 million to the Joint Admissions Medical Program that provides internships and financial help to economically disadvantaged undergrads on track to pursue medical school. We also increased funding for the Physicians Education Loan Repayment Program by \$28.2 million and added \$7 million to the Family Practice Residency Program. Both programs target students who agree to practice in medically-underserved areas.

TEXAS Grants provides tuition assistance to four year colleges and universities for qualifying resident students or those who have earned an associates' degree. This year, we raised TEXAS Grant funding by \$145 million, dramatically increasing the number of incoming students who can be assisted.

Still, college costs are high, so I supported HB29 that offers students and parents the option to freeze tuition for four years at the rate paid when a student first enrolls there. And my SB680 creates a pilot program to help educate students about financial aid and the possible consequences of student loans.

Locally, appropriations for UT Southwestern Medical School were up \$23.9 million over 2012-13 levels. We maintained current funding levels for the University of North Texas at Dallas and for the UNT-Dallas School of Law, that's geared-up to open and accept its first class in Fall 2014. But a bill containing funding for a third UNT-Dallas building was vetoed.

Paul Quinn College is one of five Texas Historically Black Colleges and Universities that receives state money to help train teachers. The state's \$3.94 million appropriation was a \$540,000 increase.

## Health and Human Services

Texas spends healthcare dollars for those who are not capable of providing for themselves; the elderly and disabled, many in state-subsidized nursing facilities, some in assisted-living facilities, children with disabilities and those who are without health insurance. Food is also provided to needy families and individuals through several state and federal programs. Some argue that it's too much, others, not nearly enough.

So when at least one-third of state revenues are expended on health-related services, we must make every dollar count. Two re-

form-minded bills passed during this year's session look to make sure that is the case. SB7 aims to streamline the coordination of Medicaid long-term care and acute care services and to redesign the delivery of care for persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities. SB8 has the goal of identifying and stamping out fraud across Texas' health and human services system.

SB7 will expand the STAR+PLUS Texas Medicaid managed care program that serve the elderly and disabled to include coverage of rural areas. It establishes a pilot program to test cost-controlled, managed care long-term service and support delivery models.



Retired former President of the University of North Texas at Dallas, Dr. John Ellis Price was honored on the Senate floor by Sen. West. He is joined by UNT Chancellor Lee Jackson and Dr. Michael Williams-UNT Heath Science Center.

SB7 will also use managed care models, including STAR+PLUS Medicaid to provide acute care services. In addition, the Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) will implement measures that will maximize federal funding for services such as providing attendants and therapists that help the day-to-day lives of the disabled.

As early as the end of the 2015 fiscal year, the state expects to realize about \$12.55 million in savings. When SB7 is fully implemented in 2018, savings are anticipated at \$166.5 million.

SB8 targets Medicaid fraud that occurs when service providers bill for unnecessary medical procedures, most recently evidenced by a historical rise in invoices connected to cosmetic dentistry. Under SB8, the HHSC will establish a data analysis unit to monitor contracts, and detect data trends and spikes in the number of Medicaid and CHIP cases presented for payment.

Unnecessary state and federal spending has also been caused by service providers who engage in direct marketing to potential Medicaid clients. SB8 will prohibit any Medicaid or CHIP provider from influencing a recipient's choice of provider, marketing to clients solely due to their Medicaid or CHIP participation, and from making unsolicited personal client contact.

SB8 will also protect Texas from wasteful and fraudulent spending associated with non-emergency medical transport by moving to a managed system that pays a flat-rate based on the use of designated routes and delivered by HHSC-approved transit providers.

When implemented, SB8 should save Texas taxpayers more than \$14 million annually, as soon as 2014.

As a member of Senate Health and Human Services and Senate Finance, I was able to add value to the delivery of local services. NorthSTAR is the primary provider for behavioral health services for the medically indigent and Medicaid recipients here in North Texas. In a rider adding \$43 million for community health services, I worked to ensure that the funds are allocated to local mental health authorities based on per capita spending. NorthStar will receive an increase of at least \$6 million for FY14-15.

