



House District 1 - Bowie, Franklin, Lamar & Red River counties
District & Capitol Interim Report
April 2016

Around House District 1. Kudos to Roxton ISD. The Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA) recently informed Roxton ISD (RISD) officials that the district earned the department's *Perfect Peach Award* for outstanding participation in the 2015 Local Products Challenge. The district earned this distinction by serving Texas agricultural products as part of three or more school meal components. Congratulations to all of the staff at RISD for making the extra effort to help their students eat healthier and develop life-long healthy eating habits.

Leaders of Tomorrow. On April 13th, I met with Mount Vernon high school juniors that were selected by their teachers as having leadership qualities, to discuss management skills and developing a path to a thriving professional career. The students had the opportunity to ask questions regarding everything from my time as a young professional to the legislative process and the responsibilities I hold as a state representative. The afternoon was a great meeting, and I can definitely see our future is safe with these hardworking students.



Rep. VanDeaver with the Mount Vernon ISD's Leaders of Tomorrow.

NETEX Rail Division. On April 22nd, I met with Northeast Texas Rail leadership to discuss the much needed rail rehabilitation. The NETEX rail line runs through a rural, six-county region northeast of the Dallas - Ft. Worth metroplex and serves as the main mode of freight transportation for the region. Not only is the corridor vital for today's transportation needs but even more so for the future for freight movements in Texas. As the 85th legislative session approaches, many more funding discussions will occur regarding this issue.



Lamar County comes to Austin. On April 19 & 20, representatives from Lamar County were at the Capitol to receive briefings from statewide officials, including from the comptroller about concerns facing our state as a result of the depressed price of oil. I had the pleasure of speaking with the group and was glad to have them stop by our Capitol office. Lamar County, during legislative sessions, also comes to Austin and hosts a luncheon on the Capitol grounds that is attended by 100s of legislators, staff and visitors. Lamar County, thank you!

Around the Capitol. License to carry. The Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS) recently informed my office that some Texans are experiencing a delay in receiving their license to carry (LTC) a handgun. DPS is provided, by statute, up to 60 days to issue an original LTC a handgun and 45 days to issue a renewal license. Please note that these time periods are calculated from the time a fully complete application and all supporting documents are received. DPS provided their website link (see below) so constituents can check on the requirements and necessary documentation needed for a LTC prior to submitting an application:

<http://www.dps.texas.gov/rsd/chl/applicantreminder.htm>. An original application must include: a completed application form with electronic fingerprints; the Certificate of Training (CHL-100); and any required supporting documentation. Renewal applications must include a completed application form along with any necessary supporting documents. From December 2015 through February 2016, DPS experienced a 139 percent increase from the same period the year before.



Main Street Community. The application period is now open for the Texas Historical Commission's (THC) Texas Main Street Program, which is a revitalization program for historic downtowns and neighborhood commercial districts. The program stimulates private sector downtown reinvestment, and helps retain, expand and recruit businesses while also creating new jobs in Texas. Optional letters of intent are due to THC by May 13, and applications are due July 29. More information can be found at www.thc.state.tx.us/mainstreet.

Interim committee meetings. Appropriations. On April 19th, the full House Appropriations Committee met to discuss two interim charges: 1) evaluate potential fiscal policy challenges or economic disruptions including the long-term impact of price declines in oil and gas on the Texas economy; and 2) monitor the accumulation of available funds within the Economic Stabilization Fund (ESF), a.k.a. the Rainy Day Fund, particularly in light of the passage of House Bill 903 (84R). The committee heard testimony from the Legislative Budget Board, which develops budget and policy recommendations for legislative appropriations, and several individuals from the Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts agency. Comptroller Glen Hegar stressed despite continuous low oil and gas prices, the Texas economy is doing well. Sales tax revenue grew 2.1% from March 2015 to March 2016, which is proof of the economy's durability. The state's budget will not be as plentiful as the 84th session, but the downturn effect of oil prices may not be as bad as some anticipate.

On April 20th, the House Appropriations subcommittee on Articles I, IV & V met to hear invited and public testimony on interim charge 6 (partial): Monitor the implementation of House Bill 9 (84R) and study updated projections towards actuarial soundness of the Employees Retirement



System. Examine issues and costs associated with granting a cost of living adjustments or “13th Checks” to retired state employees. An individual gave an example of retirees having to get their groceries from local food banks, as they cannot afford to buy groceries after escalating living and healthcare costs. Looking for solutions, Texas lawmakers may be able to tap into the state's Rainy Day Fund, or the governor could declare the unfunded liability an "emergency." Under such an emergency declaration, Article 16, Sec. 67 (b)(3) of the Texas Constitution allows the legislature to appropriate additional funding necessary to fully fund the benefits as authorized by law.

In May, there will be two interim meetings of the House Committee on Public Education. The committee will hear testimony on May 3, on its charge to "examine partnerships between higher education institutions, public school districts, and workforce that promote postsecondary readiness." The committee will take up additional charges on May 11, including reviewing current policies and rules to protect students from inappropriate teacher-student relationships and examining the accessibility to broadband services for schools, libraries, and institutions of higher education. Also, there will be a House Appropriations Committee Article III subcommittee meeting at Texas Southern University to discuss community college funding on May 5th. On May 18th, the full House Appropriations Committee will meet to examine Texas constitutional spending limits compared to limits utilized in other states. You can always follow hearings and legislative activities at <http://www.capitol.texas.gov/>.

Scholarship Opportunity. I am pleased to be able to inform you about the Texas Armed Services Scholarship Program (TASSP) that allows me, as a state representative, to nominate one student from my House District to receive a scholarship. This program is designed to encourage students to become members of our armed forces and help pay some of their college expenses. A student must meet specific eligibility criteria in order to receive an initial scholarship award. In addition to the eligibility criteria, a student must enter



into an agreement requiring a four-year commitment as a member of the Texas Army National Guard, Texas Air National Guard, Texas State Guard, U.S. Coast Guard, U.S. Merchant Marine or a commissioned officer in any branch of the armed services of the United States. Student resumes should be sent to my legislative director, Madison Stewart-madison.stewart@house.texas.gov, no later than July 1st. Final determination of the award amount will be made by the Texas Higher Education Coordination Board on September 9, 2016 for the 2016-2017 academic year. Students may receive up to four years of scholarship awards. Further information can be found at: <http://www.hhloans.com/index.cfm?ObjectID=8FB593C7-EE1E-7872-00A8808886543AEE>

My office is here to help. I thank each of you for letting me serve you as your state representative. Please contact either the District office (903-628-0361) or Capitol office (512-463-0692) if there is anything you think we can do to help you.