



86th Legislative Accomplishments

The main priority of this legislative session was to repair an outdated school finance system while ensuring property tax relief. I am proud to report that the Texas Legislature passed monumental legislation providing lasting property tax relief while adding significant resources to public schools. As an appointee to the Committee on Public Education, we focused on the needs of students and teachers; Texas public schools play the defining role of educating approximately 92% of all Texas school-aged students. In this session, we provided teacher pay raises, invested billions in public education, expanded early education, and provided increased funding to retired teachers. These achievements were accomplished while providing tax rate compression and ensuring property taxes would not rise beyond growth and inflation to protect Texans from unnecessary and harmful tax hikes.

We passed a balanced budget, legislation to protect religious liberties, defended the 2nd Amendment, and maintained our commitment to securing the border.

Property Taxes and School Finance, House Bill 3 and Senate Bill 2, Working Together

The 86th Legislature saw the passage of two monumental bills, Senate Bill 2 and House Bill 3. Senate Bill 2 works with House Bill 3, which will lower local property taxes and put more money into our local schools. This is possible because House Bill 3 requires the State of Texas to pick up more of the tab for public education funding than had been the case in the last decade, as the State had increasingly relied on local property taxpayers to bear more of the burden for funding public schools. House Bill 3 puts more state money into funding our public schools and provides relief to homeowners by lowering property taxes by an average of 8 cents per \$100 valuation in 2020 and 13 cents in 2021.

Senate Bill 2, known as the Property Tax Reform and Transparency Act, requires cities, counties, and other taxing units to receive approval from voters before raising property taxes more than 3.5% in a year (formerly 8%). This provides critical transparency mechanisms that empower taxpayers and voters with a say in the property tax rate-setting process. These transparency mechanisms include online resources that disclose who is proposing rate increases, a portal to provide an opinion on the proposed rate increases, and information about public hearings. These online resources will allow Texans to evaluate how each budget decision will affect them in real time.

The Texas Taxpayer Transparency Act is a trigger that improves communication between taxing units and taxpayers. Current rollback election requirements put an unnecessary burden on taxpayers by requiring them to gather enough signatures to petition for an election. This enables voters by automatically triggering an election to ratify a property tax rate if it's raised above a certain amount (the rollback rate is 3.5% for most taxing units and 2.5% for school districts).



While there are many taxing units, county, city, school districts, etc., your local school district is the largest consumer of local property taxes.

The Texas Plan, Investing in Our Future and Transforming School Finance, House Bill 3

The legislature saw the passage of a historic school finance bill that will increase funding for public schools throughout Texas and House District 4, spending \$11.6 billion on public education and tax relief. House Bill 3, The Texas Plan, puts more than \$4.5 billion into the classroom to accelerate student achievement significantly increases the basic allotment for school districts to receive per student and increases total state funding by \$6.5 billion.

- Adds funding for full-day Pre-K for low-income students and creates programs ranging from special education to Career & Military Readiness.
- Ensures that more funds are directed to schools with a higher concentration of under-served students, such as dropouts, students in special education, and residential treatment facilities.
- Invests in and supports our teachers by providing an additional \$2 billion to compensate educators and increase the minimum salary schedule.
- Educators will receive financial support through a mandate that requires school districts to spend 30% of their new revenue on increasing employee salaries and providing funding and resources for new teachers.
- Recalculates funding formulas to focus on weighted average daily attendance and current property values, resulting in greater equity among districts and increasing allotments for fast-growth districts.
- Requires school districts to conduct efficiency audits to ensure that taxpayer dollars are used responsibly and puts safeguards in place to protect taxpayers.

With the passage of House Bill 3, students and teachers will see significant increases in funding and support to help them succeed, and taxpayers will see meaningful property tax relief.

Protect Innocent Life

The legislature continued to defend the sanctity of life by fully funding alternatives to abortion. This includes resources for pregnant women and adoptive families, and by passing House Bill 16. We passed House Bill 16, the “Born Alive Protection Act,” which protects infants who survive abortion procedures and ensures they receive the same diligent, professional medical care given to every child born in the hospital. We passed Senate Bill 22, which prohibits any taxpayer dollars that are used to fund abortion providers and prevents state and local entities from entering into a taxpayer-funded transaction or contract with abortion providers or affiliates of abortion providers. Through the state budget, we dedicated \$80 million to the Alternatives to Abortion fund, which supports over 200 pregnancy resource centers across the state.



Defend The Second Amendment

We continued to safeguard Texan's Second Amendment rights by passing legislation to protect Texans when carrying in public places while evacuating or returning to areas affected by natural disasters and who keep firearms in their residence (owned or leased). Not only are we strengthening the ability of law-abiding gun owners to carry, but we are also expanding the Second Amendment rights of Texas business owners and retired peace officers. We supported bills that protect the rights of owners and tenants of residential units to lawfully possess firearms and ammunition in their apartments or condominiums and transport them between their vehicles and residential units. We passed legislation that protects citizens from being charged with a crime for carrying a handgun while evacuating from or returning to an area subject to a mandatory order issued during a declared state or local disaster.

