



88th Legislative Accomplishments

The 88th Legislative Session adjourned, delivering critical conservative victories to the state. Your state legislature invested in border security and retired teachers, saved women's sports, protected children from gender modification and explicit materials, ensured increased felony penalties for election fraud, fully funded the rebuilding of the Terrell State Hospital, and created the 3rd District Court in Kaufman County.

Due to the federal government's complete and utter failure, Texas stepped in by spending \$4.6B through House Bill 7 on border security for extraordinary hospital, police, court, and jail costs in our border counties and empowering our local governments with the resources to tackle the problem head-on. Senate Bill 10 sets aside \$5B for tenure-based adjustments and future increases for our retired teachers. SB 30 provided \$573M to construct a 250-bed replacement campus at Terrell State Hospital, and HB 3474 created the 489th Judicial District Court in Kaufman County.

Sent to the Governor to be signed into law, I passed House Bills 679, 2518, and 3485, ensuring protections for construction contractors and vendors. SB 821 ensures that citizens' data privacy is protected. SB 2192 guarantees that sufficient advance notice of intent is given to a county before the creation of a Municipal Utility District (MUD).

Retired Teacher's Cost of Living Adjustment

In this session, the Texas Legislature made a vital commitment to support our retired teachers by passing Senate Bill 10, the first cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) since 2013. Senate Bill 10 delivers a COLA for Texas retired teachers while ensuring the Teacher Retirement System (TRS) pension fund remains sustainable for the next generation. Beginning in 2024, the bill supplies retired teachers with a one-time, upfront cost-of-living increase based on retirement years, with a \$5,000 cash payment for the state's oldest retirees. SB 10 will also offer a 2-6% COLA for retirees. With 96% of TRS retirees ineligible for Social Security benefits and given the record budget surplus, it was time for us to prioritize and fulfill this vital need for our esteemed retired educators.

Secure the Border

This legislative session marked a historic commitment to border security in Texas, allocating a record \$5.1 billion to safeguard the TX-Mexico border in alignment with Senate Bill 1. Amid federal inaction, we took decisive measures to protect Texans through various legislative actions. SB 22 established Rural Law Enforcement Grant Programs for qualifying Sheriff, Constable, and Prosecutor's offices; SB 602 expanded the authority of U.S. Border Patrol agents who completed a DPS training program to include arrest, search, and seizure at border checkpoints and points of entry for felony offenses under Texas law; SB 1484 created a border operations training program



through DPS for peace officers employed by local law enforcement agencies along the border; and SB 1900 designated Mexican cartels as foreign terrorist organizations within Texas, enhancing penalties for associated crimes. I was honored to co-author House Bill 6, escalating penalties for fentanyl-related offenses. Together, these actions constitute the most robust and comprehensive border plan our nation has ever witnessed, and I am proud to support it.

Ensure Election Integrity

Election integrity is the cornerstone of our democratic principles, a truth recognized by citizens throughout Texas. Responding to the call for more transparent and secure electoral processes, the Texas Legislature took decisive action to uphold the integrity of our democracy. This commitment is reflected in the passage of House Bill 1243, a crucial piece of legislation that returns the penalty for voter fraud to a felony level, underscoring the gravity of such an offense. Additionally, House Bill 5180 was enacted to ensure public trust by providing public inspection of ballots 60 days following an election. Election fraud undermines the very foundations of our government. With this understanding, we say with clear conviction that election fraud has no place in the United States and, most assuredly, no place in Texas.

Defend the Second Amendment

The 88th Legislature continued safeguarding Texan's Second Amendment rights this session by passing multiple bills. House Bill 3137 strengthens Texas' pre-emption laws by preventing local governmental entities from being able to require owners of firearms to license their firearms or from imposing any liability insurance requirements on firearm owners HB 2837, the Second Amendment Financial Privacy Act, prohibits financial institutions from using merchant codes to track, report, or disclose law purchases of firearms, ammunition, and accessories. With nearly 98% of mass shootings occurring in 'gun-free' zones since 1950 and public entities like parks and libraries exploiting loopholes by designating themselves as 'educational institutions', HB 1760 now narrowly defines educational institutions, allowing more Texans to be their own first line of defense. Texans have a constitutional right to protect themselves and their families.

Pro-Life. Pro-Family.

This legislature strengthened its commitment to protecting the sanctity of life and fortifying the core of our society – the family unit. Senate Bill 24 allocated a substantial \$40 million increase to the state's Alternatives to Abortion program, House Bill 12 extended Medicaid coverage for mothers from two months postpartum to 12 months, and Senate Bill 379 added maternity clothes, feminine hygiene products, diapers, baby wipes, baby bottles, and breast milk pumping products to a list of items that are not taxed in Texas. These bills reaffirm the belief that being pro-life goes beyond rhetoric - it means being pro-family, pro-women, and pro-children.