With the 83rd Session's increased emphasis on mental health, I was also able to pass SB718. Texas law already specifies the age of consent for inpatient mental health services at 16 years old. However it does not do the same for outpatient services. SB718 brings consistency to state statutes by establishing 16 as the age that a person may also consent to outpatient mental health treatment.

Over several legislative sessions since passing the initial bill establishing Kinship Care as an alternative to foster care, my work in this area has continued as more information has be-

come available. But even a relative who takes custody of a child may not be fully aware of that child's needs. My bill SB502, requires the Department of Family and Protective Services, before placing a child with a relative caregiver, to bring them together and provide the caregiver with information regarding the child's educational, medical and social history.

SB502 also raises the level of financial assistance that a relative caregiver may receive from \$1,000 for a sibling group to a maximum \$1,000 per child.

Over several hot Texas summers, we have been saddened by reports of children left in automobiles by both relatives and day care workers, too often with tragic results. HB1741 requires licensed daycare centers to install electronic safety alarms in all vehicles that are used to transport children that seat eight or more passengers. These alarms, mounted at the rear of the vehicle, will activate when the engine is turned off and drivers must walk to the rear of the vehicle to disarm them. This allows drivers to see any child who may still be inside.

## Jurisprudence

In recent years, greater awareness has come to the criminalization of Texas youth for school-related disciplinary violations. These practices were highlighted when a report, *Breaking School Rules* made national headlines, followed by Texas Appleseed's critical study of school disciplinary policies.

Texas Supreme Court Chief Justice Wallace Jefferson elevated the discussion started during his 2011 State of the Judiciary Address by assembling an interim Texas Judicial Council committee to study the impact of school discipline and school-based policing.

The result was a package of bills that will dramatically reduce the number of school-based criminal citations, and also provide resources needed to address truancy and other school disciplinary infractions.

SB393 provides much needed reforms for school-based offenses. It sounded like a great idea to some when the current system of managing school discipline and truancy problems was created. But these citations, unlike offenses adjudicated in juvenile courts, are processed by municipal and justice of the peace courts (JP) that normally have jurisdiction over adult cases. This not only allows these records to be accessed by the public, it also places a child before an adult court for a juvenile offense.

SB393 eliminates Class C citations, other than traffic offenses committed on school property, while still giving campus police the authority to take students into custody who commit violent crimes; shields juvenile records in municipal and JP courts similar to what is commonplace in Family Court; and allows violations to be satisfied through community service or tutoring.

SB1419 provides funding for counties and local schools to hire juvenile case managers as authorized under SB393. Funding totaling \$3.8 million would be generated by a \$2 fee to be added to convictions in municipal and JP court cases. Dallas County is one of a handful of Texas jurisdictions that has juvenile case managers in place.

As chairman of Senate Jurisprudence, I was also able to author and move legislation that will help Texas courts to become more efficient. Consistent with the goals of the Texas Supreme Court, SB2302 creates an e-filing system for civil case court documents. Attorneys and their clients will notice a difference also when the existing "per-document" filing fees are replaced by the new system where filing fees are levied "per case."



Mrs. Myrtis Evans Griffin has served District 23 for 21 years. She is joined by her granddaughter Keila Smith Evans with Sen. West.

## Intergovernmental Relations

Before my appointment to chair Senate Jurisprudence, I served as chairman of the Senate Committee on Intergovernmental Relations (IGR) that has oversight over housing and city and county governance. However, several IGR-related issues remain among my legislative priorities.

Under existing law, the Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs (TDHCA) has the authority to deny the applications of entities that violate state and federal rules that govern the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit program, but not other programs or funds the agency manages. SB659 authorizes TDHCA to debar developers who violate state law across all agency programs. And SB193 requires those entities who receive state and federal tax credit funds to provide independent audits to the appropriate local and state authorities.

It's been found in the aftermath of a disaster that relief is sometimes delayed by red tape, including the numerous forms that must be filled out before assistance can be provided to jurisdictions. SB171 instructs the Texas Division of Emergency Management to convene a workgroup to determine if a standardized, single application can be used.