Secure The Border

In this session, we continued our commitment to border security. Working with House Bill 1, the Legislature has allocated \$800 million to local law enforcement and prosecutors, DPS, and many other agencies to protect our border. We passed House Bill 4306, which creates a fund to guarantee future funding of border protection and establishes studies to combat narcotics, human trafficking, and illegal entries. Keeping our borders safe is essential to ensuring that all Texans are secure. We will continue to fight for our safety.

Support Our Teachers

This session, we passed legislation to ensure that active and retired teachers are compensated for their commitment to our children. We passed Senate Bill 12, making the teacher retirement system actuarially sound by providing additional funds and protecting against premium increases for retired teachers' healthcare. We added \$524 million to the Teacher Retirement System to ensure the fund is stable and solvent. In addition, we provided \$589 million to retired teachers with additional funds through a 13th check. Finally, to protect against healthcare premium increases, \$230.8 million has been allocated to cover shortfalls in the healthcare fund.

Religious Liberty

During this session, the legislature worked to strengthen our constitutional liberties by prohibiting local governments from endangering the First Amendment freedoms of Texas citizens or businesses. We passed Senate Bill 1978, which prohibits governmental entities from using tax dollars to deny contracts, loans, licenses, or employment opportunities to a person or business over their religious beliefs. This also prevents the state and local government from targeting an individual by denying or withholding benefits or financial assistance, altering tax treatment, or causing any tax, penalty, or payment assessment against, or denying, delaying, or revoking a tax exemption.

KAUFMAN AND HENDERSON



COUNTY PRIORITIES

Kaufman County Court at Law #2

Recently reported, Kaufman County is the second fastest-growing county in Texas. Senate Bill 891 will prevent overloaded dockets and establish the judicial infrastructure for future growth. This legislation enables Kaufman County Court at Law # 1 and # 2 to address the same type of cases, prevent backlog, and move cases through the county court system more efficiently.

Increasing Efficiency at the Texas DMV

House Bill 1262 allows trailer owners to register their eligible trailers for between 1 and 5 years rather than requiring the current 1-year term. This benefits trailer owners, state agencies, and local government offices. As signed by the Governor, it is revenue neutral, as fees would be kept the same, paid in whole, in one transaction covering the entire period of up to 5 years. This would also amount to less paperwork and processing, helping increase efficiency at the state and local levels.

State Hospital Accountability

House Bill 2210 clarifies an ambiguous section of the Texas Education Code that children residing in state hospitals are exempt from campus or district accountability ratings. Removing these students from the ratings but still tracking their progress and improvement provides relief for those districts affected by this issue.

Ending Forced Annexation

House Bill 347 eliminates forced annexation statewide, giving all property owners the same right to consent to annexation. This strengthens the rights of property owners and extends them additional protections against forced annexation by state and local entities.

Rural Broadband

High-speed internet is necessary for business, government institutions, and everyday activity. Offering increased accessibility to these areas is vital for the continued economic success of our state. Senate Bill 14 increases access to broadband internet for rural areas. This will be accomplished through the help of the Texas Electric Cooperatives. By utilizing their existing electricity infrastructure, they can deploy broadband to members they serve and meet their internet needs.

COMMITTEE APPOINTMENTS

During the 86th Legislature, I was appointed to serve on the Committee on Public Education and the Committee on Criminal Jurisprudence. I was honored to have the opportunity to serve on these two important committees that affect the lives of every Texan.



The Committee on Public Education oversees jurisdiction over all matters pertaining to the public schools and the public school system of Texas and the financing thereof; the state programming of elementary and secondary education for the public school system of Texas and state agencies such as the State Board of Education and the Texas Education Agency. A total of 523 bills were referred to the Committee on Public Education on a variety of issues ranging from school finance and school safety to civics instruction in public schools. During the session, 251 bills were voted out of the committee, with House Bill 3 being one of the most important bills heard in any committee.

The Committee on Criminal Jurisprudence oversees all matters pertaining to criminal law, prohibitions, standards, and penalties; probation and parole; criminal procedure in the courts of Texas; revision or amendment of the Penal Code; and the following state agencies: the Office of State Prosecuting Attorney and the Texas State Council for Interstate Adult Offender Supervision. 328 bills were referred to the Committee on Criminal Jurisprudence this session, and 151 bills were voted out of committee. When considering bills that affect criminal law, I am proud to have highly engaged judges, attorneys, and law enforcement officials in Henderson and Kaufman County to consult on these matters.