

ANGIE CHEN BUTTON



The State of Texas
House of Representatives



May 1, 2015

Friends,

We are entering the final month of the 84th legislative session. Our days at the Capitol are getting longer as committees wrap up their work hearing bills and the floor sessions are stretching late into the evening. It is important that you continue to communicate your thoughts with us on issues that are important to you.

Economic Development

With overwhelming support, this week, the Texas House passed HB 26, the Economic Reform bill, which I proudly authored. Texas is not a leader in job creation by pure luck. Along with many pro-business policies, Texas offers various incentive programs to help bring jobs and economic growth to our state. However, the state will not stay on top without effort.

During the interim, I had the honor of chairing the Select Committee on Economic Development Incentives. HB 26 is a product of the hard work started by that committee and the continued work of the standing Committee on Economic & Small Business Development. It is a major effort to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of our programs and appeal more to small businesses, all while remaining attractive to major employers.

In order to improve transparency and effectiveness of our programs, HB 26 creates the Economic Incentive Oversight Board. This board is comprised of public appointees and is tasked with examining economic development programs in our state and creating a schedule for evaluation. The board will examine the overall process and state's approach to economic development. In doing this, the board must develop a matrix for examining the success of these programs. The board also has the ability to ask for a program to undergo an audit if, during their evaluation, they discover anything that warrants a closer look.

HB 26 eliminates the Emerging Technology Fund. While this fund has done some good things for our region and state, it has also been surrounded with controversy and has a reputation for not

operating in an open and transparent manner. This legislation also calls for the elimination of the Linked Deposit Program and Small Business Industrial Development Corporation. These two programs have become stagnant and are no longer regularly used.

HB 26 creates the Governor's University Research Initiative. The Governor's University Research Initiative would be used to provide matching funds to Texas public universities for the recruitment of Nobel Laureates and National Academy members. The initiative will help ensure Texas will be home to research centers and great minds that will transform future generations. It is important to harness our resources to elevate Texas' higher education institutions as integral participants in our economic advancement.

The Economic Development reform bill restructures the Texas Enterprise Fund. This fund is often referred to as our state's "deal closing" fund and is credited with bringing notable employers, such as Toyota, to Texas. The reforms in HB 26 require the fund to be used for small business in addition to being used to attract major employers considering relocation to our state. HB 26 creates eligibility for technology and innovation for university research projects that have university and private sector investment to apply to the fund to help commercialize projects.

This bill will now head over to the Senate.

Transportation Funding & Planning

This week, the House passed HB 13 and SJR 5 which dedicates about \$3 billion of the state's sales tax revenue to the State Highway Fund. This measure does not raise taxes or increase the overall state spending; it merely dedicates funds that would originally go into General Revenue and places it in the state highway fund. Ultimately, the measure will be going to the voters later this year for your final approval. Additionally, the House passed HB 20 which requires the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) to provide progress reports on how the Department is functioning. This bill aims to increase transparency and accountability on where TxDOT allocates funding to different projects. HB 13 and HB 20 will now move on to be heard in the Senate.

Youth Leadership Garland

Youth Leadership Garland is a program through Garland ISD for high school sophomores to learn how to become effective leaders. I enjoyed meeting all of these bright young people when they came down to their State Capitol to learn more about our state government. The group of students were able to meet and speak with their elected officials from Garland and to discuss some important issues that are moving through the legislature.



Garland Councilmembers Stephen Stanley, Tim Campbell, and BJ Williams stopped by my office to discuss transportation issues this week

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.