

ANGIE CHEN BUTTON



The State of Texas
House of Representatives



June 24, 2011

Dear Friends:

This special session is drawing to a close. We plan to adjourn Sine Die on Wednesday, June 29th however, there is still much to be done before then. Several important pieces of legislation are currently in conference committee while differences between the House and Senate versions are worked out and are expected to be eligible on the House Floor Monday. These include SB 1 and SB 2, the fiscal matters bills needed to balance our state budget, as well as SB 8 relating to flexibility for school districts and public school finance. HB 41, the bill designed to reduce intrusive pat-downs by the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) at airports, is also on the calendar for Monday. Please continue to communicate your thoughts on these and any other issues.

HB 79

This week the House passed HB 79, the judicial fiscal matters bill. HB 79 increases the efficiency and effectiveness of the Texas court system and brings simplicity and rationality to the legal process by reforming the organization and administration of our court system. It makes it easier for local courts to exchange cases, dockets, and benches, helping courts to address problems in judicial workloads. This legislation also streamlines the kinds of cases statutory county courts can take by expanding the limit on the amount in controversy from \$100,000 to \$200,000 to ease some of the caseload burden of local district courts. It creates the Judicial Committee for Additional Resources, which would provide assistance on the request of trial courts, for particularly massive, complex, and burdensome cases.

HB 79 abolishes small claims courts and transfers those disputes to the jurisdiction of Justice of the Peace (JP) Courts. The JPs would resolve these cases based on a system of rules to be drafted by the Texas Supreme Court. This change will not do away with those seeking small claims but instead, will make the process more efficient and effective.

In addition, this legislation allows counties with two or more district courts to transfer cases from one district court to another and grants district courts original jurisdiction in civil matters greater than \$500. Moreover, it requires certain county court judges and probate judges to be U.S. citizens and allows associate judges in child protection and child support family courts to carry handguns in court if they have concealed handgun permits.

HB 79 represents an investment in the court system of our state. As the population and economy of Texas grow, so will the need for an efficient and rational system of courts. This legislation's reforms are geared toward creating more efficient and uniform justice across our state.



Discussing legislation on the House floor with Speaker Straus to my right and Representatives Morrison, Zerwas, and Miller to my left.

**For your information, below is the press release issued earlier today by Governor Perry
Announcing TETF Investment in HD 112.**

Gov. Perry Announces TETF Investment in At-Home Macular Degeneration Monitoring Technology

AUSTIN – Gov. Rick Perry has announced the Texas Emerging Technology Fund (TETF) has awarded \$1 million to Vital Art and Science Inc. (VAS) for the development of a handheld application capable of diagnosing and monitoring age-related macular degeneration and diabetic retinopathy.

“The Texas Emerging Technology Fund continues to be a critical tool to help develop and bring to market innovative technologies with the potential to change lives not just here in Texas, but across the U.S. and abroad,” Gov. Perry said. “VAS’s technology will provide an accurate and cost-effective monitoring solution for the millions around the world who suffer from macular degeneration and diabetic retinopathy, and will help physicians treat these age and vision-related diseases.”

VAS is developing myVisionTrack, which allows patients with age-related macular degeneration and diabetic retinopathy to easily and accurately test and monitor their retinal function at home. This technology provides a lower cost alternative to doctor’s office based testing, and a more accurate alternative to current home testing methods. Age-related macular degeneration is a leading cause of blindness and vision loss in Americans age 60 and older, and combined with diabetic retinopathy, affect more than 40 million people around the world. There is currently no

cure for these conditions, which must be constantly and accurately monitored in order to be properly treated.

“I am excited about the steps made by Vital Arts and Science Inc. and the ability for the TETF to help make these innovations a reality,” Rep. Angie Chen Button said. “Not only will our region and state benefit economically from this technological advancement, but people everywhere who are suffering with these vision-related ailments will find relief with more convenient and effective monitoring and treatment.”

This technology was developed at the Retina Foundation of the Southwest in Dallas, which along with the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center, will support clinical trials of the technology.

The TETF is a \$200 million initiative created by the Texas Legislature in 2005 at the governor’s request, and reauthorized in 2007 and again in 2009. A 17-member advisory committee of high-tech leaders, entrepreneurs and research experts reviews potential projects and recommends funding allocations to the governor, lieutenant governor and speaker of the House. To date, the TETF has allocated more than \$197.2 million in funds to 133 early stage companies, and \$173 million in grant matching and research superiority funds to Texas universities.

For more information on the TETF, please visit

Please Save the Date

Third Annual District 112 Senior Awareness Day

Saturday, August 6, 2011

9:30 AM - 12:30 PM

Richardson Civic Center, Grand Hall

411 W. Arapaho Rd.

Richardson, Texas 75080

Dallas Area Agency on Aging benefits counselors will be available to answer questions and provide assistance on Medicare, Medicaid and Social Security.

There will be entertainment, refreshments, exhibitors and door prizes. I hope you can join us for this fun and informative event. If you have any questions, please call 972-234-8980 or e-mail me at Angie.Button@house.state.tx.us.

It is an honor to serve as your Representative in the Texas House. Please let me know if I can ever be of assistance.

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.