

ANGIE CHEN BUTTON



The State of Texas House of Representatives

May 15, 2009

Dear Friend:

We have been working overtime in the House in an attempt to meet all of the fast approaching deadlines. At midnight last night, we reached the deadline to hear House bills on second reading. If a House Bill was not heard on the floor by midnight, it is dead.

The Sunset Process

Sunset is the regular assessment of the continuing need for a state agency to exist. While standard legislative oversight is concerned with agency compliance with legislative policies, Sunset asks a more basic question about the agencies' functions: do the agency's functions continue to be needed? The Sunset process works by setting a date on which an agency will be abolished unless legislation is passed to continue its functions. This creates an opportunity for the Legislature to closely examine each agency and make changes to an agency's mission or operations if needed. In this newsletter and future newsletters I will include highlights of some of the major agencies reviewed. I will begin with the Texas Department of Transportation Sunset Bill.

After 10 hours of debate and 183 amendments, the Texas House passed HB 300. The bill puts in place protections so that taxpayer dollars are used responsibly and not on failed projects. Key reforms in HB 300 include:

- Repealing once and for all the Trans Texas Corridor
- Requiring the Commissioner of Transportation to be elected, so that voters can hold TxDOT accountable
- Banning the use of taxpayer funds for lobbying by regional transportation planning organizations
- Requiring toll authorities to put their check registers online, so that taxpayers know where toll revenue is going
- Establishing a Legislative Oversight Committee to monitor operations at TxDOT
- Creating an Office of Inspector General to investigate waste and evaluate efficiency of the department's administration
- Requiring a strengthened ethics policy for TxDOT employees and requiring the agency to set up a phone line for Texans to report violations of ethics rules.

This bill is currently in the Senate Transportation Committee.



Rep. Button filling in for Speaker Straus last week.

Economic Development - Enterprise Fund for Job Retention Passed

On Wednesday I laid out my bill, HB 1277 on second reading. HB 1277 allows the Texas Enterprise Fund to be used for job retention in times of economic stress.

This legislation is not designed to save a failing business model but, if a business is trying to make the decision between closing a plant in Texas versus other states, this bill will give them an additional reason to stay in Texas. If a business is considering closing shop in Texas and moving to another country, these funds could make them think twice and stay.

I am proud to say that this bill passed the House unanimously. Senator Bob Deuell is sponsoring this piece of legislation and it is currently in the Senate awaiting a hearing.



Rep. Button laying out HB 1277

HB 1198, the bill I authored which would make it easier for municipalities to take advantage of the incentives available through the Enterprise Zone program for the recruitment and retention of

High Tech companies, fell victim to the midnight deadline last night. Although this bill was placed on the calendar, it was unfortunately not heard in time for passage.

University of North Texas School of Law

On Thursday, the House passed SB 956 to establish a public law school in downtown Dallas. This school will be the first public law school located in Dallas County and will be part of the University of North Texas System. I proudly co-authored HB 59, the House Companion to SB 956, to help keep our region a leader in higher education.

My first session will end on June 1st. It is truly an honor to work for the great people of Richardson and Garland. For the remainder of the session, we will hear Senate bills and work out differences between House and Senate versions of legislation. Please continue e-mailing and calling with your input on legislation.

Sincerely,

Angie Chen Button

If you would like to be added or removed from this mailing, please e-mail District112.Button@house.state.tx.us.