

Capitol Update

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Greetings from Austin!



Thank you for taking part in my new e-newsletter. I hope this newsletter will be a great way to keep you informed on the issues that are being discussed at your Capitol during the 83rd legislative session. I encourage you to keep informed on the issues being discussed before the legislature. To help make that easier, my staff and I will be sending you these updates on a regular basis. Be confident that I will maintain my commitment to low taxes and limited government, while working with other representatives to provide the essential government services you expect.

Committee Assignments Announced

Committee assignments for the 83rd Legislature were recently announced by Lieutenant Governor David Dewhurst. I was honored to learn that the Agriculture & Rural Affairs Committee I have chaired for the past couple sessions is being expanded to handle Homeland Security issues. With this expansion, the committee will oversee matters relating to immigration and border security, and will continue to focus on agriculture and rural affairs issues. As Chairman of the Agriculture, Rural Affairs, & Homeland Security Committee, I am eager and excited to continue making a difference for the state of Texas by tackling issues important to the safety and prosperity of farmers, ranchers, and all rural Texans. My other committee assignments include Vice Chairman of the Natural Resources Committee, and I will continue to serve as a member of both the Senate Committee on Finance and the Business & Commerce Committee.

The Budget: Where We Stand

On January 8, Comptroller Susan Combs released the biennial revenue estimate. The estimate is our best projection of the amount of general revenue funds the state will have to spend over the course of the two years. General revenue funds are the portion of the budget over which lawmakers have the most control. Here are some key takeaways from the biennial revenue estimate:

- It is projected the state will collect \$96.2 billion in general revenue during the 2014-15 biennium.
- Of that revenue, \$3.6 billion will be deposited in the Economic Stabilization Fund—better known as the Rainy Day Fund—which the comptroller expects will grow to \$11.8 billion by the end of fiscal year 2015.
- Additionally, \$8.8 billion of general revenue is left over from the current 2012-2013 biennium.
- Adding that all together, it's estimated Texas will have \$101.4 billion of general revenue available for the 2014-2015 biennial budget ($96.2 - 3.6 + 8.8 = 101.4$).

While this is good news and a clear sign of our state's economic health, it's important to remember these numbers represent what we think will happen. No one can predict the future. There are still seven months left in the current 2013 fiscal year and several budgetary obstacles remain from difficult decisions made during the 82nd Legislature, not to mention the mess currently unfolding in Washington D.C. During these uncertain times, I invite you to join me in continuing Texas' common sense conservative governance that has made it a national leader. By keeping taxes low, regulations reasonable and government spending in check, we can keep Texas the best place to live and do business in the United States.

School Safety Hearing

Recent events at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut and at Lone Star College in Harris County have prompted lawmakers to discuss ways that school safety can be improved in our state. As a result, on January 28, 2013, my committee, Agriculture, Rural Affairs and Homeland Security, held a joint hearing with the Senate Committee on Education to discuss this important issue. We received input from expert witnesses and members of the public, who presented a broad range of ideas and opinions on how best to address safety in Texas schools.

Among those testifying were the Texas School Safety Center, the Advanced Law Enforcement Rapid Response Training Center, the Texas Department of Public Safety, and representatives from several local school districts. Witnesses testifying generally agreed that local school boards should decide what school safety measures are best for their school district community.

This hearing reaffirmed that what works in one district may not work in another, and there really is no one-size-fits-all solution. The state's role in this discussion is to provide the school districts the resources they need to be successful in keeping our children and teachers safe.

Invoicing the Federal Government Act (SCR 6)

I'm proud to announce that I recently filed the "Invoicing the Federal Government Act" in an attempt to have Congress reimburse Texas the tax dollars that we have spent securing our state's southern border. Under the United States Constitution, the responsibility to fully maintain security of international borders falls to the federal government. However, the federal government has repeatedly refused to allocate the resources necessary to adequately fulfill this constitutional duty. Because the federal government isn't doing its job, the Texas-Mexico border has been increasingly exploited by smugglers, human traffickers, and violent drug cartels. The federal government has delayed any meaningful action on border security for too long, forcing Texans to foot the bill or face unimaginable consequences. Because of this, the financial burden to the state of Texas has been at the expense of other state services, such as education, healthcare, and critical infrastructure. During the 2012-2013 budget years, at a time of steep budget cuts to education, healthcare and other critical state services, the financial burden forced upon the state of Texas by the federal government reached \$221.6 million. Border security is a federal duty and the cost should not be borne by the citizens of Texas. This is just wrong, and because of this I am asking Congress to reimburse Texas this money.



In the next Capitol Update, I'm excited to share with you more details about the legislation I've filed so far this session. The 83rd legislature has just begun, and there is still a great deal of work to be done. I see each day in the Capitol as an opportunity to uphold the principles and policies that have made Texas great. I continue to appreciate the privilege to represent the citizens of Senate District 30, and it remains my distinct honor to serve each of you to the best of my ability.