



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

Around House District 1. Early voting underway. Runoff elections to finally decide the winners from the March 1 primaries began Monday, May 16, and runs through Friday, May 20. Polls will be open from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m.; contact your local county registrar's office for polling places. Polls will be open from 7 a.m. - 7 p.m. on Election Day, May 24.



Texarkana's Spring Lake Park "Walk through History" Trail. My office recently received information from the Texas Parks & Wildlife Department (TPWD) that the city of Texarkana's Spring Lake Park "Walk through History" Trail Recreational Trail Grant Application is being recommended for funding. The TPWD Commission will take a final vote on this application on May 26. If approved, the city will receive approximately \$130,000 to create a new trail loop while renovating an existing segment of the trail and adding benches and signage.

Letter of support. Earlier this month, I submitted a letter of support to the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) for the city of Texarkana's nature restoration project to mitigate the damages associated with the release of hazardous substances around the former Kerr-McGee Chemical Corporation wood treatment facility. The city is seeking \$20 million for the Watershed Restoration Project to work with Texas A&M University - Texarkana, Texarkana Community College and the Liberty-Eylau ISD to create a living wetland laboratory that integrates with local STEM educational programs at all local schools.

Stakeholder meeting - proposed watermaster for Sulphur River and Cypress Creek basins. As mentioned in my March 2016 e-newsletter, the TCEQ announced that it was studying the Sulphur and Cypress Creek River Basins to see if either one of these river basins needs to have a watermaster appointed. A stakeholder meeting has been scheduled on June 7, at 6 p.m., at the Mount Pleasant Civic Center (Main Hall East), 1800 N. Jefferson Street in Mount Pleasant. Comments about appointing a watermaster can be submitted to TCEQ through June 24. Comments can be mailed to TCEQ at the Watermaster Section MC 160, P.O. Box 13087, Austin, Texas 78711-3087 or e-mailed to watermaster@tceq.texas.gov.



Memorial Day. This year, Memorial Day is May 30. I want to take this opportunity to recognize and thank all of the brave men and women, and their families, who have served in our armed services in war and peace time. Memorial Day has its origins from the 1860s and was originally known as Decoration Day so families and survivors from the Civil War could decorate the graves of the fallen soldiers. If you have the opportunity, I encourage each of you to participate in local events and celebrations this Memorial Day to honor our deceased military veterans who have sacrificed for us to give us the great state and country we have today.

Around the Capitol. Sunset Advisory Commission. The Sulphur River Basin Authority (SRBA) is currently under review by the state's Sunset Advisory Commission (SAC) that is charged with reviewing state agencies and state-sanctioned entities every 12 years. The SAC has issued its review of SRBA pointing out operational problems along with suggestions for improvement. The SAC will hold a hearing in Austin on June 23 & 24 to discuss the agencies under review this cycle, including SRBA. Here is a link to the self-evaluation report prepared last fall by SRBA and the recently released review of it by the SAC staff: <https://www.sunset.texas.gov/reviews-and-reports/agencies/sulphur-river-basin-authority>. Later this year, the SAC will adopt recommendations for the 85th Legislature to make changes in how the SRBA should operate in the future.

Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS). The Texas DPS reminds drivers that May is Motorcycle Safety and Awareness Month and to use extra caution driving while around motorcycles. DPS said that in 2015, 455 people died on Texas roads while riding motorcycles and scooters, which represents 13 percent of all traffic fatalities for the year. There are more than 1.1 million Texans who hold a motorcycle, or Class M, license.

DPS also encourages Texans to renew their driver's license or identification card online by visiting <http://dps.texas.gov/DriverLicense/OnlineServices.htm>. DPS reminds Texans that their licenses must be renewed in person every 12 years, so an updated photo can be taken and eyesight can be tested.



Texas Historical Commission (THC). The THC has announced its first statewide Heritage Travel Conference, *Real Places 2016*, to be held June 13-15 at the AT&T Executive Education and Conference Center in Austin featuring workshops, panel discussions and networking events. This conference provides training for County Historical Commissions, Main Street programs, local governments, chambers of commerce, visitors' bureaus, historic sites and travel industry experts. Registration can be made at www.realplaces.us or you can contact 512-258-7474 for more information.

Interim committee meetings. Appropriations. On May 18th, the full House Appropriations Committee met to discuss the Texas constitutional spending limits compared to limits utilized in other states, and examine further progress made during the 84th Legislative session to reduce reliance on General Revenue-Dedicated accounts. There are over 200 General Revenue-

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Dedicated accounts, and the Legislature may appropriate revenue from these accounts only for the purpose to which the revenue is statutorily dedicated. Given this restriction, however, there have been times when the funds in these dedicated accounts have been diverted to fund other state programs or held in reserve without being spent on their intended purposes to help certify the state budget. General Revenue-Dedicated accounts made up 3.7% of the \$209.1 billion budget of the 84th legislative session budget. The Legislative Budget Board presented testimony with recommendations to ensure that the funds collected in these dedicated accounts are spent for their intended purposes and to reduce the reliance on these dedicated accounts as a method of finance.

House Committee on Public Education. On May 3, the Committee met to "examine partnerships between higher education institutions, public school districts, and workforce that promote postsecondary readiness." On May 11, the Committee heard testimony about incidences of inappropriate teacher-student relationships and what school districts and parents can do to protect their students. Though some tweaking of statutes might be necessary during the upcoming session, a bigger concern focused on school officials not complying with currently adopted laws and regulations.

Texas Legislature On-line. You can always follow hearings and legislative activities at <http://www.capitol.texas.gov/>, as well as access archived recordings of previously held meetings.

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.