



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

February 2019

Around the District. Speaker Bonnen visits Texarkana. Earlier this month, new House Speaker, Dennis Bonnen, visited Texarkana and spent his time attending programs and visiting with numerous people. I want to thank the Speaker for taking the time away from the Capitol to become more familiar with Northeast Texas. During his time in Texarkana,



Figure 1. L-r: Speaker Bonnen, Rep. VanDeaver & an A&M-Texarkana student. Photo by A&M Texarkana.

Speaker Bonnen visited numerous programs at A&M -Texarkana and Texarkana College to learn about the educational opportunities available in our area, as well as to see the need for even more programs and funding to ensure that Northeast Texas remains a vibrant, growing economy. The Texarkana area is very fortunate to have been able to host the Speaker, and I appreciate all of the hard work

that many people did to make this trip a success.

Stroke Designation - Paris Regional Medical Center. The Department of State Health Services (DSHS) recently informed my office that Paris Regional Medical Center has received a Stroke Designation Award. Stroke designation is a formal recognition of a hospital's stroke care capabilities and commitment to excellence that exceed minimum hospital licensure requirements. Paris Regional Medical Center earned a Level II Designation – Primary Stroke Facility. This designation, which is valid for two years, shows the facility's dedication to improving, expediting, and standardizing the care of stroke patients. If you would like to know more about stroke designations, please visit dshs.texas.gov/emstraumasystems/stroke.

DSHS designations for Christus St. Michael Health System in Texarkana. DSHS also informed my office that Christus St. Michael earned a Level II Designation - Primary Stroke Facility and Level III Designation - Neonatal Intensive Care Unit, which are valid for two and three years, respectively. All of these recognitions reflect the hard work and

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dedication of the health care professionals in House District 1.

Around the Capitol. Visitors from HD 1. The Hawkins family from DeKalb visited the state Capitol and two of their sons, Graham and Harris, served as House Pages. Though Britt is too young to have been a page this session, I was able to have him join me on the House floor while the House was in session.



Figure 2. L-r: Rep. VanDeaver, Britt Hawkins & Speaker Bonnen. Photo by House Photography.

The whole family toured the Capitol and learned about the historic building and its many treasures.



***Texas A&M-
Texarkana
nursing
students.***

It was great having these students visit the

Capitol on Texas Nurses Day on February 9, to learn more about the legislative process.

***Lamar County Days & Northeast Texas
Regional Alliance Days at the Capitol.***

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contingent of people from northeast Texas traveled to Austin the end of February to celebrate their days at the Capitol. The groups visited legislators' offices, handed out materials reflecting businesses from the region, attended meetings with key agencies and officials, had an evening tour of the Capitol hosted by Senator Hughes, and Lamar County cooked and served hamburgers on the Capitol lawn. Thanks to everyone making the long trip to Austin; it was great seeing you at the Capitol!

North Lamar ISD band. Also visiting the Capitol, was the high school board from North Lamar ISD as it was on the way to San Antonio to participate in the state band contest.



Figure 3. Rep. VanDeaver & Senator Hughes with the North Lamar ISD High School Band. Photo by House Photography.

Committees hard at work. House Public Education. The House Committee on Public Education (HPE) began hearings on January 30th and has met seven times. These meetings first heard testimony from the Texas Education Agency (TEA) on public education issues and the school finance system, before delving into invited testimony regarding the Texas Commission on Public School Finance's final recommendations. In the last two meetings, 33 bills have been heard, including three of my bills -- HB 330, HB 396, and HB 397.

Superintendent Rex Burks of Simms ISD

testified before the committee in support of HB 330, which will add a medical exemption to the list of TEA-allowed exemptions for categorizing students as dropouts, while House Bills 396 and 397 were laid out as two methods of clarifying statute for the technology and instructional material fund.

House Committee on Appropriations (HAC): Article III Subcommittee. During the month of February, the House Committee on Appropriations (HAC) divided into subcommittees to address different areas of the proposed budget. As in the last two sessions, I am serving on the Subcommittee for Article III - Education, that has oversight for TEA, the Teacher Retirement System of Texas (TRS), the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB), all colleges, universities and health-related institutions. There have been discussions about increasing the state's share of funding in public education and for TRS. At the conclusion of public testimonies, the subcommittee began its formal meeting process where it began working through potential riders for House Bill 1. So far, the full committee has met six times, and the Article III subcommittee has met eight times. Many more meetings and hours of debate will be needed to finalize the state budget for the 2020-21 biennium.

House Bill 2. Property tax reform. Along with addressing school finance issues, the governor declared property tax reform an emergency item this session. Representative Dustin Burrows (Lubbock) filed HB 2, relating to property tax reform on January 31, and the bill had a 12.5 hour hearing on February 27. Over 100 witnesses testified for and against this bill. The bill was left pending in the committee.

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Major features of the bill include 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 a say in significant increases in property tax rates. The Senate companion to HB 2, Senate Bill 2, is awaiting action by the full Senate but has not yet been voted on at this time. As filed, the bills were identical companions but changes were made in SB 2 in the Senate Committee on Property Tax. Over the next few weeks, the scope of changes to the property tax system should become clearer.

Interested in following? You can always follow action at the Capitol from reading the bills that have been filed to watching public hearings and live action in the House & Senate Chambers by logging on the <https://capitol.texas.gov/>.

Social media. Please follow me on both my social media accounts!

Facebook: @GaryVanDeaverHD1

Twitter: @GaryVanDeaver

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.