

ANGIE CHEN BUTTON



The State of Texas
House of Representatives



May 17, 2013

Friends,

There are ten days left in the 83rd regular session and it is crunch time for the state budget. This session, negotiations on our budget have been particularly challenging. The main points of contention are also the major issues of this session: education, water, and transportation. With deadlines looming, the House and the Senate are continuing to work hard to iron out differences while responsibly funding the needs of our state. This afternoon, the Senate and the House conferees came to an agreement giving hope that SB 1 will make its way back to the House floor for final passage before we adjourn Sine Die.

Emerging Technology Fund

Last week the House passed HB 3162, that I authored with my colleague from Houston, Chairman John Davis, to change the way the Texas Emerging Technology Fund (ETF) administers awards. The ETF has been under a great deal of scrutiny in the past years as many have alleged that because awards decisions are made by the state's "Big Three," the Governor, Lt. Governor, and Speaker of the House, politics has too much of an impact on award decisions. Our region has benefited a great deal from this fund and I saw a need to modify some of the practices governing this important economic development tool.

In the bill, the "Big Three" would each appoint five members to a board that would then hire a fund manager and make awards to applicants seeking help with start-ups. Decisions involving university awards would still be made by the Governor, Lt. Governor, and Speaker. This bill is intended to help ease concerns about the fund while ensuring Texas has the tools to remain competitive. Additionally, the bill renames the ETF the "Texas Research Technology Fund" which more accurately reflects the purpose of the fund. HB 3162 is currently over in the Senate awaiting final passage.

Public Education-CSCOPE

I have received a great deal of correspondence on CSCOPE and SB 1406. Regional service centers have developed a curriculum management system known as CSCOPE, designed to assist school districts in teaching the essential knowledge and skills. Although the State Board of Education (SBOE) has oversight of instructional materials in Texas, there has been no SBOE oversight over CSCOPE content since its inception because a curriculum management system is not considered to be an "instructional material." SB 1406 provides for SBOE oversight of regional education service center activities concerning certain curriculum management systems. This bill was originally set on the calendar for this week, but as a result of a procedural error found in the bill, it was sent back to committee and will now be back up on the House floor on Monday. I plan to support this bill. If you have not contacted me on this yet but would like your opinion known before I vote, please e-mail me at Angie.Button@house.state.tx.us before Monday.



With 4th graders and their wonderful Teacher Emily Koder from GISD's Luna Elementary school at the Capitol.

Charter Schools

The House passed SB 2 this week relating to charter schools. In an effort to improve the quality of education in our state, this bill increases the cap on the number of charter schools to a total of 275 schools by 2019. Another provision of this bill that I was very supportive of, seeks to make it easier to close under-performing charter schools while encouraging the replication of successful charter schools. After considering the input I got from many in the district, I voted in favor of this bill.

Teacher Retirement System

The House passed SB 1458 today. This bill helps to make the Teacher Retirement System (TRS) actuarially sound to ensure that teachers get the benefits they have earned once they retire. SB 1458 increases the state contribution to the fund and also provides a cost of living adjustment for many retirees, TRS's first in over a decade. This session, I met with several current and retired teachers throughout the District. They dedicate so much of their time to educate our children and I was glad to assist them by voting in favor of this bill. Earlier during the session, I met with Tonna Duke, a retired teacher of Richardson, and Cindee Sharp with TRTA (both pictured with me below) to address some of the retired teachers' legislative priorities.



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.

