



State Representative Lyle Larson
TX HD-122

06.14.2011

Weekly Recap #22

What's new in District 122

We're two weeks into the Special Session and have accomplished arguably the most challenging task, addressing education funding. This week we will tackle congressional redistricting, Texas Wind Insurance Association (TWIA) reform, bills removing state mandates from school districts and sanctuary city legislation. Before we kick off the third (and hopefully final) week of the Special Session, we hope you'll take a moment to read our recap of last week and then let us know your opinion in the brief surveys below!

SB 7 Improving the Quality of Texas Health Care

SB7, which was passed by the House last week, aims to make Medicaid and private healthcare more cost efficient in the state of Texas. Representative Zerwas, M.D., led us through the process of making fundamental changes in delivery of medical care in Texas to prepare for the impact of the federal healthcare legislation passed last year. Medicare costs in the next biennium will cost at least \$4 billion more, so SB 7 is one way to help save Texas money. Several amendments were offered, including limiting funding for Planned Parenthood and requesting a waiver from the Obama Administration so that Texas can operate Medicaid under the state's guidance, further guaranteeing a more local solution to solving our country's health care issues.

SB 1 and 2 The "Fiscal Matters" Bills

When we arrived at the Capitol to begin the 82nd Legislative Session in January, we knew we were facing a daunting \$25 billion shortfall. We knew that we'd need to make tough decisions to fund the most important functions of state government - education and caring for the elderly and mentally impaired - while living within our means. After months of research, deliberation and debate during the regular session, we passed a balanced budget. Two weeks into the Special Session, we passed the last of the necessary budget legislation to ensure the state will function for another two years.

After 18 hours of debate on the House floor last week, we passed SB 1, the last of the budget legislation, with a vote of 83-62. Funding education was the priority of this bill. As a product of Northeast ISD public schools, I approached my first term in the Texas House with the commitment to ensure Texas public schools were not adversely affected by budget cuts. The Legislature worked hard to prioritize. As a result, several state agencies experienced deep cuts but education topped the priority list. With the passage of SB 1, the 2012-2013 budget will provide \$1.6 billion more directly to our public schools than the 2010-2011 budget, from \$27.6 billion in the current biennium to \$29.2 billion for 2012-13. This amounts to a 5.6 percent increase in state funding for education from the previous budget. The following components of the budget were cut as follows:

- natural resources budget was cut by 25 percent
- general government operations by 19 percent
- the judiciary by 13 percent
- higher education by 9 percent
- the Legislature by 9 percent
- public safety and criminal justice by 5 percent

As you are likely aware, the Legislature approved spending \$3.2 billion of the "rainy day fund" to pay for the deficit in our current budget. What is left over in the "rainy day fund" will be used to pay for increased costs of Medicaid and education in the next biennium. As discussed above, as a result of the federal healthcare bill passed last year, we expect to see thousands of new Medicaid enrollees, at a cost of at least \$4 billion to our state, possibly much more. The good news is that sales tax revenues have increased several months in a row over last year's figures. We will make adjustments as the economy turns around and more revenue is available to fill holes in the budget.

The House is expected to soon debate SB 9, the anti-sanctuary cities bill, which was added to the Special Session call by the Governor early last week. A sanctuary city is defined as a city in the US that protects illegal immigrants by not enforcing federal immigration law.

At the Capitol



With staff members and Speaker Straus on May 30th, the last day of the regular session.

If we may be of assistance to you, please feel free to contact our Capitol office at (512) 463-0646, our District Office at (210) 402-5402 or by email at lyle.larson@house.state.tx.us. Please continue to let us hear from you!

Best,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "Lyle Larson". The signature is stylized and written in a cursive-like font.