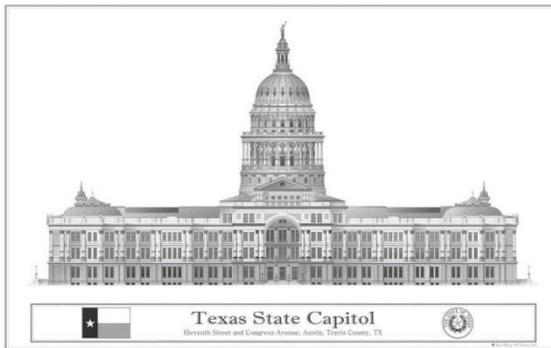




House District 1 - Bowie, Franklin, Lamar & Red River counties
District & Capitol Report - 85th Legislature
July 2017



Around the District. Town Hall meetings. I want to thank everyone who attended my Town Hall meetings last week in each of my four counties. I especially want to thank my hosts that provided the meeting space and refreshments for attendees in Clarksville, Paris, Texarkana and Mount Vernon. I felt the attendance was good at each of the meetings. In addition to providing a summary of the recently completed legislative session, I also had a chance to discuss the upcoming special session and share the results of a survey done by my office about those issues. It is very helpful for me to hear directly from my constituents.



Red River County town hall meeting.

Some issues that generated a lot of discussion at the meetings included Child Protective Services (CPS) changes and funding for kinship care for children removed from their homes ; additional funding for mental health services; and legislative changes made to the health insurance programs for retired public school employees and retirees. Additionally, the legislature expanded the use of telemedicine, which has the potential to help my constituents who do not have ready access to health care services and are more isolated in rural areas.

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Bowie County town hall meeting.

Current results of the constituent survey reviewed at the town hall meetings indicate that passage of sunset legislation is largely agreed upon in House District 1. Additionally, the results show it is widely believed that teachers should receive a pay raise. But, there were several comments that this pay raise should be funded by the state and should not be an unfunded mandate on school districts. Additionally, pro-life issues as well as property tax relief were clear priorities of respondents based on the survey results.



Franklin County town hall meeting.

Dylan's Drivers. While at the Lamar County town hall meeting, I was able to recognize Vicki and Ronnie Ballard for their dedication to saving lives in Lamar County. In memory of their son, Dylan Ballard, who was killed in a drunk driving accident, the Ballard family founded Dylan's Drivers. Thanks to this selfless organization, over 10,200 possible tragedies have been avoided in Lamar County.



Vicki and Ronnie Ballard, founders of Dylan's Drivers.

PJC benefits from TWC grant. Saputo Dairy Foods has partnered with Paris Junior College (PJC) to provide job training using an \$86,289 Skills Development Fund grant from the Texas Workforce

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Commission (TWC). The grant will benefit workers in the Northeast Texas area.

This grant will be used to provide customized training to 88 new and incumbent workers for industry-related topics with focused instruction on food processing technology. Trainees will include distribution and warehouse supervisors, maintenance mechanics and testing lab technicians.

Local projects funded by TxDOT. The Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) recently informed my office that it will soon be doing several projects in Bowie County that include:

- Resurfacing of a 3.2 mile section of US 82 in Texarkana between Interstate 369/US 59 and US 67 (7th Street), which will take about four months to complete;
- Lighting along I-30 will be upgraded to more efficient LED lighting and/or high-mast lighting systems that will take about seven months to complete;
- Resurfacing a 3.9 mile section of highway US 59/71 north of Texarkana that will take about three months to complete; and,
- Repairing concrete decking on the bridge on US 67 crossing Bassett Creek that will take about 13 months to complete.

TxDOT has also announced that Franklin County has been awarded \$490,000 to make electrical improvements at the airport. This grant will cover approximately 90 percent of the project costs so the county will have to cover the remaining 10 percent of the costs.

Around the Capitol. Special session convenes.

Without the excitement and anticipation that accompanies the start of a regular session, the first-called 30-day special session of the 85th Legislature opened on Tuesday, July 18. The governor issued the special session's formal proclamation on July 10 (<https://gov.texas.gov/news/post/governor-abbott-issues-special-session-proclamation-for-sunset-legislation>) stating that as soon as the Sunset bills have passed the Senate, he will add 19 other items to the call so these issues can be addressed during the summer overtime session in Austin. Just as in the regular session, you can follow legislation and committee hearings at Texas Legislature Online at www.capitol.texas.gov.

Revenue estimate. The state comptroller of public accounts, the Honorable Glenn Hegar, is charged with issuing revenue estimates prior to the beginning of each regular and special session. On the day before the special session convened, Comptroller Hegar informed legislators that only \$42 million is available for legislative initiatives during the special session.

Mortgage Tax Credit Program. Austin-based Texas Affordable Housing Corporation recently shared with my office information about their Mortgage Credit Certificate Program (MCCP) for first-time homebuyers. The MCCP is a tax credit that gives eligible first-time home buyers the ability to save up to \$2000 each year on their income taxes. For more information, visit the agency's website at www.tsahc.org.



Bowie County Courthouse.

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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