Back in 2007, I was able to pass legislation that created urban land banks. This instrument allows cities to amass and control future uses of blighted properties or those obtained through abandonment or foreclosure. In too many urban communities, there are too few outlets that offer fresh produce and healthy food choices. This is called a food desert. My SB2840 gives the City of Dallas the ability to release land-banked properties to build grocery stores, in addition to affordable housing in areas identified as food deserts.

## Addressing Texas' water needs

Securing a stable water supply for a rapidly growing Texas is no longer a matter that can be resolved by waiting for a rainy day. It's an undertaking that calls for strategic planning, significant resources and firm commitment. In HB4 and the accompanying SJR1, Texas may have at long last reached that resolve.

HB4 creates the State Water Implementation Fund for Texas and the State Water Implementation Revenue Fund for Texas, each as a special account outside the state treasury to be administered by the Texas Water Development Board. Funding for the state's water plan will come through the issuance of revenue bonds that must be approved by voters this November. This initiative will provide Texas with a consistent long-term financing strategy to address future water needs.

## Transportation

It took the Regular Session and a third special session for the Legislature to decide how it will address a transportation funding crisis of such magnitude that the TxDOT says will require an additional \$4 billion a year just to maintain thousands of miles of existing Texas highways and keep congestion from worsening. Bond financing packages approved by the Legislature and voters in previous years have been exhausted and there is no appetite for new user fees or to raise the gas tax. To make matters worse, the federal Highway Transportation Fund could become insolvent as soon as 2014.

Early into the third special session, legislators were finally able to agree on HB1 and SJR2, measures that will allow part of the money from oil and gas taxes that currently go into the Rainy Day fund to be used for highway funding. The bill also stipulates that if the Rainy Day Fund dips below a certain level, the diversion would be discontinued until the proper Fund balance is restored. This use of the Rainy Day Fund requires voter approval. The measure will be placed on the ballot next year, November 2014.

Dallas-Fort Worth area drivers can expect to also experience the closest there can be to "good congestion" because it will be caused by construction projects throughout the region. SB1730 reauthorizes TxDOT to enter more public private partnerships, also known as Comprehensive Development Agreements (CDAs) to design, develop, finance, build, maintain or operate transportation projects.

### SB1730 authorizes projects in District 23 that include:

1. Southern Gateway (I-35 from 8th St. to I-20 and from the I-35/67 split to FM1352.)
2. Loop 9 (Outer loop from Southeast Dallas County connecting I-20 to US Hwy. 287.)

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3. Hwy. 183-Managed lanes (between Hwy.121 to the I-35E Carpenter Frwy. merge.)
4. Loop 12 project (from I-35 traveling south from Denton past I-635 to Hwy.183.)

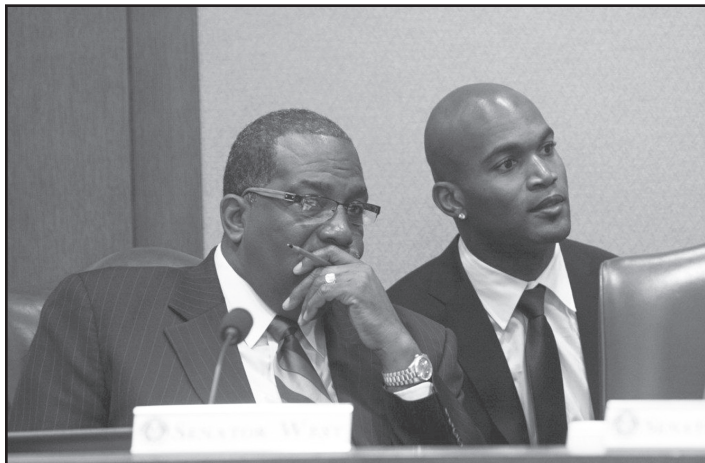
Projects have already begun on 635 and will soon start on the Horseshoe Project on I-35E near downtown and I-30W.

Beginning in 2015, an inspection sticker will no longer be issued in the state of Texas. I worked with transportation advocates on SB1350, a bill that would move Texas to a single sticker system that will electronically combine vehicle inspection with the automobile registration process. When SB1350 stalled during the regular session's final days, we were able to amend it onto HB2350.