Protecting Texas Children



Legislation that protects Texas children is paramount to the well-being of our state's future, ensuring a safe, nurturing environment that fosters growth and development. House Bill 3 requires at least one armed security officer to be present on every school campus to ensure campuses are monitored and protected, requires school employees who regularly interact with children to complete evidence-based mental health first-aid training, and provides \$15,000 annually to fund school safety measures. HB 18, The SCOPE (Securing Children Online Through Parental Empowerment) Act, requires online platforms to first obtain parental consent before collecting and processing the data of 13 to 17-year-olds in Texas and creates multiple tools for parents to have more say over the way that data is shared. The READER (Restricting Explicit Adult Designated Educational Resources) Act, or HB 900, eliminates sexually explicit books from public school libraries by ensuring book vendors are held accountable for selling explicit content to schools. Senate Bill 593 addresses concerns with the oversight and coordination of the foster care system by requiring an independent third party to conduct an assessment and recommend how the state may streamline regulations that prioritize child safety and reduce barriers to entry for child placing agencies, residential child-care facilities, foster families, kinship families, and adoptive families. Finally, SB 12 creates civil penalties for commercial business controllers who allow a sexually oriented performance to occur in front of a child. A person who engages in a sexually oriented performance can also be charged with a Class A misdemeanor.

Save Women's Sports

Senate Bill 15, The Save Womens' Sports Act, ensures equality and the continued opportunity for Texas women to participate in college-level athletic programs. Over 50 years ago, Congress authorized Title IX, which gave young women unprecedented opportunities previously denied to compete athletically for scholarships, awards, and records. Senate Bill 15 will preserve the opportunities provided by Title IX by preventing biological males from endangering female athletes, taking girls' spots on teams, breaking girls' hard-earned records, and unfairly putting girls' athletic scholarships at risk.

Banning DEI in Public Higher Education

Texas higher education institutions should focus on intellectual inquiry, academic freedom, and intellectual diversity. As visiting scholars are shouted down on public campuses, and professors double down on their support of critical race theory and other divisive topics, it is clear that action must be taken to reform. Senate Bill 17 seeks to remove DEI offices and their subsequent hiring practices and training in higher education. The bill sets forth that higher education institutions cannot have an office that engages in hiring, implements policies, conducts training about, or provides preferential treatment based on race, sex, color, or ethnicity. Additionally, institutions would be unable to hire 3rd party contractors to be their DEI office – so there are no loopholes. Higher education institutions would also be unable to compel, require, induce, or solicit persons to provide DEI statements nor give preferential status to those who do.



Prohibiting Gender Modification

Senate Bill 14 joins other laws to safeguard children from harmful, life-altering situations. This bill delivers a compassionate solution that will ensure children are protected from medically unnecessary, irreversible gender modification treatments. Doctors must be held to their oath to “do no harm.” Children are not prepared to make life-altering decisions about their gender or bodies, and doctors should not encourage or medically act in a way that will permanently alter a child’s body. The Children’s Gender Protection (CGPA) Act is a compassionate solution that recognizes the continuing evolution of a child in adolescence. This legislation provides a common-sense prohibition on therapies and medical procedures to alter a child’s gender before they are legally adults.

Property Tax Relief

Skyrocketing property taxes have become unaffordable for too many residents in this state. Texas taxpayers need real property tax relief and for the state to make much-needed improvements to the property appraisal system. Over the past several sessions, the Texas House has been dedicated to reforming the property tax system in Texas and relieving Texans of evergrowing property taxes. During the second special session of the 88th Legislature, the House and Senate agreed on a property tax relief plan to deliver the largest property tax cut in Texas history. The new property tax relief plan represents a significant win for providing relief to Texas property owners and reflects the commitment of Texas leaders to address the concerns of taxpayers and provide significant relief from the burden of escalating property taxes.

The passage of Senate Bills 2 and 3 allocates \$18 billion for tax relief policies. First, SB 2 further reduces school districts' maximum compressed rates by 10.7 cents. This provides an additional \$7.6 billion of state money into public education funding by further compressing ISD tax rates for ALL property owners. Along with what was appropriated in the State Budget, this amounts to nearly \$13 billion in total compression. Second, this bill increases the mandatory ISD homestead exemption from \$40,000 to \$100,000, meaning homestead owners will have \$100,000 of home value that is not taxable. With the additional \$10,000 exemption that seniors and the disabled receive, they will have \$110,000 of home value not taxed. SB 2 also makes historic reforms to the appraisal system that has been advocated for all session. For the first time in history, this bill will ensure that non-homestead properties valued at \$5 million or less have predictability by capping their taxable value to 20% per year for the next three years. This limit will provide stability for small and medium-sized businesses that have struggled with double and triple-digit increases in the last few years. Lastly, SB 2 will ensure that our Central Appraisal Districts are more accountable and transparent to taxpayers by creating three elected members to the CAD board of directors for counties with a population of 75,000 and larger. It also will provide a petition option for appraisal board candidates instead of a filing fee. For business tax relief, SB 3



doubles the current exemption from paying the franchise tax to \$2.47 million and removes the requirement to file a no-tax due franchise tax return.

