

ANGIE CHEN BUTTON



The State of Texas
House of Representatives



March 29, 2013

Friends,

Happy Easter! Today, my Austin office will be operating with minimal staff and on Monday my district office will be closed so my staff may spend time with loved ones. At the beginning of the 83rd legislative session, Speaker Straus said he was going to put the House to work on the state's biggest problems. With 59 days remaining in the session, the House has adopted a plan to fund our state water needs, passed major reforms to public education, and next week, the House will debate the state budget.

Ways and Means

On Monday, I laid out three separate bills before the Ways & Means Committee that I filed to help address some of the issues with our current margins tax. All of these bills are designed to help our economy and keep Texas moving forward.

The Aerospace and Defense (A&D) industry is responsible for 342,000 jobs and generates \$27 billion in revenue in Texas annually. This is an important industry that provides great benefits to our state yet, with other states ramping up their recruitment efforts, we must be proactive if we want to keep the companies we have and attract more of the A&D industry to our state. The effects of increased competitiveness coupled with federal policy has made it difficult for the industry. Before the Committee met, I received word that Raytheon was consolidating its businesses in order to better compete in a challenging A&D market environment. Because of these factors, I filed HB 1860 that would allow a deduction for federal contracts for the sale for goods and services to the federal government.

I also filed HB 1310 to address issues our doctors are having. Currently, the cost of vaccines is a major expense for pediatricians and family doctors providing vaccines to their patients. As the tax code is written, most doctors actually lose money each time they administer a vaccine. Because vaccines are important to ensure the safety and wellbeing of all Texans, this bill allows physician practices to deduct the actual cost of the vaccine when they calculate taxes owed.

Accepting credit and debit cards as a means of payment is a necessity for almost every business in the State of Texas. Anytime a credit card is used at a business, the credit card company turns around and charges that business for processing the transaction. Texas is one of ten states that prohibits merchants from surcharging customers to defray costs associated with accepting credit and debit cards. Currently, credit card fees are a major expense for Texas businesses with the average fee for accepting a debit or credit card equaling between 2 and 3 percent per transaction. For sales of gasoline and diesel fuel, these fees equal between 4 and 7 cents per gallon. In order to help alleviate the burden on many of our small businesses, I filed HB 1579 to permit costs attributable to the acceptance of credit cards and debit cards as a means of payment to be considered a cost of goods sold for determining tax liability.

All three of these bills were discussed in committee and were left pending as we continue to hear bills that will impact the margins tax. I am confident that we will be able to make some changes to the current system that will have a positive impact on businesses and our state economy.

HB 5 - Public Education

Tuesday, after a long day of debate, the House passed HB 5 with great bipartisan support. The bill enhanced school accountability by implementing a new school rating system. Schools will be measured with more understandable labels of A, B, C, D, and F and will be rated on academic performance, financial stability, and community and student engagement. HB 5 expanded the courses and curriculum offered to students. It gives students more flexibility to explore their individual interests as they prepare for higher education or the workforce. I offered two amendments that were unanimously adopted that would expand computer and technology courses offered and promote the use of technology in schools. The bill also reduced school's dependence on standardized testing and scaled back the reliance on end of course exams. Since I was first elected to office, parents, teachers, students, and school administrators have all spoken to me at length on testing and how we are requiring too much. I was proud to vote for this important piece of legislation.



Here I am pictured with GISD School Board President Linda Griffin and Board Assistant Secretary Rick Lambert, who visited me on Wednesday.

HB 4 - Water

In the midst of a prolonged statewide drought, all of us in North Texas are very aware of the importance of water to our state and the need to plan for our future. Wednesday, the House debated HB 4 that will create the State Water Implementation Fund for Texas (SWIFT). SWIFT will be the funding mechanism for the state's water plan. The legislation specifies that at least 20% of SWIFT funds used in any biennium must be for water conservation, reuse, or education. After a full day of debate on the bill, it passed with an overwhelming majority. Thank you to everyone that sent in their own views on this important piece of legislation. I appreciate all of the input and interest that you have shown in your state's future.



Congressman Sam Johnson was honored on Wednesday by the Texas House on the 40th anniversary of his homecoming from Vietnam, where he was a prisoner of war.

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.