

ANGIE CHEN BUTTON



The State of Texas House of Representatives

September 4, 2009

Dear Friend:

I hope this newsletter finds you well. For those of you who work for our school system or have children who attend, I hope the new school year has started for everyone without a hitch. Additionally, I wish all of you a happy and safe Labor Day weekend. My capitol and district offices will be closed on Monday, September 7th. Please note that during the holiday, maintenance will be performed on our computer systems so there may be a delay in the receipt of any e-mails you send this weekend. I apologize for any inconvenience this may cause.

It has been a wonderful month for District 112. I recently submitted my interim charge ideas to the Speaker's office. Interim charges are the assignments given to each House committee to examine during the interim. I suggested items to the Speaker that focused on improving our economic conditions and making sure Texas is primed to compete in the Global Market. Last month, we received some good news as a result of the 81st Legislature adopting a fiscally responsible state budget while preserving the Rainy Day fund. The full article can be found at <http://news.moneycentral.msn.com/provider/providerarticle.aspx?feed=BCOM&date=20090811&id=10247000>. Below is an excerpt.

“S&P raises Texas Issuer Credit and GO Ratings 'AA+' from 'AA' on continued diversifying economy S&P raised its issuer credit rating (ICR) and general obligation (GO) rating on Texas to 'AA+' from 'AA' based on the state's continued economic diversification, and expectation that state officials and policy makers will remain committed to the maintenance of an adequate level of reserves in the Economic Stabilization Fund (rainy day fund). In S&P's opinion, the recent adoption of a biennial budget that preserves the state's rainy day fund (currently at \$6.7 billion, or about 9% of fiscal 2009 expenditures) provides the state with significant flexibility to address potential additional revenue declines and looming budget and liquidity pressures related to school funding.”

New Laws Set to Go Into Effect Sept. 1

HB 537 requires **all** occupants of a vehicle, no matter their age, to be secured by a safety belt, no matter where they are seated in the vehicle; changes the definition of a passenger vehicle to include a passenger van designed to transport 15 or fewer passengers including the driver; removes the current exemption for third-party Medicaid transportation provisions regarding the use of child passenger safety seats; and prohibits a motorcycle operator from carrying a passenger under the age of 5 unless the child is seated in a sidecar attached to the motorcycle.

SB 61 amends the existing statute regarding child passenger safety seats. The bill requires that any child younger than 8 years of age be restrained in an approved child passenger safety seat unless the child is at least 4 feet, 9 inches in height. The law becomes effective on Sept. 1, 2009, but tickets for this offense cannot be issued until June 1, 2010. Police officers are allowed to issue a warning before that date.

HB 55 makes it illegal to use a wireless communication device in a school zone unless the vehicle is stopped or a hands-free device is used. Cities or counties wanting to enforce this law must post a sign at the beginning of each school zone to inform drivers that using a wireless communications device is prohibited and the operator is subject to a fine. It is a defense to prosecution if the operator was making an emergency call.

HB 2730 increases the penalties for driving while intoxicated with a child passenger by adding an automatic driver license suspension period for first-time offenders and an increased suspension period for repeat offenders.

HB 2730 allows a new Texas resident to operate a vehicle without a Texas license for 90 days instead of the current 30. (This provision went into effect on June 19, 2009.)

HB 2012 creates two new punishment enhancements: a Class B misdemeanor if a person drives with a suspended license and without insurance; and a Class A misdemeanor if the person driving without insurance or a valid driver license has an accident and someone is seriously injured or dies as a result of that accident.

SB 129 authorizes neighborhood electric vehicles (NEVs) to be operated on roads with a posted speed limit of 45 miles per hour or less. The bill authorizes driver license holders to operate NEVs without having a motorcycle endorsement, clarifies that drivers and passengers in such vehicles are not required to wear helmets and specifies that enclosed three-wheeled vehicles as described in the bill are authorized to operate in preferential lanes.

Around the District

I am happy to have attended many events around the district this month. I was pleased to have the opportunity to tour the Richardson YMCA and to speak at the Richardson Lion's club. I enjoyed the opportunity to meet the new RISD and GISD teachers during their new teacher receptions. Additionally, I attended an informative Congressional Forum hosted by the Dallas Regional Chamber of Commerce and was able to participate in a multicultural roundtable hosted by Congressman Sam Johnson. I also addressed the Dallas Chapter of the American Association of Attorney CPAs and appreciated meeting with the awardees at the Texas Instruments Foundation Innovation in STEM Teaching Awards Reception. Monday, I went to a Congressional Field Hearing on Healthcare Reform hosted by Congressmen Sam Johnson, Pete Sessions, Jeb Hensarling, and Joe Barton.



Representative Button with Kevin Cieszkowski (the 2009 STEM Fellow from Richardson ISD) and his spouse Jean Cieszkowski.

November 3rd Election

The 81st Legislature passed eight joint resolutions proposing 11 amendments to the state constitution, and these proposed amendments will be offered for approval on the November 3, 2009, election ballot. For your information, ballot language for the proposed amendments can be found below. If you would like further information about any of these amendments, please contact my office.

Amendment No. 1

The constitutional amendment authorizing the financing, including through tax increment financing, of the acquisition by municipalities and counties of buffer areas or open spaces adjacent to a military installation for the prevention of encroachment or for the construction of roadways, utilities, or other infrastructure to protect or promote the mission of the military installation.

Amendment No. 2

The constitutional amendment authorizing the legislature to provide for the ad valorem taxation of a residence homestead solely on the basis of the property's value as a residence homestead.

Amendment No. 3

The constitutional amendment providing for uniform standards and procedures for the appraisal of property for ad valorem tax purposes.

Amendment No. 4

The constitutional amendment establishing the national research university fund to enable emerging research universities in this state to achieve national prominence as major research universities and transferring the balance of the higher education fund to the national research university fund.

Amendment No. 5

The constitutional amendment authorizing the legislature to authorize a single board of equalization for two or more adjoining appraisal entities that elect to provide for consolidated equalizations.

Amendment No. 6

The constitutional amendment authorizing the Veterans' Land Board to issue general obligation bonds in amounts equal to or less than amounts previously authorized.

Amendment No. 7

The constitutional amendment to allow an officer or enlisted member of the Texas State Guard or other state militia or military force to hold other civil offices.

Amendment No. 8

The constitutional amendment authorizing the state to contribute money, property, and other resources for the establishment, maintenance, and operation of veterans hospitals in this state.

Amendment No. 9

The constitutional amendment to protect the right of the public, individually and collectively, to access and use the public beaches bordering the seaward shore of the Gulf of Mexico.

Amendment No. 10

The constitutional amendment to provide that elected members of the governing boards of emergency services districts may serve terms not to exceed four years.

Amendment No. 11

The constitutional amendment to prohibit the taking, damaging, or destroying of private property for public use unless the action is for the ownership, use, and enjoyment of the property by the State, a political subdivision of the State, the public at large, or entities granted the power of eminent domain under law or for the elimination of urban blight on a particular parcel of property, but not for certain economic development or enhancement of tax revenue purposes, and to limit the legislature's authority to grant the power of eminent domain to an entity.

I am honored to serve you in the Texas House of Representatives. Please express your views on any issue that is important to you and I assure you, I will take your views and the views of every constituent in District 112 into consideration.

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.