

ANGIE CHEN BUTTON



The State of Texas House of Representatives



February 3, 2017

Friends,

This week in Austin, the Texas House and Senate convened twice for joint sessions to hear Governor Greg Abbott deliver the State of the State and State Supreme Court Justice Chief Justice Nathan Hecht deliver the State of the Judiciary.

State of the State

On Tuesday, Governor Greg Abbott laid out his priorities for the 85th legislative session. He declared four emergency items asking lawmakers to fix the state's troubled Child Protective Services agency, punish cities that provide sanctuary to undocumented immigrants, reform ethics laws, and support changing the U.S. Constitution to rein in federal power. By declaring something an emergency item, it allows the legislature to take quicker action to address them. The rules prohibit legislators from voting on legislation during the first 60 days of the 140-day session but allow a vote on emergency items at any time.

Governor Abbott expressed several other priorities during the State of the State. He said, "Let's make Texas the 31st" state that offers school choice, showing support for a program that would let parents use public money to send their children to private schools. Additionally, the Governor expressed his strong support for the Texas Enterprise Fund, also known as our state's "deal-closing" fund, emphasizing its continued importance in keeping our economy strong. Governor Abbott went on to push for "serious property tax reform with a real revenue cap," restricting local officials' ability to raise property taxes without voter approval.

"I am confident we are going to be able to balance the budget without looting the Rainy Day Fund," Abbott said, referring to the state's savings account. Largely funded by taxes on oil and gas development, the fund is projected to have a balance of \$11.9 billion at the end of the next two-year budget.

I would love to hear your thoughts on the State of the State and the items our Governor indicated were priorities. You can reach me at Angie.Button@house.texas.gov.

State of the Judiciary

On Wednesday, the House and the Senate convened for another joint session to hear the State of the Judiciary. In his address, Texas Supreme Court Chief Justice Nathan Hecht discussed bail reform, the cost of legal expenses, mental health issues, and a host of other topics. He stated that the legislature should prioritize judicial security referring to Julie Kocurek, a state district judge in Travis County, who was shot outside her home in late 2015 by a man who once appeared in her courtroom.

Judge Hecht asked lawmakers to continue funding legal services for veterans and sexual assault victims. "Legal costs are also a problem for the middle class and small businesses," Hecht said. The chief justice said he and colleagues are looking at recommendations to lower the costs of legal services. Additionally, Judge Hecht asked legislators for financial assistance to continue funding the Texas Supreme Court's Children's Commission, which trains judges and lawyers handling children, foster care, and human-trafficking cases. He also called on lawmakers to eliminate straight-ticket voting in judicial races, a sentiment echoed by Speaker Joe Straus earlier this week, and expanded to include all races on the ballot.

CPA Day at the Capitol

On Tuesday of this week, we celebrated CPA Day at the Capitol as CPAs from across state came to visit their legislators. As a CPA, I also participated in a CPA forum along with my colleague, Sen. Charles Perry and Representative Frullo where we briefed the accountants on how the current legislative session may affect Texans. We discussed the budget, school funding and other key issues facing our state.



I was thrilled to have my friends Bob Yarborough and Tallie O. Young of Sachse stop by as a part of the National Association of Independent Financial Advisors day at the Capitol.



GISD Principals were in town this week as a part of Raise Your Hand Texas. Pictured here with Garland's Webb Middle School Principal Kenneth Washington and Sachse's Armstrong Elementary Principal Coleman Bruman.

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.texas.gov