

ANGIE CHEN BUTTON



The State of Texas
House of Representatives



June 5, 2015

Friends,

This Monday, the House and Senate Adjourned Sine Die. The Texas House successfully addressed a number of key priorities including education, job creation, transparency and accountability in government.

The Legislature approved a balanced two-year state budget that grows less than 2% per year and allows for almost \$4 billion in tax relief for Texans. The budget puts additional resources into public education and higher education.

Several important education reforms are also on their way to Governor Abbott's desk for approval. For example, the House broadened the accountability system used to evaluate public schools, reducing the role of standardized testing. The Legislature also approved a plan to more quickly and effectively reform schools that repeatedly fail to meet academic standards.

The Legislature created the Governor's University Research Initiative which I authored with HB 26, to help public institutions of higher education recruit nationally recognized scholars.

Creation of the Governor's University Research Initiative was part of the Legislature's larger effort to reform the economic development funds administered by the Governor's office. HB 26 also eliminated the problematic Emerging Technology Fund and created new oversight of other economic development funds in order to protect against abuse of taxpayer dollars.

Oversight of taxpayer dollars was a major theme throughout 84th legislative session. As the session began, details emerged about problems with contracts issued by the state's Health and Human Services Commission. The House stepped up providing significant new oversight of how agencies award and administer private-sector contracts.

Finally, the House achieved a number of victories in its efforts to make the budget more transparent. For decades, the state has collected fees for a stated purpose, but withheld the money from that purpose so that it could be counted to certify the rest of the budget. The House reduced that practice in 2013 and further reduced it this session. As a result, hundreds of millions of dollars in fees were reduced, while additional resources flowed to transportation, hospital trauma care and state parks.

“The House was a place where we vetted ideas carefully, treated each other with respect and worked to find common ground,” Speaker Straus said. “Members have had the chance to address the issues that are most important to them and their constituents, and I think they can return home proud of what they have achieved.”

I appreciate all those who contacted my office to let me know their views on pending legislation. I invite your continued communication during the interim as my office is already at work on ways to make our state a better place to live and do business. From this point forward, I will send newsletters once a month. These newsletters will discuss in detail, legislation we passed this session as well as issues that arise during the interim. If there is a particular topic that is of interest to you that you would like highlighted, please let me know.



Passing Legislation on the Floor of the Texas House

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.