

ANGIE CHEN BUTTON



The State of Texas
House of Representatives



May 7, 2011

Friends,

Happy Mother's Day! We have had a very busy and productive week at the Capitol. Everyday, with the exception of Monday, when the house adjourned around 7:00 p.m., the floor session has lasted past 10:00 p.m. Friday night we left the Capitol close to midnight and came right back this morning at 10:00 a.m.

Bill Update

With all of the time spent on the House floor this week, there was a great deal of movement on many bills of interest.

The redistricting map for the State Board of Education and HB 15, the sonogram bill, were sent to Governor Perry for his signature after final passage by the House earlier this week. Additionally, the House adopted the conference committee report on the recently passed eminent domain legislation and is awaiting final approval by the Senate before sending it to the Governor.

Earlier this week, the House passed a measure to create "Choose Life" license plates that will promote and raise funds for adoption programs. SB 321, the bill that will allow guns in parked cars at places of employment, passed the House after passing the Senate. Under current law, anyone legally possessing a gun can carry it in their vehicle. This law would prevent employers from banning guns stored in locked cars in their parking lots.

Thursday, the Speaker appointed conferees for HB 1, the budget bill. The conferees will represent the House in negotiations with the Senate to work out the differences between the two chambers' adopted versions of the budget. Then, the conference report will go back to the House and Senate for adoption. If both chambers agree and adopt the proposal, it will go to the Governor for his signature.

Sanctuary City Legislation (HB 12)

Friday, the House took up HB 12. I am a proud co-author of this legislation that will create a uniform standard for how local law enforcement will work with federal immigration enforcement departments. By creating a uniform standard statewide for how laws will be interpreted, we

establish safer streets and neighborhoods. The term "sanctuary city" refers to a municipality that has established policies prohibiting police officers from enforcing immigration laws or cooperating with federal immigration officials. For example, the Governor has mentioned the City of Houston's General Order 500-5 that prohibits police officers from asking someone's citizenship status during a lawful stop. This bill simply makes sure that no municipality in Texas has the option of making its community a safe haven for individuals who violate the law.

Unfortunately, this bill was killed on a point of order Friday evening. A point of order is a technical problem with the bill. HB 12 will go back to committee for corrections and will find its way back to the floor early next week.

Education Reform (HB 400)

The House debated education reform last night. House Bill 400 provides important education reforms that allow for effective human resource management. It reduces unnecessary mandates on school districts. This bill allows for class size flexibility and recognizes and rewards effective teaching.

Texas school districts need flexibility to protect quality educational services provided to Texas students in these challenging times. HB 400 will serve a valuable role in expanding the available management tools to meet this objective. This bill saves jobs by giving districts alternatives to laying off teachers, nurses, counselors, and librarians during these trying economic times. As I have mentioned before, in the proposed budget, 56% of the state's general revenue is spent on education, which is actually a little more than what has been spent in the previous years. The share of the pie is the same, but the size of the pie has gotten smaller due to the economic downturn.

This bill was debated late into Friday evening until it was delayed as a result of a printing error. The bill will now be reprinted and is expected to be up on Monday.

Tort Reform (HB 274)

HB 274, which I co-authored, is a comprehensive tort reform bill that helps ensure our state's judicial system remains fair, predictable, and able to fully compensate those injured by the actions of others. Texas needs more jobs, not lawsuits, and HB 274 helps achieve that goal. Having a fair, balanced, and predictable legal system helps secure Texas's position as the nation's leader in economic growth and job creation. The changes HB 274 makes include directing the Texas Supreme Court to adopt rules to allow for the quick dismissal of meritless lawsuits, allowing trial courts to obtain immediate appellate court help with difficult legal issues, and encouraging the early resolution of actions through settlement. After this bill was stalled on a technical issue, earlier this week, it was brought up again today and passed the House.

Asian Pacific American Heritage Day at the Capitol

The U.S. Congress established May of each year as Asian Pacific American Heritage Month. In honor of this occasion, I hosted Asian Pacific American Heritage Day at the Capitol on Wednesday, May 4. We had leaders from the Asian American community across the state including the DFW, Houston, San Antonio, and Austin areas at the Capitol. In the morning, the group met with Gov. Rick Perry where we all discussed ways to leverage our ability to increase our exports to Asian countries and to create more jobs for Texans. The group received a resolution

on the House floor honoring May 2011 as Asian Pacific American Heritage Month in Texas. I would like to thank everyone who came to the Capitol for this wonderful celebration. Texas has become an increasingly important exporter to Asia. In 2009, China, South Korea, Singapore, Japan, and Taiwan were among the twelve top importers of Texas goods and services in the world.



Representative Angie Button with Leaders from the Asian American Community Across Texas.

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 Angie.Button@house.state.tx.us.