

ANGIE CHEN BUTTON



The State of Texas
House of Representatives

June 1, 2009

Dear Friend:

The House just adjourned Sine Die bring the 81st legislative session to an end. We have been working all week into the night and early morning to wrap up pending items. This will be the last weekly update of the session. I will continue to send periodic updates on issues that may arise during the interim, and I will mail out a newsletter to each of you discussing the highlights of this legislative session in the coming months.

Last week was an eventful week here in Austin. Tuesday the 26th was the deadline for the House to hear Senate bills. Many important pieces of legislation did not get heard as a result of stall tactics employed by some House members.

SB 1 - The Budget Bill

The House just passed the final version of the budget bill. The 2010-2011 budget reduces General Revenue spending by nearly \$1.6 billion compared to 2008-2009. The biennial budget expends \$182.3 billion in funds (including \$80.7 billion in General Revenue), draws on \$12.1 billion from federal economic stimulus money, and pays for state agency operations and programs over the next two years. The budget also includes a tax cut for small businesses.

Additionally, there will be a 13th check averaging \$500 per recipient issued this biennium to retired teachers and state employees. Although I proudly supported this initiative as a member of the Appropriations Committee at a level of \$1000 per recipient, the Senate did not provide any funding for this item. House conferees fought hard and the two sides reached a compromise at \$500. Fortunately HB 3347 also passed which provides additional funds for Retired School teachers. I am glad that we can offer our retired public servants an additional check.

The approved budget is balanced and fiscally responsible. I believe it adequately funds necessary government services without touching the Rainy Day Fund.

Voter ID

Because SB 362, the Voter ID bill, was placed on the calendar, opponents of the legislation brought all business on the House floor to a standstill for days hoping that last Tuesday's midnight deadline would pass without debate on the bill. This parliamentary delay tactic did ultimately kill the Voter ID bill along with hundreds of great bills that were important to Texans.

Addressing voter fraud is a very important issue and, although we were not given the opportunity to debate the Voter ID bill and vote based on its merits, I will continue to work towards passage of

this legislation. The people's voice, expressed through voting, is the foundation on which our country was built. This celebrated right is at the very base of our great state and our country.

Although Voter ID did not pass this session, I filed an amendment to SB 362 to address objections by some bill opponents. The amendment addressed the incorrect transliteration of names which is a common problem encountered by some Asian American voters. Several bill opponents have given that issue as a reason to vote against the bill entirely.

I appreciate the hundreds of constituents that contacted me on this legislation. I encourage you to continue voicing your opinions as we work to make Voter ID legislation good for all legally registered voters.

Our Heroes - Property Tax Relief for Disabled Veterans

On Saturday, May 30th, the House and Senate came together with the Governor and Lt. Governor for a joint session to honor Texans who have died in the war on terror in Afghanistan and Iraq. The legislature hosted a breakfast for the families of the fallen soldiers in the morning. We then read resolutions in honor of the fallen servicemen and presented parchment copies of the resolutions and flags to their families. One member of our district, First Sergeant Jeffrey Ray McKinney died in Iraq on July 11, 2007, at the age of 40. He was a 19-year veteran of the armed forces and a loving husband and father. I presented a parchment copy of House Resolution 2308 along with a Texas flag to his parents.

I have the deepest respect for our brave servicemen and servicewomen who risk their lives to defend our freedoms, and my heart goes out to First Sergeant McKinney's family and all the other families that have lost loved ones protecting this great nation of ours. Having grown up in Taiwan, I realize the importance of American soldiers protecting freedom around the world since it was American naval and air forces stationed in Taiwan during the 1950s, 1960s, and most of the 1970s who discouraged Mao's Communist China from invading Taiwan and subjecting its citizens to the brutality of the Great Leap Forward and Great Cultural Revolution that Mainland China had to endure. I am so grateful to the armed forces of the United States of America.

One of the nonpartisan bills that fell victim to stall tactics was SB 469. SB 469 died simply because we ran out of time on the floor of the House. Fortunately, the Senate was able to add portions of this bill as an amendment to HB 3613, a bill which I proudly coauthored. Now HB 3613 will not only make the appraisal process fairer for many homeowners, it now provides property tax relief to approximately 600,000 Texas veterans, with the addition of this amendment. I am so glad that there was another vehicle for this well-deserved piece of legislation. HB 3613 passed Thursday and is awaiting the Governor's signature.

Working for You



Rep. Button pictured with Representatives Tryon Lewis and Tim Kleinschmidt wearing red ties provided by State Rep. Chuck Hopson in a picture that appeared in the *Austin American Statesman*. The ties were worn by most House members as a show of unity on the House floor.

Thank you for your support and for keeping me informed on issues that are important to you. Please keep communicating with me throughout the interim as I strive towards making this great state an even better place to call home.

Although the 81st session is ending, much of my work is just getting started. I have a full agenda prepared for the interim. The first of these objectives is a thorough evaluation of current economic development tools available in our state. I plan to fully examine what we have in our toolbox and the effectiveness of those tools on economic development while looking at benchmarks to ensure we are indeed achieving economic development goals. Additionally, I will evaluate what we can do to improve international trade opportunities and to make Texas more competitive in the global market. The third item on my interim agenda involves workforce training. We must be proactive to make sure Texas has a workforce trained for the needs and demands of the 21st century.

I am honored to serve you in the Texas House of Representatives. Please continue to express your views on any issue that is important to you. I look forward to your input as I prepare legislation for the next legislative session.

Sincerely,

Angie Chen Button

If you would like to be added or removed from this mailing, please e-mail District12.Button@house.state.tx.us.