



**District & Capitol Report - 86th Legislature  
House District 1 - Bowie, Franklin, Lamar & Red River counties**

**January 2019**

**Around the District.** *Paris Area Arts Alliance.* Congratulations to the Paris Area Arts Alliance that received funding from the Arts Respond Performance Support grant program so it could bring the "Singing Zoologist," Lucas Miller to Paris the end of January. Mr. Miller combines music, singing, poetry, puppets and video along with student participation to ignite excitement in students about science to make learning a fun experience.

**Prescribed burns announced.** *Texas Parks & Wildlife Department (TPWD).* The TPWD informed my office that it intends to conduct one or more prescribed burns in the Pat Mayse Wildlife Management Area between February 1 and May 2, 2019. To receive a text message notification prior to the burn, please text number 81010 with the message: @pmburn. City and county emergency services dispatch centers, local fire departments and the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality will be notified prior to any burns to ensure they are aware of burns in the area.

**Mount Vernon Music.** Congratulations to Mount Vernon Music that received a grant from the Texas Commission on the Arts so it can share the talent of Texas Touring Roster

and Cliburn in the Classroom artist Evan Mitchell with audiences in the area.

**Around the Capitol.** The 86th Texas Legislature convened on January 8, 2019, as returning and new members gathered for opening day. I was privileged to have several family members join



*Figure 1 Rep. VanDeaver and his mother, Mary Helen VanDeaver, at swearing in on January 8, 2019.*

me at the Capitol. The first order of business for the newly sworn-in members was to elect a new Speaker of the Texas House since the previous speaker, The Honorable Joe Straus, did not run for re-election in 2018. The

Honorable Dennis Bonnen, House District 25 from Angleton, was unanimously elected to serve as the 75th Speaker of the Texas House of Representatives.

**Legislative priorities.** On opening day, Speaker Bonnen announced that the number one priority for the Texas House this session is "school finance, school finance and school

finance." In December, the Texas Commission on Public School Finance released its recommendations after an almost year-long series of meetings with experts, association representatives and the public. Link to the commission's report at: <https://tea.texas.gov/schoolfinancecommission/>.

Property tax reform is a critical component of addressing the ongoing challenges of adequately and equitably addressing school finance. On Thursday, January 31, House Bill 2 was filed to begin the process of reforming property taxes. Here is a summary of HB 2:

House Bill 2 includes provisions intended to increase transparency in the property tax rate calculations; make it easier for property taxpayers to navigate the appraisal review board process; and empower citizens to have a direct say in significant increases in property tax rates. Other features of the bill include:

- *Transparency* - the current notification requirements for property tax rates are complex and difficult for the lay person to understand. House Bill 2 modifies the process by which taxing jurisdictions set property tax rates by strengthening the notification provisions prior to jurisdictions adopting rates, and by making the changes easier to comprehend.
- *Reforming the Appraisal Review Board Process* - taxpayers protest their property tax values to the Appraisal Review Boards, which frequently are the last stop in the protest process. House Bill 2 seeks to make these hearings more taxpayer friendly by modifying how the notices of hearings are given, and changing the times in which

taxpayers may appear before the board, among other modifications.

- *Rollback Rates* - the "no-new-revenue tax rate" as set forth in HB 2 (currently the "effective tax rate") is the property tax rate in the current year that would raise the same revenue for the taxing jurisdiction as the previous year on property that is taxable in both the current tax year and the preceding tax year, given the current year's property values. The rollback rate is the amount of increase above the no-new-revenue tax rate a jurisdiction may increase property tax rates without a vote to limit the property tax rate growth. HB 2 as filed changes the rollback rate from 8% to 2.5% for all taxing districts with more than \$15 million in combined property and sales tax revenue.
- *Voter Engagement* - under current law, if a property tax jurisdiction sets the current year's property tax rate higher than the rollback rate, voters may petition the jurisdiction to hold a rollback election to cap the tax rate increase at the rollback rate. As filed, HB 2 would change this election to a ratification election, giving voters the power automatically to vote on a property tax rate increase that exceeds the rollback rate.

Also on Thursday, 01/31, a companion to HB 2 was filed in the Texas Senate as SB 2. Links to both bills are found at: HB 2 - <https://tlis/BillLookup/history.aspx?LegSess=86R&Bill=HB2>; and SB 2 - <https://tlis/BillLookup/history.aspx?LegSess=86R&Bill=SB2>. To date, the school finance reform bills are still being drafted and will be filed later.

**Committee assignments.** Though we have a new Speaker, I have been reappointed to serve on two House Committees that I have served on since initially serving in the House in 2015. I appreciate Speaker Bonnen appointing me to the House Committee on Appropriations and the House Committee on Public Education. I look forward to working with my colleagues as bills come before these two important committees. Hearings have already begun and more work will be needed to pass a budget for the 2020-21 biennium and to address the critical challenges facing our public school system and its 5.4 million Texas students.

**Legislation filed.** To date, I have filed 14 House bills and resolutions for consideration this session. [A list of my bills can be found here.](#)

The bill filing deadline in the House is March 8, which is the 60th day of the session. This deadline does not apply to "local bills," and members can petition the House to grant him or her permission to introduce even after the filing deadline. I am currently working on numerous other pieces of legislation to file this session and will update you as these bills get filed.

**Capitol visitors.** Since the start of the session, I have enjoyed visiting with family and friends from House District 1 at the Capitol.



*Figure 2. Rep. VanDeaver with Bowie County JP Todd Fore and his son, Jason, in the House Chamber. House Photography*



*Figure 3. Rep. VanDeaver along with the Delk family from Texarkana on their visit to the Capitol.*



*Figure 4. The VanDeaver family on Opening Day of the 86th Legislature. House Photography*

**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.