



87th Legislative Accomplishments

The 87th Legislature passed the Texas Heartbeat Bill to abolish abortion after the detection of a fetal heartbeat and Constitutional Carry to ensure that Texans maintain their right to defend themselves and their families. Sent to the Governor, I passed House Bill 1264, an election integrity bill that expeditiously removes deceased individuals from the voter rolls to prevent fraudulent voting. The Texas Legislature passed legislation defending law enforcement, protecting religious freedom, funding our border, disaster response reform, Public Utility Commission and ERCOT reform, and rural broadband expansion; and countless other legislative solutions benefitting Texans. As a two-term member of the Public Education Committee, we ensured that our previous commitments to public education funding were met and built upon our investments in students and teachers in the great state of Texas.

Sent to the Governor to be signed into law, I passed HB 1476, ensuring vendors and suppliers are protected and compensated promptly when working with state and governmental entities. HB 3938 establishes the industry-based certification advisory council to provide guidance to public education leaders on current and future workforce needs. HB 1321 designates Highway 198 in Henderson County as Deputy Sheriff Tony Ogburn and Deputy Sheriff Paul Habelt Memorial Highway.

Protect Innocent Life

During the 87th Session, the Texas Legislature renewed its commitment to protecting the sanctity of life. Senate Bill 8, the Texas Heartbeat Act, prohibits abortions after a fetal heartbeat is detected. With a fetal heartbeat being detectable as early as six weeks, this is a major advancement in the prohibition timeline previously at 20 weeks. House Bill 1280 would immediately prohibit abortions in Texas if the U.S. Supreme Court overturns the controversial *Roe v. Wade* decision. We also allocated \$100 million to the state's Alternatives to Abortion program. I was proud to coauthor SB 8 and HB 1280; two of the most important pro-life bills in Texas history. Protecting the rights of future Texans is of the utmost importance and this session the Texas Legislature prioritized the need to honor every one's God-given right to life.

Defend the Second Amendment

The 87th Legislature took a strong stance on gun rights after seeing Texan's overwhelmingly express the desire to protect themselves during the pandemic. We continued to safeguard Texan's Second Amendment rights this session with multiple bills. House Bill 1927, The Firearm Carry Act, ensures that all law-abiding Texans, 21 years and older, are permitted to carry a handgun. This Constitutional Carry bill clarifies previous laws to defend gun owners and makes it easier for Texans to protect their families. We also passed House Bill 2622 to make Texas a Second Amendment Sanctuary State, protecting Texans' right to carry from federal overreach. The



legislature passed countless other protections for gun owners and the industry, defending gun sales during declared disasters and prohibiting discrimination against firearm industries. The legislature also passed Senate Concurrent Resolution 20, recognizing the 1847 Colt Walker pistol as the official handgun of the State of Texas. Texans have a right to protect themselves and their families, especially during disasters.

Protect Religious Liberty

During the pandemic, we saw repeated infringement on religious liberty by elected officials. Faith and liberty should never be threatened. This session, we responded to this injustice by passing multiple bills to protect religious freedom. Senate Joint Resolution 27 proposes a constitutional amendment to prevent the state from prohibiting or limiting religious services. Texans will have the opportunity to vote on this amendment to our Constitution in the fall of 2021. House Bill 1239 prohibits any governmental entity from issuing an order or passing an ordinance that would close houses of worship. HB 525 establishes religious organizations as essential businesses in an emergency declaration. SB 581 preserves private property owners' right to religious expression by prohibiting homeowner associations from adopting restrictive rules to remove religious displays on a homeowner's property. Texans faced extreme challenges over the last year and supporting our faith communities through these difficult times is vital.

Ensure Election Integrity

After the 2020 elections, many Texans expressed a lack of confidence in the integrity of our elections. Election integrity is the backbone of our democracy. This prompted the Texas Legislature to deliver on several important election integrity bills. I authored and passed HB 1264, to ensure that individuals who die are expeditiously removed from the voter rolls to ensure that their identities cannot be used to vote fraudulently. We also passed HB 574 to increase the penalties for conducting fraudulent activity in elections. The bill would make statute consistent by elevating some current election-related offenses from misdemeanors to felonies and would appropriately punish individuals who committed election fraud. Election fraud has no place in the United States, and certainly no place in Texas.

