



**Lyle Larson**

State Representative - District 122

### **What's New in District 122**

Throwing a touchdown pass, sinking a 3-point shot or hitting a home run to win a game are the analogies we all use to motivate us in every walk of life. Often in both life and politics, we are unwilling to put ourselves in the position to lead the team to a victory due to the fear of failure. This Legislative Session, our team has embarked on many initiatives at the state level to hold elected officials accountable, make government more efficient and, most importantly, to leave our great state a better place for future generations to enjoy. We appreciate your interest and at the risk of throwing an interception, shooting an 'air ball' or striking out at the plate, we are working hard to get legislation passed that we believe will have a positive impact on Texas.

While our team has been very busy preparing for the many hearings for legislation laid out in committee over the past few weeks, we also had the chance to partake in meetings with some great folks over the last two weeks, including: constituent and small business owner, John Hermann, Dr. Jaime Capelo, Dr. Battista and Dr. Paul, three physicians from District 122, the Texas Aggregates and Concrete Association, several folks with the San Antonio Fire and Police Pension Fund, the Associated Builders and Contractors of South Texas, and representatives from CHRISTUS Santa Rosa, as well as University Health System.

Additionally, Team Larson visited the Alamo last Monday to see the William B. Travis "Victory or Death" letter, which was on display for the first time since the historic battle. The letter is still an inspiration today and was a very emotional experience for many of the 25,539 folks who came to view it. This historic treasure drew in folks from all over the world for its 13-day visit, with a wait at times of over five hours to view it. San Antonio was very proud to host the famous letter penned by Lt. Col. William Barrett Travis as the Mexican Army besieged the Alamo in 1836, and we thank the Texas State Library and Archives Commission for allowing it to return to its place of origin for the first time in 177 years. Escorted by a DPS caravan and helicopter up IH-35, the letter safely arrived back in Austin last Friday, March 8th for continued

preservation, but we're hopeful the Alamo will be able to continue hosting the letter every several years on a regular basis.

## **Legislation by Larson**

We made it! The 60th day of the Legislative Session, which is the last day that members are allowed to file bills, was last Friday, March 8. Our last bill was filed just hours before the deadline, and brought the Team Larson total to 52 bills. To view the list of legislation we're pursuing, please look [here](#). Now that no new bills may be introduced, committee hearings will begin to get longer and there will be a lot more action on the House floor.

## **Bills in Committee**

To date, we've presented 18 bills in various committees. Here is a quick recap of the presentation of some of our most high profile bills:

### **[HJR 42](#) Term Limits and [HJR 73](#) Resign to Run**

We filed our term limits bill because career politicians are exactly what inhibit our government from achieving its mission. As a longtime advocate of term limits, I believe every elected official at every level of government should be allowed to serve for a finite amount of time. Last week, we presented [HJR 42](#), which would limit all elected officials serving at the state level to a maximum of 12 years in office: 6 2-year terms for Texas House members and 3 4-year terms for State Senate members and statewide officeholders. After presenting the bill, several of the committee members indicated they would support limiting statewide officeholders to 2 4-year terms, which would take effect immediately upon voter approval. The committee also seemed favorable to [HJR 73](#), the resign to run concept which would require that anyone who holds state office will be forced to resign if they announce their candidacy for another elective office with more than a year left on their term.

### **[HB 120](#): Specialty Military License Plates for Defense Superior Service Medal Honorees and [HB 150](#): Flying Flags at Half-Staff in Remembrance of Fallen Service Members from Texas**

Members of the Committee on Defense and Veterans' Affairs indicated strong support for these initiatives when we presented them last week. We look forward to continuing to work to honor our military service members.

### **[HJR 30](#) and [HB 151](#): City-County Consolidation**

We firmly believe that we need to start changing the architecture of government in Texas to gain very obvious efficiencies in the urbanization of many of our larger counties. We laid out two bills in the County Affairs Committee that would allow the voters to decide whether to combine Bexar County and the City of San Antonio into a single metro government. Similar consolidations have been done all over the country in places like San Francisco, Indianapolis, Nashville, Denver and others with extremely good results by providing better and less expensive service delivery by shedding duplicative layers of government.

### **[HB 105](#), [HB 162](#) and [HJR 40](#): Protecting Our Parks by Restoring Integrity in Budgeting**

For several years, we've worked to restore truth in budgeting, especially in the way we collect and appropriate tax revenue for our state park system. If we're going to restore integrity in the budgeting process, there is no better place to start than providing parks the funding that has been promised. Our state parks have a profound impact on every person who lives in or visits our great state, and they are the most visible example of how the state takes care of its most iconic Texas institutions. Last week in the Ways and Means Committee hearing, we presented these bills, that include 3 different strategies to end the practice of diverting sporting goods sales tax revenue from its intended purpose: our state parks. The committee reacted very positively to our legislation, and we are fortunate to have Ways and Means Committee Chairman Harvey Hilderbran as a joint author on these bills.