House Joint Resolution 2 will be placed on the upcoming November ballot as a proposition to Texas voters that, if passed, will amend the state constitution to authorize the state legislature to move forward with the above improvements in Senate Bill 2.

Texans need — and deserve — meaningful, predictable, lasting property tax relief. Whatever action we take on property tax relief must apply to all property owners in Texas — not just homeowners. The combined Senate and House plan provides a hybrid solution that would benefit homeowners, as well as small businesses in our communities and everyone else who owns property. Reducing property taxes, providing relief to small business owners, and reforming our appraisal system will ensure economic growth and prosperity, and this agreement is a significant victory for all Texans.

Kaufman and Henderson County Priorities

Terrell State Hospital

After a five-year, long-fought battle, the 88th Legislature approved \$573 million in its budget to construct a much-needed 250-bed replacement campus at Terrell State Hospital (TSH). After countless meetings and correspondence with officials from the City of Terrell, the Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC), and other critical stakeholders, the funding for this capital project has finally been appropriated. The 250-bed replacement campus includes 50 maximum security beds, 140 forensic beds, 35 adolescent beds, and 25 civil beds and will become a vital part of the continuum of mental health recovery services in the region, addressing important unmet needs for inpatient treatment of those suffering from serious mental illness. Challenges facing the aging facilities in Terrell are exacerbated by the state's growing need for space to provide treatment for the acutely mentally ill caused by population growth and an increase in mentally ill inmates. The Terrell State Hospital design phase will start this year, with construction beginning in Fall 2024.

3rd District Court

I am proud to announce the successful creation of the 3rd District Court, also known as the 489th Judicial District Court, in Kaufman County. It is a significant achievement that will enhance the local judicial system and improve access to justice for county residents. This milestone was made possible through the passage of House Bill 3474, signed into law by Governor Greg Abbott on June 13, 2023. The creation of the 3rd District Court marks a significant advancement for Kaufman County's justice system. This new court will help to alleviate the burden on the two other existing district courts, allowing for a more expedient and effective resolution of cases. Ultimately, the new court will contribute to the fair and timely administration of justice, fostering a stronger and more accessible legal system for all the residents of Kaufman County.



Rural Broadband

Without access to high-speed broadband, many individuals in rural communities lose out on job opportunities, access to telemedicine treatment, remote learning, and the ability to purchase or find goods and services. This session, we passed House Bill 9, which establishes the Texas Broadband Infrastructure Fund, expanding the state's framework for improving broadband connectivity across the state by overseeing the state's broadband development program. The legislature would have guidance over the appropriations of the new fund and maintain flexibility to address evolving technology and consumer needs. Texas voters would sign off on this proposal on the November ballot - if approved, \$5 billion will be dedicated to this effort.

Law Enforcement Pay Increase

In many of our smaller Texas counties, law enforcement agencies grapple with high caseloads and stretched resources, an issue that often leads to delays in justice. Senate Bill 22 gives targeted grants to qualified county sheriff's offices, prosecutors' offices, and constable offices in counties with a population of 300,000 or less. These grants are tiered based on county size, allowing larger counties to receive more funding. This legislation allocates grant money for essential resources such as additional officers on the road, jailers, equipment purchases, and other crucial needs. By addressing the challenges in hiring and retaining competent attorneys in these rural counties, SB 12 represents a vital step in ensuring that justice does not become bogged down by unmanageable caseloads but continues to move efficiently and fairly for all Texans.

Special Sessions

SB 4 - 88(3), Additional Border Security - raises the mandatory minimum sentences for human smuggling and the operation of a stash house. It increases the penalties for smuggling persons, the operation of a stash house, or evading arrest or detention. SB 4 also proposes a 10-year minimum sentence across the board for these offenses, with certain enhancements that can provide for a 15-year minimum.

SB 7 - 88(3), COVID-19 Protections - prevents employers in Texas from adopting a policy requiring the COVID-19 vaccine as a condition of employment. SB 7 also prevents an employer from taking adverse action against an employee, contractor, or applicant for employment or applicant for a contract position for their refusal to receive the COVID-19 vaccine.

SB 3 - 88(4), Border Security & Colony Ridge - appropriates \$1.5 billion to the Office of the Governor's Trusteed Programs (OOG) to construct, operate, and maintain border barrier infrastructure. In addition, SB 3 includes \$40 million for border security operations, including



overtime expenses and costs due to increased law enforcement presence in the Colony Ridge development in Liberty County.

SB 4 - 88(4), Border Entry - creates illegal entry and reentry offenses. Under SB 4, a person would commit a class B misdemeanor (up to 180 days in jail and/or a maximum fine of \$2,000) if the person entered or attempted to enter the state from a foreign nation at any location other than a lawful port of entry. The offense would be a state-jail felony (180 days to two years in a state jail and an optional fine of up to \$10,000) if the defendant had been previously convicted of illegal entry from a foreign nation.