

ANGIE CHEN BUTTON



The State of Texas
House of Representatives



February 3, 2012

Friends,

This year is already moving quickly as legislators work to prepare for the 83rd legislative session. Committees are beginning to meet on interim charges and next month I will report to you on the Technology Committee's first interim hearing.

Taking Care of Business in HD 112

Throughout my time as your State Representative, I have focused on growing our economy. On February 1st I traveled to Austin to attend the Texas Association of Business's Annual Conference. While there, I was awarded with the "Champion for Free Enterprise" award for my pro-business work last session. Because I regularly fight to keep taxes low and to create an environment that fosters job growth, I am proud to say that this is the second session I have received this honor. Recently, I was appointed to serve on the Select Committee for Economic Development. This committee is charged with examining current initiatives in the state to assess what is working and to determine what we can do to improve our efforts in Texas. I would love to hear what you have to say. If you would like me to visit your business so I can see firsthand how you operate and to discuss what can be done to help you succeed, please contact my office or e-mail me at Angie.Button@house.state.tx.us to schedule a visit.



Here I am at the Ron Patterson Insurance Open House on January 19, 2012. On my right: Ron Taylor, Chairman of the Board of the Richardson Chamber of Commerce, and on my left: Ben Patterson, Holly Beers and Melissa Harvey with Ron Patterson Insurance.



On January 26, 2012 I attended the Freese and Nichols Ribbon Cutting Hosted by the Richardson Chamber of Commerce. Behind me is Richardson City Councilman Kendal Hartley. To my left are Richardson City Councilmen Mark Solomon and Amir Omar. To my immediate right is Richardson Mayor Bob Townsend, further right Richardson City Manager Bill Keffler, and furthest right Richardson Chamber of Commerce President & CEO Bill Sproull.

Freese and Nichols expanded its Energy Group in Richardson, Texas. The company has opened a 13,438-square-foot site in Greenway Plaza III at 2100 Lakeside Boulevard. The move will help Freese and Nichols meet increased demand for the firm's natural gas and oil pipeline services.

The firm plans to increase its presence in the oil and gas industry by expanding its capabilities to provide a full range of services for producers and mid-stream clients in the Barnett Shale and Eagle Ford Shale. Demand surpassed original expectations, resulting in the need for a larger space. Within six months, the firm hit its maximum capacity in the Richardson office with 26 employees. Freese and Nichols will move these employees to the new location, and anticipates adding 10-12 new positions by the end of 2013, most likely mechanical and chemical engineers, CAD technicians and designers.

Redistricting

The redistricting process has been confusing to many people so I would like to take this opportunity to provide a bit of background information and to let you know where the process currently stands. The legislative maps were originally drawn by the State Legislature and signed by the Governor. Various plaintiffs' groups filed suit against the State of Texas to prevent elections using the legislatively drawn maps.

The case proceeded to a trial with Attorney General Abbott and his team defending the State of Texas and its maps. The plaintiffs sought and received from the San Antonio three-judge panel, an injunction preventing the maps enacted by the legislature from being used in the 2012 elections prior to being pre-cleared under Section 5 of the Voting Rights Act. Due to this injunction, interim maps had to be drawn, and were issued by this same court last November.

The AG then appealed the three-judge panel's decision issuing interim maps. That effort was successful and the Supreme Court remanded the case back to the San Antonio three-judge panel for further action.

The three-judge panel is only considering interim maps, not final maps. This is an important distinction, but it is confusing to many. When the legislative maps were challenged, the three-judge panel was tasked with getting a preliminary ruling on maps because a final ruling could not be issued until all the potential legal challenges are resolved, including challenges to the maps before a different three-judge panel in Washington D.C. which is dealing with alleged violations of Section 5 of the Voting Rights Act.

When the Supreme Court issued its opinion, it ruled that the three-judge panel had gone too far in redrawing the maps. However, there were challenges to the legislatively drawn maps on the basis of alleged violations of the Voting Rights Act - Sections 2 and 5 in particular. The Supreme Court indicated that the San Antonio three-judge panel could not presume that the legislative map violated those sections without first having a judicial determination of that fact. The Supreme Court also indicated that the three judge panel could alter the legislative lines if they determined there was "reasonable probability" that the maps would be found in violation of the Voting Rights Act.

Since there is no guarantee that there will be a ruling in time to accomplish a timely primary election and since the Supreme Court did not say to wait on that ruling, the Attorney General's office has been pushing for an immediate decision by the San Antonio three-judge panel.

One important fact about the Supreme Court's decision is that when the Supreme Court ruled that the San Antonio three-judge panel's maps were stayed, the Supreme Court did not reinstate the legislature's maps, but instead, gave the task of redrawing maps back to the same San Antonio three-judge panel with the instructions to draw new maps in accordance with the criteria of their decision.

In comments on Friday, the San Antonio three-judge panel signaled that it would be helpful if the Attorney General and the plaintiffs groups would get together and discuss if they can agree on which districts there are areas of disputes over possible violations. By narrowing the number of contentious districts to a manageable number, it increases the likelihood that the San Antonio three-judge panel will be able to draw maps in time for an April primary.

The Court has stated that if the districts in dispute can be narrowed down, and if there is some agreement as to what is not in dispute by February 6, that there is still a good chance that Texas can have an April 3rd primary as long as the San Antonio three-judge panel can draw lines by February 6th.

We should know if we can have an April 3rd primary by the end of the day on Monday, February 6th.

Around the District

So far 2012 has been a wonderful and busy year and it is just getting started! Eric Evans, CEO of Lake Pointe Health Network gave an informative speech at the Rowlett Chamber of Commerce's January monthly luncheon. It was wonderful meeting Dr. Lawrence Wolinsky, the new Dean of Texas A&M's Health Science Center Baylor College of Dentistry in Dallas. Attending the City of Richardson's State of the City Address is always an informative event. I am proud of the impressive accomplishments Richardson made in 2011. One of the six accomplishments Mayor Townsend mentioned in his address included, Richardson being named as the International Business Capital of North Texas by the state legislature. I was glad to author the legislation last session to make that happen. Learning about the exciting economic development taking place in our area was very interesting at the Dallas Regional Chamber's annual meeting. The Garland Chamber of Commerce held a terrific annual banquet last month. Professor Michael Cox with SMU provided a very good presentation as to why people are moving to Texas. He identified six factors: stable weather patterns, low taxes, right-to-work laws, conservative government spending, reasonable housing prices associated with sensible land-use regulations, and good public schools. I would also like to congratulate the new chamber board members and all the individuals and businesses who received awards that evening. Below are some photos from other events around the district I attended:



Congressman Sam Johnson and Richardson Council Member Kendal Hartley at the 2012 DFW Taiwanese Chamber of Commerce annual meeting.



I attended the City of Garland Martin Luther King Jr. Parade Hosted by the Garland NAACP. Here I am with Garland Mayor Ronald Jones.



I gave an 82nd Legislative Session update to this wonderful group of ladies at the Women's Center of Richardson.

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.