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The State of Texas
House of Representatives



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Education

For most school districts throughout the state, budgeting for the next two years will be a difficult process. Through sound management practices that have been in place for some time and a team of wonderful teachers and support staff, Garland ISD and Richardson ISD will remain top notch. In an effort to assist school districts facing the fiscal realities of our state's economic shortfall, several pieces of legislation have been proposed to reform many aspects of educational administration and provide significant budgetary savings.

On Wednesday, the House adopted two of these proposals. HB 6 moves the state from distributing textbooks and technological equipment to distributing money to school districts to purchase these items. It gives school districts more options to choose from the approved lists or any other materials available to ensure that the materials cover each of the essential knowledge and skills elements. School districts would have flexibility to buy the type of instructional materials that suit the needs of each class.

The second of these proposals was HB 500. This bill reduces the number of end-of-course exams required for graduation from twelve to four, decreasing the financial burden that these tests place on the schools. Rather than imposing a rigid one-size-fits-all system, HB 500 gives districts the flexibility to adapt their local policy to local needs in determining how to count the end-of-course exam in calculating a student's final course grade. The transition period included in the bill would give school districts the opportunity to gather data to align their curricula with the end-of-course exams. Additionally, HB 500 allows more flexibility in the graduation requirements for students choosing to graduate under the recommended or minimum high school graduation plans, which would allow them to focus on the exams measuring college and workforce readiness.

The Budget

On Sunday, the House voted to adopt CSHB 1. This bill will now go over to the Senate and work to reconcile the differences between the two chambers will begin. Last week, I discussed Article 3, Education. In this newsletter, I will go into more detail concerning Article 5, Public Safety and Criminal Justice. I will touch on each of the budget areas as the session progresses. If there is a particular order you would like me discuss these Articles in, please let me know.

In the version of the budget adopted by the House, Public Safety and Criminal Justice make up 9.6% of the overall budget. They made up 10.0% of the 2010-2011 budget. The actual reduction in dollars is \$678.4 million. These reductions were spread across the board with the exception of funding for Border Security.

Although cuts are necessary, we simply cannot decrease efforts to protect the citizens of this great state from violence taking place across the border and seeping into Texas. I worked hard to maintain the level of funding appropriated to Border Security from the last biennium and this budget does not reduce spending for Border Security because serious threats remain.

With the state's previous investments, troopers now have the necessary equipment, vehicles, and resources to combat border-related crime. Funds will go to DPS and other entities to provide resources to prosecutors such as equipment, training, and support for patrol operations and overtime, to expand gang enforcement patrols, multidistrict gang investigations, and gang prevention efforts.

Although funding for Border Security remained the same, cuts did take place in other areas. The significant changes in the budget compared to the previous biennium are highlighted below.

- \$25.2 million decrease in general revenue funds from fiscal 2010-11 due to closing a prison (potential revenue gain estimated at \$33.5 million from sale of prison unit and its property)
- \$50.9 million decrease in general revenue funds from fiscal 2010-11 funding levels for private beds in prisons, state jails, and residential pre-parole facilities
- Reduction in funding for the Windham School District, which provides educational programs for adult offenders in the Texas Department of Criminal Justice by \$12.8 million
- Decreases funding for prison health care by \$222.7 million
- \$72.3 million decrease for Texas Youth Commission from the previous biennium for residential services, primarily due to proposed reduction in capacity

Friendly Faces from Home



Several firefighters from across Texas stopped by the Capitol this week. Here I am with some of Garland's Bravest including Glen Johnson, David Riggs and Eric Brown.



I also had the pleasure to speak with Greg Zachary, a real estate appraiser from Richardson, regarding issues affecting his profession.



This Wednesday was Texas Catholic Advocacy Day at the Capitol. I met with Ellen Rossini of Richardson, to the right of me. She also brought with her several high school seniors who I also had the opportunity to visit with.

It is an honor to serve as your State Representative. Please continue to communicate your views on issues that are important to you.

Sincerely,

Angie Chen Button

If you would like to be added or removed from this mailing, please e-mail.