Under this new process, the renewal notice sent for automobile registration will include information telling car owners they will have 90 days before their tags expire to have their vehicles inspected. Auto owners will pay a small fee to the inspection station. The state's portion of the inspection will be collected when drivers pick up their new registration sticker or plates. Texas joins 27 other states in converting to a single sticker system.

Toll-dodging will become much more difficult with the passage of SB1792, a bill supported by the North Texas Toll Authority (NTTA). Under this new law, any driver who has accumulated 100 or more unpaid tolls will be labeled a "habitual violator." This will allow toll authorities to 1) block automobile registration, 2) ban future toll road use by issue of a Class C ticket and 3) impound the auto of drivers who continue to use the toll road.

SB1792 went into effect June 13. But during a 90-day amnesty period, NTTA allowed scofflaw drivers the options of paying all unpaid tolls in full with no added fees, entering into a payment plan that tacked-on a 10% administrative fee, or to request a hearing. As of September 13, all penalties and fees will be added back to unpaid tolls.



Former Dallas Cowboy and Houston Texan Bradie James sits in on Jurisprudence Committee hearing. James actively supports the Dr. Emmett J. Conrad Leadership Program.

## Criminal Justice

A new mindset is helping Texas reform its system of criminal justice. While some still think that incarceration is the key to reducing high crime rates, others have realized that incarceration only stops the person incarcerated. It doesn't stop crime. That said, here's a quick look at bills passed this session that are consistent with being *smart on crime*.

SB1611 will help ensure the right to a fair trial by implementing a uniform open file discovery system in criminal cases. Under the bill, prosecutors must turn over to defense any relevant evidence, including witness lists, but not the work papers of prosecutors and investigators. Even evidence that becomes available to prosecutors at any time before during or after trial must be turned over. Open file discovery also applies to defense.

SB344 allows new evidence to be introduced post-conviction to the court on behalf of a defendant when new scientific methods become available that contradict the findings used to convict the defendant during the original trial, or on a previous appeal. The bill requires judges to determine if the defendant would have been found guilty if the new evidence had been presented at the original trial.

SB107, a bill I authored, allows a person to file an online petition for an order of non-disclosure, available on the web-

site of the Office of Court Administration, or the local county's website. The petition can also be filed by mail. Prosecutors have 45 days to object, in which case, a hearing would be set. If there is no objection, the petition is approved.

SB107 also prohibits background check companies from purchasing criminal history record files from county courts. This is a problem because when records are bought through the courts, no notice is issued to other public or private entities when an order of nondisclosure or an expunction is issued. Notice is issued only when criminal history records are purchased through DPS. Under SB107, only the subject, a criminal justice or licensing agency or authorized entities may access criminal history records from the courts.

SB1173 another of my bills, allows judges sentencing discretion in state jail felony cases. Under SB1173, the court after an assessment is performed, may order the sentence served in full or in part, or have the defendant released to community supervision. Offenders sentenced to state jail now serve the majority of their sentences. They are ineligible for parole. And since the 2003 budget cuts, treatment is no longer available. They are released with no supervision when their sentences are completed.

State jail felons are re-arrested at rates higher than persons sentenced to prison. If released to community supervision, treatment and other resources are available and better outcomes are produced. The average daily cost for state jail incarceration is \$42.90. Basic adult probation costs the state and taxpayers \$1.38 per day. Better outcomes at a lower cost equals smart on crime.

## Protecting the public...

SB1120 prohibits an apartment complex or property management company from requiring a tenant, displaced by a natural disaster - such as a tornado, hurricane or flood - to sign a new lease at a longer term than their previous lease before they can be moved to a new unit.

After a tornado hit Lancaster in April 2012, my office received calls from displaced tenants who were being forced by landlords to sign longer leases before being allowed to move into new units. SB1120 prevents that!

## Not protecting the public!

Had it passed into law, SB1247 would have provided borrowers with numerous safeguards against the high cost of payday and auto title loans. Under Texas law, in most cities, there are no limits on interest rates or the amount of fees that can be charged, or the number of times a loan can be rolled-over (refinanced). These practices trap borrowers in what is known as the "cycle of debt" when they are not able to pay the loan in full when it is due. Instead, fees are charged to renew the loan without any of the fee applied to pay down the amount borrowed.

