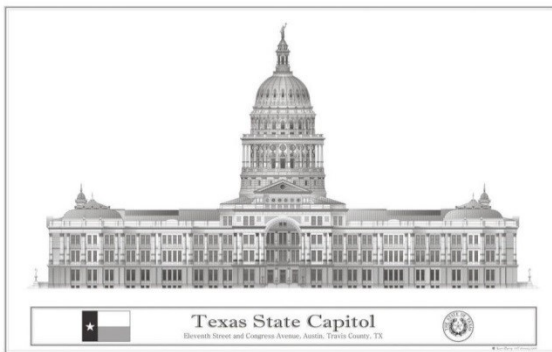




**House District 1 -
Bowie, Franklin, Lamar & Red River counties
District & Capitol Report - 85th Legislature**

April 2018



Around the District. Texas Armed Services Scholarship Program (TASSP). The TASSP allows me, as a state representative, to nominate one student from House District 1 to receive a \$4000 annual scholarship for college ROTC students. An eligible student must commit to serving four years 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. The deadline to submit information to my office is June 1. For more details, contact my Legislative Aide, Becky Calahan, at 512-463-0692.

Lone Star Legislative Summit. Earlier this month, I was pleased to participate in the Nacogdoches County Chamber of Commerce's Lone Star Legislative Summit That "brought Austin & Washington to East Texas." Other participants included Governor Gregg Abbott, Attorney General Ken Paxton and Railroad Commissioner Wayne Christianson. The topics covered during the panel discussions included health care, energy, education and economic development.



House members speaking at the Summit from l-r: Reps. VanDeaver, Simmons (Carrollton) & Huberty (Humble)

TACS Annual Spring East Texas Conference. I also participated in the Texas Association of Community Schools (TACS) 30th Annual Spring East Texas

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Conference in Tyler. The conference focused on preparing small and mid-sized schools for the upcoming legislative session in January 2019.

Around the Capitol. Sales Tax Holiday for Emergency Preparedness Supplies. Beginning at 12:01 a.m. on Saturday April 28 running through 11:59 p.m. on



Monday April 30, Texans can purchase needed supplies to be prepared in case of emergencies. With spring tornadoes and floods and summer hurricane season just around the corner, this might be a good time to restock your emergency

supplies and save on the state sales tax. Here is a link to the supplies eligible for the exemption:

<https://comptroller.texas.gov/taxes/publications/981017.php>.

Texas Tax Amnesty Program. From May 1 through June 29, the Texas Tax Amnesty Program will, under certain circumstances, provide delinquent taxpayers with relief from penalties and interest on taxes due. Tax amnesty applies to periods before Jan. 1, 2018, and only includes liabilities that have not been previously reported to the Comptroller's office. If a taxpayer has been notified that a period or periods are scheduled for an audit review, or if they are already under audit review, then those periods are not eligible for amnesty. It does not apply to accounts that have been certified to the Office of the Attorney General, accounts that are presently in litigation, or accounts that have been reduced to judgment. Additionally, the amnesty doesn't apply to local motor vehicle tax, IFTA taxes, PUC gross receipts assessments or unclaimed property payments. Here is a link for more information:

<https://comptroller.texas.gov/tax-amnesty/>.

Work zone fatalities on the rise. The Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) reports that, in 2017,

fatalities in work zones rose nine percent over 2016 with 199 deaths and 813 serious injuries in 27,148 work-zone crashes. TxDOT cautions drivers to slow down, use common sense and observe posted warning signs in work zones. Fines in work zones double when workers are present and can cost up to \$2000.

April hearings for House Committees. Earlier this month, three committees that I serve on held meetings at the Capitol. Here is a brief summary of those meetings:

Select Committee on Opioids and Substance Abuse.

This month, we heard invited testimony on three of the Committee's charges relating to the interaction between substance abuse and mental health; the prevalence of substance abuse in pregnant women, veterans, homeless individuals and people with co-occurring mental illness; and how state agencies monitor and prevent substance abuse in state-run programs such as Texas Medicaid, Texas Department of Insurance Workers' Comp, Teacher Retirement System of Texas and Employees Retirement System. You can follow information about the committee's work at <http://www.house.texas.gov/committees/committee/?committee=C394>. Future meetings are scheduled for May 15, June 26 and August 7 & 8.

House Committee on Appropriations (HAC). The HAC met on April 18 to discuss several interim charges: the use of the Economic Stabilization Fund (ESF - aka the "Rainy Day Fund") to generate additional revenue; the use of one-time funding and deferral measures implemented for the 2018-2019 biennium; monitoring and management of state agencies contracts with third-party vendors and the improvement and transparency needed; the state's cyber-security enhancements for state agencies; and finally, received an update on enhancing border security.

