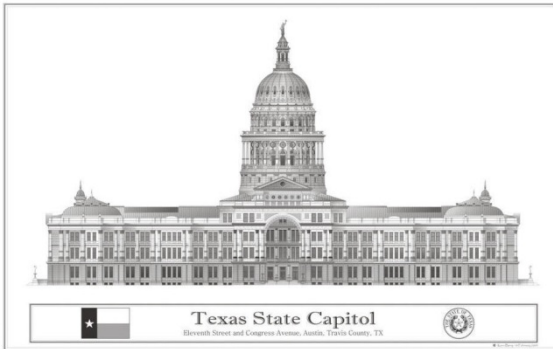




**House District 1 - Bowie, Franklin, Lamar & Red River counties
District & Capitol Report
85th Legislature - March 2017**



Winners will be posted on the THA website on June 1, 2017.

At the Capitol. Lamar County Retired Teachers visit. Members of the Texas Retired Teachers Association (TRTA) from Lamar County were in Austin this week to remind legislators how important teachers and public schools are to everyone in this state. I enjoyed visiting with old friends and meeting new ones.

Friends of Texas Public Schools. This week, I participated in a panel discussion with fellow House colleagues and Dr. Diane Ravitch, former Assistant Secretary of Education in the George H. W. Bush administration and a previous proponent of administering standardized tests for every student, in every subject, in every grade. A former proponent of the *No Child Left Behind Act*, enacted in the George W. Bush administration, Dr. Ravitch has since moderated her stance on use of standardized testing.

Around the District. Scholarship opportunity. The Texas Hospitality Association (THA) recently informed my office that it will again award a \$10,000 scholarship to four high school graduates from the Class of 2017. The THA has a statewide campaign to fight underage drinking, and the scholarship will be divided among the four top students whose artwork best supports the effort to fight underage drinking. Entries must be postmarked no later than Friday, May 5, 2017, by 11:59 p.m.; for more information refer to <https://texashospitalityassociation.com/#scholarship>.



L-r: VanDeaver; Rep. Diego Bernal; Rep. Dan Huberty; and Ravitch.

Budget talk. The Texas Senate passed its state budget for 2018-19, this week, and the full Texas House of Representatives will work on its version of the budget on April 4. Once both Chambers have passed their budgets, a 10-member conference committee will work to resolve the differences. The Senate version of the budget (SB 1) spends \$106.3 billion that is \$1.4 billion above the amount of available state revenue the comptroller told the legislature in January it had to spend this session. To balance its budget, the Senate delays \$2.5 billion in payments to the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) authorized by voters in 2015. These payments to TxDOT would now begin in fiscal year 2020, rather than fiscal year 2019. SB 1 also cuts spending for the state's colleges and universities between six and 10 percent from their current funding levels. Though public school funding formulas were left untouched, the fact that state property values are rising reduces the state's funding obligation to public schools by \$1.4 billion.

The House version of the budget being considered next week spends \$106.8 billion for the next biennium, but rather than delaying payments to TxDOT, the House has chosen to fund the shortfall by using the state's Economic Stabilization Fund that is also known as the "Rainy Day Fund" that was adopted by the legislature in 1987 and approved by

voters in 1988 to smooth out the volatility of state revenue and to cope with emergencies and funding shortfalls. As of today, the fund has over \$10 billion and is expected to grow to almost \$12 billion over the next biennium. The legislature has only dipped into the fund seven times over the last 30 years.



Pictured: The House Committee on Appropriations.

Progress on legislation. Two bills I filed this session, **HB 486** and **HB 786**, were passed out of their committees and will hopefully soon be set on a House calendar. **HB 486** provides school districts flexibility to lower or raise their tax rates as long as the rate does not exceed the voter-approved maximum tax rate. **HB 786** allows volunteer first responders, who work for a company that employees at least 20 people, to use their vacation and sick leave time to respond to emergencies and natural disasters.

As of today, nine of the 23 bills I filed this session have had public hearings in their assigned House Committees. I am pushing hard for the rest of my bills to be heard so they can advance during the rest of this session.

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.

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