If passed into law, SB1247 would have:

- Limited the number of times a loan could be refinanced.
- Limited the terms of a payday or auto title loan to 180 days.
- Limited the amount loaned to a percentage of the borrower's income.
- Limited the number of loans a borrower can have at one time.
- Created extended payment plans.
- Allowed local ordinances.

## Special Session(s)

During the third of the Called Special Session of the Legislature, we were able to pass legislation that will make a dent in solving Texas' future transportation needs. And yes, during the second Called Special Session, we were able to come into compliance with the U.S. Constitution regarding the manner in which Texas sentences 17 year-olds who have committed capital offenses.

But few will argue that the reason that legislators were not able to leave Austin after a 140-day Regular Session - that began with so much promise and goodwill - was all about abortions.

These controversial bills lacked the support necessary to pass during the regular session when normal procedures like the Senate two-thirds rule were in place. Provisions in the bill may cause the closure of all but a handful of facilities; all located in urban centers.

## What did your college student do this summer?

He or she could have been a member of the 20th Class of the Dr. Emmett J. Conrad Leadership Program.

For those unfamiliar with this exciting opportunity, the Dr. Emmett J. Conrad Leadership Program, since 1993, has provided paid summer employment for more than 2,100 students who live in District 23.

At our annual intern luncheon held August 14, students, employers and scholarship sponsors were recognized. This year's class had 147 interns. They were assigned to jobs at hospitals, city, county and state agencies, law, accounting and architectural firms and area corporations. For the second year, we placed an intern with the Dallas Cowboys and another with the Texas Rangers; a first!

As a Conrad intern, students gain invaluable work experience and transfer that practicum back into the classroom. Most interns remain in the program for several years, even while pursuing post-graduate degrees. Many have gained permanent employment with companies they have interned with, entities like Texas Instruments, the Texas Department of Criminal Justice, AT&T and the Texas Department of Transportation, to name a few. Three former interns are now medical students at the UT Southwestern Medical Center at Dallas.

This year's luncheon speaker was the Honorable Shirley Franklin - former Atlanta mayor and incoming visiting professor at the University of Texas - LBJ School of Public Affairs. She challenged interns telling them that the world now belongs to them and if change is to take place, they must be the ones to do it.

Information on the 2014 Dr. Emmett J. Conrad Leadership Program application process can be found at [www.conradleadership.com](http://www.conradleadership.com).



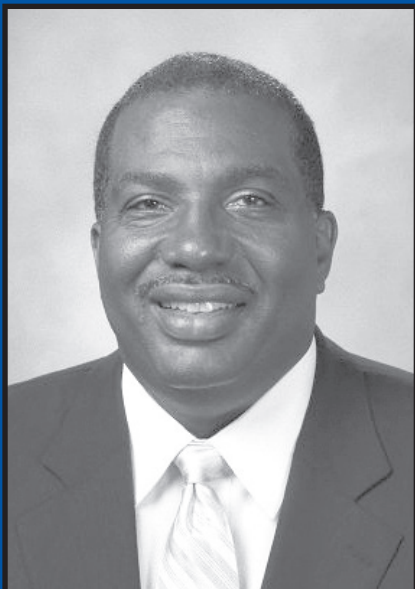
2013 Dr. Emmett J. Conrad Leadership Program

## Senator Royce West

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### HOW TO CONTACT

## Senator Royce West

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**AUSTIN:**  
P.O. Box 12068  
Austin, Texas 78711  
512/463-0123 • FAX: 512/463-0299  
Dial 711 for Relay Calls

**DALLAS:**  
2612 Main Street, Suite 100 Dallas, Texas 75226  
214/741-0123 • FAX: 214/749-7830

5787 South Hampton Rd., Suite 385 Dallas, Texas 75232  
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*"Please let me know what you think about the important issues facing our state by going to the following web addresses and filling out my on-line questionnaires. Your input counts."*

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