Comptroller Glenn Hegar testified on ways to increase

ESF investment returns and how if changes aren't made, Texas's AAA credit rating could decline, as well as, causing a structural imbalance in the budget. Hegar also proposed a way to use the ESF to generate additional revenue for long-term obligations like pensions and other post-employment benefits (OPEBs). He also focused attention on ways state contract management can be improved and secured. The Comptroller stressed there are "three pillars" the state can use to help develop a better contracting system that includes: internal personnel training, improving ethics- disclosing conflicts of interests and increased reporting requirements for contracts exceeding specific dollar amounts; in addition to, further oversight of statewide contracts and the improvement of communication between the state's Quality Assurance Team and the Contract Advisory Team.

The Department of Information Resources (DIR) received \$21.5 million in the 2018-19 state budget to provide security policy, assurance, education, awareness and assist state entities in identifying security vulnerabilities. Such measures are being taken to assure Texas taxpayers that their personal information will be secure and used only for intended purposes.

The Legislative Budget Board (LBB) informed the HAC that 130 National Guardsmen were deployed to the Texas border as of March 31, 2018. This month, the president directed the U.S. Secretary of Defense to request the deployment of National Guard personnel to the border. As of April 12, a total of 762 Texas National Guard troops were deployed. Deployment will increase by 300 each week until total deployment reaches 1,400.

Colonel Steve McCraw, director of the Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS), provided information that the funds and directives provided by the legislature have been a cost savings to the state by reduced lodging rates, redeployment assessments, investments in technology, as well as, potentially receiving waivers from certain extensive contracting procedures for facility services. These efforts, in addition to the increased

number of border personnel, will help maximize the resources provided to the department in meeting its end mission of securing the border.

Mr. Grahame Jones, the Director of Law Enforcement with the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) discussed the agency's role in border security by helping with maritime expertise and off-road capabilities, reducing water-related fatalities, protecting natural resources and wildlife, effort to prevent human trafficking, while also supporting local landowners by reducing trespassing, vandalism and theft.

The executive director, Mr. Bentley Nettles, of the Texas Alcoholic Beverage Commission (TABC) testified on behalf of the agency's special investigation agents that have been conducting operations focusing on drugs, human trafficking, and money laundering and other criminal activity.

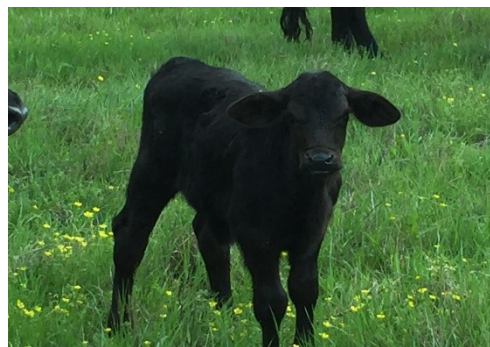
The HAC will continue hearing interim charges into the fall to help create a budget for the upcoming legislative session beginning in January 2019.

House Committee on Public Education (HPE). The HPE met this month to discuss the implementation of several bills (HB 21, SB 179, and HB 22), as well as receive an update from TEA Commissioner of Education Mike Morath about how Hurricane Harvey affected schools. House Bill 21 passed during the 85th special session included grants for autism and dyslexia, as well as hardship grants for specific school districts affected by changes in state funding laws. Senate Bill 179, also known as "David's Law," is an anti-cyberbullying bill that I co-sponsored during the 85th legislative session. TEA gave the committee an update on the implementation of this bill noting that TEA and HHSC are collaborating to build a website for the public with resources regarding the prevention, reporting and consequences of cyberbullying.

The final bill discussed was House Bill 22, regarding the new A-F school accountability being implemented later this summer. We heard testimony from Commissioner Morath, as well as other interested groups, about the implementation of the three domains (Student Achievement, School Progress, Closing the Gaps) that comprise the A-F system. TEA solicited feedback on the accountability guidelines that the commissioner will use to make final decisions on the criteria for A-F ratings. To see the outline of feedback received, follow this [link](#) and click on "House Bill 22 2018 Accountability Decisions Framework."

The commissioner also provided an update on Hurricane Harvey-affected schools. He noted there will be negative impacts on the state's supplemental budget for the current biennium due to loss of property value, and less revenue to the state. The supplemental budget and the budget for 2020-21 will also have funding needs for special education programs due to changes TEA outlined in its [special education corrective plan](#), which was a required response to federal oversight concerns about the identification of special education students across the state. Lastly, Commissioner Morath also noted that there are ongoing behavioral and mental health challenges that students and school personnel face after the trauma of Hurricane Harvey. Here is a link to this hearing:

http://tlchouse.granicus.com/MediaPlayer.php?view_id=40&clip_id=15072.



Texas Dairymen Association (TDA). Earlier this month, I gave an interview to the TDA newsletter so

their members will know that in addition to being an advocate for public education I am also a farmer and

rancher, and that I understand their operations and daily challenges. I appreciated the chance to reach out to the TDA membership. Here is a link to the interview:

<http://milk4texas.org/meet-rep-gary-vandeaveradvocate-for-public-education/>.

Social media. Please follow me on both my Facebook and Twitter accounts!

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.