ERCOT and PUC Reform

After millions of Texans were left in the cold and dark because of massive energy failures, the Texas Legislature went to work to ensure that this does not happen again. During the regular session, we ensured that there were sweeping reforms made to ERCOT and the Public Utility Commission. Senate Bill 3 provides for the preparation of, prevention of, and response to extreme weather emergencies and extended power outages. This includes new requirements and penalties for the PUC, ERCOT, the Railroad Commission, Texas Department of Emergency Management, and Texas Commission on Environmental Quality. Senate Bill 2 addresses the operations of the



PUC and ERCOT, reforming the board to require that all ERCOT board members are residents in Texas and have a stake in the Texas electricity market and improving emergency communications systems. I was proud to support these bills and many others to ensure that there is increased transparency, accountability and reliability in our energy management.

Though much was done to reform these boards and ensure that there is accountability in leadership and changes to winterization requirements, there is a lot of work to be done to fix the issue of capacity that our grid is still unprepared for. As public servants, we have heard many ideas on how to tackle this issue and we must bring these options to professionals in the field to provide long term solutions for our electrical needs. These issues are complex and the State Legislature must create legislation that will ensure our grids are reliable and capable of supporting our state's growing population. I am committed to making sure that these issues are fixed to prevent future disruptions.

Secure the Border

During this session, we continued our commitment to border security. Working in conjunction with Senate Bill 1, the Legislature allocated \$800 million to local law enforcement and prosecutors, DPS, and many other agencies to protect our border, bringing the total allocation for border security to more than \$1 billion - the highest amount of funding for border security in Texas history. Additionally, I was proud to support Governor Abbott's Operation Lone Star, a joint operation between the Department of Public Safety and the National Guard to combat the smuggling of people and drugs into Texas. After the legislative session, Governor Abbott announced the state's dedication to ensuring that the border wall is completed and that resources are provided to border cities and law enforcement to assist in the humanitarian crisis at our southern border. Though border security is the federal government's responsibility, Texas will not allow the administration's failures to endanger the lives of Texans and will not sit idly by as this crisis grows. I am proud to support the most robust and comprehensive border plan the nation has ever seen.

Public Education

As a lifelong learner and advocate for public education, I was proud of our work this session to renew our commitment to supporting Public Education in Texas. At the outset of this legislative session, many individuals were concerned that a predicted budget deficit would lead to cuts to previous increases in spending for public education. However, we prioritized our students and teachers this session and ensured that previous funding levels created by House Bill 3 were met with House Bill 1525 and exceeded with funding from the state and federal funds. As a two-term member of the House Public Education Committee, I was very proud of our work to support students and teachers in Texas.



HB 3 was a massive school finance reform bill from the 86th Legislative Session. Legislation of this size requires follow-up to ensure that their implementation is effective. HB 1525 worked to improve HB 3 and build upon school finance and funding reform, and it was one of the most important bills passed this session, with roughly \$2.3 billion tied into it. We allocated \$46.5 billion to public education, adding to key areas such as programs to help students and schools affected by the pandemic, supplemental special education services, and delivering \$11 billion in Federal CARES Act funding directly to schools. The state also upheld its commitment to retired teachers by increasing their contribution rates in the Teacher Retirement System and increasing funds by \$39.5 million to maintain current health insurance premiums and benefits for our retired teachers through TRS-Care. Senate Bill 1365 was another important bill to provide our students with the best education possible and examine the importance of local control. SB 1365 updates performance standards for schools at risk of being placed in the conservatorship of TEA and ensures that children do not fall further behind due to the pandemic.

Our Texas Public Schools experienced one of the most difficult years in history and will need our continued support as they move forward and access their needs after the pandemic. In the interim, my colleagues and I look forward to continuing to work on behalf of Texas students.

The State Budget

The Texas Legislature spent countless hours negotiating and determining the budget for this biennium. Senate Bill 1 provides a conservative framework to address Texas' growing needs while also addressing the Legislature's commitment to public education, infrastructure, security, and Texans' health. Careful spending is essential to balance the budget, limit government, and provide relief to taxpayers. Senate Bill 1 appropriates \$248.5 billion total, a reduction of \$13.5 billion from the last budget, including \$46.5 billion for Texas schools, \$34.2 billion for healthcare, and \$1 billion for border security. The budget remains under all four spending limits--the debt, welfare, pay-as-you-go, and spending limits. In addition, our state budget offers \$5.2 billion in property tax relief. Texas is tightening its belt to give tax-payers a break while ensuring that vital programs for our state are still funded.

Kaufman and Henderson County Priorities

Honoring Fallen Henderson County Sheriffs

During this session, I had the opportunity to file a bill to honor two heroes from Henderson County. On Thursday, May 17, 2007, Henderson County Deputy Sheriffs Tony Ogburn and Paul Habelt were shot and killed while responding to a domestic violence call in the Payne Springs Community of Henderson County. Both officers were veterans of the United States Army and continued to



serve their community and country through their service in Henderson County. House Bill 1321 designates a portion of Texas State Highway 198 in Henderson County as the Tony Ogburn and Paul Habelt Memorial Highway. Deputy Sheriffs Ogburn and Habelt sacrificed everything for the safety of our community, and their legacy deserves to be honored for generations to come. Our law enforcement officers risk their lives for us daily; the least we can do is recognize their service and sacrifice.

