ANGIE CHEN BUTTON

The State of Texas
House of Representatives

March 20, 2009

Dear Friend:

I am quite fortunate to have been appointed to the Appropriations Committee, a rare honor for a freshman legislator. That appointment has put me right in the middle of the action this year – and in a tremendous position to closely watch out for the needs of Richardson and Garland.

Border Security

One issue close to my heart was at the top of the Appropriations Committee agenda – border security. I listened to hours of testimony on violent and illegal conduct on the border right now and I am thankful that I am now in a position to help do something to stop it.

Fortunately the prior legislative session created a solid foundation. In the last budget, $108 million was appropriated for border security. This funding helped with three major programs, Operation Laredo, Operation Rio Grande and Operation Linebacker. Laredo and Rio Grande reduced border crossings and crime along the 1,240 mile Texas-Mexico border. Operation Linebacker, initiated by the Texas Border Sheriff's Coalition, increased border patrols and provided support to local law enforcement in order to reduce crime and enhance border security.

Representative Angie Chen Button discussing legislation with Appropriations Chair Jim Pitts.

The Stimulus Bill

The Appropriations Committee is at the center of the huge controversy surrounding the Stimulus Bill. This month, Governor Perry and governors of several other states announced they intend not to accept some of the Stimulus money due to the strings attached to unemployment funds. I am deeply saddened that the Stimulus funds, which are paid for with our taxes and are meant to help boost the economy, are weighed down with restrictions that can hurt Texas in the long run. Texas would be forced to implement an unprecedented expansion of unemployment benefits in order to receive these stimulus dollars. Changes like this have historically not been supported by lawmakers because they would increase the tax burden on employers. The economic crisis should not be an excuse to toss away fiscal responsibility, because Texas' fiscal responsibility has shielded us from the worst ravages of the economic crisis.

Texas' unemployed are covered regardless of how this ends. However, we will have a shortage in the actual fund unless some adjustments are made. The last time the federal government provided emergency unemployment funds (under President Bush) they came with no strings attached and the program worked extremely well. That system should not have changed in this difficult economic time. I am hopeful that an agreement can be reached that will allow Texas to take part in this program without doing ourselves long term harm.

Lobbying

Politics often is a "dirty word" and I am determined to find ways to clean it up. That was why I recently authored a bill called HB 2430 which will limit lobbying by former members of the Texas Legislature. This bill prohibits all legislators, starting with me and my colleagues sworn into office in 2009, from becoming lobbyists for profit for at least two years after they leave office. This is a bipartisan effort to help protect public integrity and prevent public servants from lobbying against the public good while in office or immediately upon leaving office. Legislators from both the Senate and the House have filed similar legislation addressing this problem. This is one small step toward making politics cleaner.

Richardson Resident Comes to Austin

On Wednesday, I joined Rep. Hubert Vo of Houston in attending the Texas Federation of Asian-American Chambers of Commerce Reception. I was so happy to see Richardson's own, Dr. Anant Jain, who chairs the Federation and who hosted this wonderful event. I am proud to see so many Richardson and Garland residents take such a prominent role in statewide organizations.

It is a great pleasure to serve you in the Texas Legislature. I am eager to assist you if I can.

Sincerely,

Angie Chen Button

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