

ANGIE CHEN BUTTON



The State of Texas House of Representatives



March 31, 2017

Friends,

Including today, there are 60 days left in the 85th legislative session. Committees are hard at work hearing legislation important to Texans. Thursday, April 6th, the house budget will be debated on the floor. Thank you to those who have already contacted me to express your priorities. If you have not yet contacted my office to weigh in on the budget debate, I would love to hear from you. Please email me at Angie.Button@house.texas.gov.

Stopping Tax Hikes

This week, I laid out HB 2126 before the Ways & Means Committee to prevent an increased tax rate for retailers and wholesalers who sell phone cards. A recent 'proposal for decision' delivered by an administrative law judge, said that the sale of prepaid phone cards constitutes the sale or resale of telecommunications services. Under this interpretation, a retailer or wholesaler engaged in the sale of prepaid phone cards would have to pay an increased franchise tax rate.

This bill clarifies that prepaid calling cards are not considered to be a telecommunication service for franchise tax purposes. This bill has no cost to the state and will prevent retailers and wholesale employers from being forced to pay more taxes.

Railroad Commission of Texas

Almost all state agencies go through a process called a sunset review every twelve years. The purpose of these intensive reviews is to determine if these agencies are operating efficiently and are still needed. If the legislature does not pass a bill continuing an agency under review, then that agency is abolished. The Sunset Commission recommends improvements that would eliminate wasteful spending or get rid of duplicative services carried out by other agencies. And while not all suggestions by the Commission make it into the final version of the continuation bill, the process still serves to keep state agencies accountable.

This week, the House debated and passed HB 1818, the sunset bill that made improvements to the Railroad Commission and authorize it until its next review in 2029. The Railroad Commission is charged with regulating the oil & gas industry, pipeline safety, and surface mining. The Commission is led by three commissioners that are elected state-wide by the voters. HB 1818 gives the Railroad Commission increased oversight over pipeline safety and creates a plan that would track and report monitoring and enforcement activities over time. These activities would include the number, type, and severity of violations to regulations as well as the penalty assessed and the ability to better track and penalize repeat violators. The bill will now head to the Senate for review and debate.



Wednesday, March 29th was Retired Teacher Day at the Capitol. I was honored to meet with several retired teachers from Richardson ISD and District 112. Educators, thank you for your service to our state.



Yesterday, I was happy to join Representative Hubert Vo in recognizing March 30, 2017 as Vietnamese American Day at the Texas State Capitol. After the fall of Saigon, many Vietnamese Americans settled in Texas and flourished here making our state home to the second-largest Vietnamese population in the United States. Vietnamese Americans have embraced the principles for which the United States stands for including hard work, religious freedom, and democracy. Thank you to everyone who participated in this event!

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