Workforce Development

The future of our workforce is of the utmost importance to our state as a whole, especially rural communities. Many sectors of our economy are hurting workers, and our students must be provided with opportunities for programs that will make them most successful in our state economy. I filed House Bill 3938 to ensure that our students receive educational and career courses to prepare them for our workforce needs. HB 3938 establishes the industry-based certification advisory council to better align career and technology education programs with current and future workforce needs. The advisory council includes members representing employers, career and technology educators, Texas State Technical College, and public junior and community colleges across the state. Our students deserve the best preparation for their futures, and our economy will benefit from students trained in programs that our state is reliant on.

Defending Law Enforcement

After a year in which our law enforcement officers were under-appreciated and overworked, we went to work to ensure that our local law enforcement officers will be protected from movements that threaten their resources and the safety of our community. This session, we passed House Bill 1900 to prevent cities from acting on calls to "defund the police." The officers who risk their lives daily to keep our communities safe deserve our appreciation and support. Risking the safety of our community or our law enforcement officers by cutting funding to their efforts to protect our community is unacceptable. I was proud to co-author HB 1900 and will continue to support our law enforcement officers. Additionally, during this session, we passed HB 9 and HB 1938 to continue showing our support for emergency operators and law enforcement across the state. HB 9 penalizes protestors and rioters who block or prevent emergency vehicles from performing their duties, while HB 1938 creates a grant program to help law enforcement agencies cover the costs of storing body-worn camera footage.

Rural Broadband

During the last year, we have seen the need for access to broadband in our rural communities. Without access to high-speed broadband, many individuals in rural communities lose out on job opportunities, access to telemedicine treatment, remote learning, and to purchase or find goods and services. This session, we passed House Bill 5 to ensure that individuals in rural communities have every opportunity that high-quality internet provides. HB 5 creates the Broadband



Development program to award grants, low-interest loans, and other financial incentives to expand broadband access to and adoption. I was proud to co-author HB 5 because rural communities need increased accessibility for quality of life and the continued economic success of our state.

Special Sessions

HB 9, Additional Border Security Appropriations - Creates additional appropriations relating to border security, specifically the Texas Military Department, Department of Public Safety, Department of Criminal Justice, Commission on Jail Standards, TruSTeED Programs within the Office of the Governor, Department of State Health Services, and Border Security Reporting Requirements.

HB 20, Social Media Disclosures - To bring transparency, this bill requires a social media platform to publicly disclose on an accessible website how the platform selects the content users see and what sorts of content it allows. It also requires a social media platform to implement an easily accessible complaint procedure for users to submit a complaint regarding illegal content or the platform's allegedly wrongful content removal. The bill would also require the platform to investigate any report of illegal content within 48 hours of receipt of a complaint and allow a user whose content has been removed to file a complaint and receive feedback and a review of that removal decision. Under this bill, a social media site of over 50 million users is prohibited from censoring a person or the content that person posts based on the person's viewpoint or the viewpoint expressed in the post. If the site does block or restrict a user based on viewpoint, that user can file suit against the site to get back online and make the site pay their attorney's fees. Alternatively, the attorney general's office can bring suit on behalf of a user or group of users.

SB 1, Election Integrity - This legislation strengthens poll watcher protection, bringing about transparency by utilizing technology throughout the electoral process, limiting the most common fraudulent practices and opportunities for fraudulent practices, and providing better and more timely evidence in investigations into alleged voter fraud. S.B. 1 amends current laws relating to election integrity and security, including preventing fraud in the conduct of elections in this state, increasing criminal penalties, and creating criminal offenses.

SB 4, Abortion Drugs & Reporting - Current Texas law does little to regulate drugs used in drug-induced abortions. Due to their potentially harmful impact, these drugs are in the United States Food and Drug Administration's Risk Evaluation Mitigation Strategies special program. If this classification were to change, Texas could not maintain these safety standards until the legislature convenes. S.B. 4 creates a state standard for the use of these drugs, which closely matches those set forth by the current FDA. Also, by creating a state standard, the state will have a mechanism to track these drugs' health and safety impacts with data reported to state agencies.

SB 7, TRS 13th Check - Provides for a one-time supplemental payment to eligible TRS retirees.



SB 8, Homestead Benefits - Allows homeowners the benefit of the homestead exemption to their property taxes in the year they acquire the property and protects school districts against the resulting loss in revenue.