### **[HB 118](#) and [HB 121](#): Returning Accountability to San Antonio Transportation Entities**

Last Tuesday, the House Transportation Committee listened to hours of testimony on [HB 118](#) and appeared to be very interested in the concept. HB 118 would allow only elected officials serving on Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) Transportation Policy Boards (TPB) to vote to allocate funding on transportation projects. As many of you know, MPO boards currently consist of elected officials (city council members, county commissioners, suburban mayors, state representatives and senators) and non-elected officials, including public employees such as city and county public works department staff and TxDOT engineers. As a former Chairman of the Bexar County-San Antonio MPO, I found this setup to be problematic. While the expertise of the non-elected public employees is clearly needed, it is

my belief that to be accountable to voters only elected members of the MPO should be allowed to vote. With over \$200 million flowing through the Bexar County-San Antonio MPO alone, we should be able to hold accountable the folks who make decisions about what transportation projects are funded.

We also had a lengthy discussion about [HB 121](#), which would require the election of VIA Metropolitan Transit Authority board members, rather than appointment by various elected government entities. The VIA board controls a large budget and make public transit decisions that have major long-term impacts. There is currently no limitation on the length of board members' tenures or methodology for an internal, democratic removal of an unsatisfactory board member. Especially in light of recent mischief and corruption, we feel that HB 121 will yield better transit policy results and lead to more fiscally responsible funding decisions.

### **Committee Hearings this Week**

Yesterday, we presented [HB 630](#) in the House Committee on Elections. HB 630 seeks to change quorum requirements for filling political party precinct chair vacancies. This bipartisan issue was brought forward by several county party organizations, indicating they experienced challenges in filling these vacancies because state law requires the assembly of precinct chairmen must possess a quorum of 50 percent to vote to fill vacancies. A quorum is nearly impossible to achieve in many counties, especially large counties like Harris and Bexar. Without a quorum to vote, precinct chair positions are left vacant, compounding the problem as counties become even further removed from quorum. This is a non-contentious piece of legislation as representatives from local Republican and Democrat parties testified on the necessity of the bill.

We also presented [HB 1350](#) before the Elections Committee. The idea behind the bill was born when I was driving down the road some time ago and heard a public service announcement on the radio, explaining services offered by a state agency. HB 1350 is intended to prevent state agency heads from appearing in state-funded promotions 60 days prior to an election in which their name is on the ballot. HB 1350 is a simple, ethically obvious step towards better transparency in government.

Both bills were seriously considered by the Elections committee. With some potential adaptations, the bills will likely move forward.

Tomorrow, our [HB 160](#) will be heard in the State Affairs Committee. HB 160 would require elected officials to disclose to the Texas Ethics Commission any state funded travel and security used outside of the state. The Commission

would then make the determination whether the travel and security costs are associated with official business or a personal/campaign related trip. If it is determined that the travel and/or security costs are not for official business, the elected official would be required to reimburse the state for those costs.

HB 160 has received a lot of notoriety and we expect the hearing to be very interesting.

### **The Texas House H2O Committee**

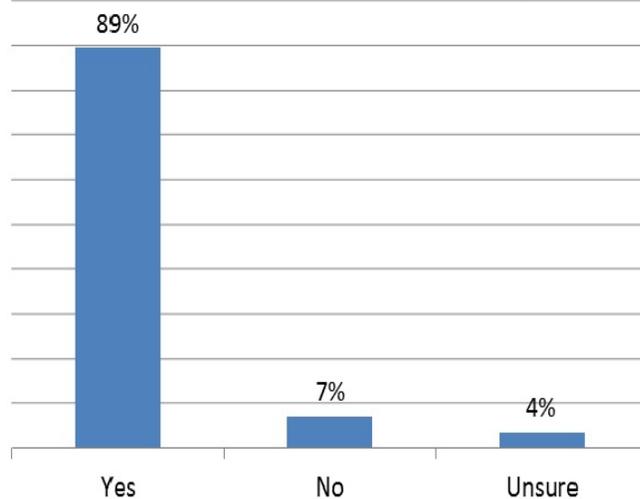
Last week, the House Natural Resources Committee heard the first in a series of water-specific bills coming out of our office this session. [HB 252](#) would mandate that water suppliers send a report to the TCEQ if they are reasonably certain that they have less than six months of water left at their disposal. The basic goal of the bill is to ensure that these systems, and the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality - the regulatory body that oversees them - have sufficient time to locate alternative sources of water. Since the worst of the drought began in late 2010, we've heard stories of a number of towns that have approached running dry, and at least one town is currently trucking in water to serve its customers. Through voluntary reporting, the TCEQ has already helped 16 water systems locate alternative sources of water. Our hope is that this legislation will lead to even more success stories.

Both the House Appropriations and Senate Finance Committees heard testimony focused on funding the State Water Plan this week. Chairman Allan Ritter's [HB 4](#) and Chairman Troy Fraser's [SB 22](#) would both use funds from the legislature's "Rainy Day Fund" to help implement water projects over the next 50 years. We feel like this measure is imperative to the stabilization of Texas' water future and stand with our colleagues in our steadfast commitment to passing this legislation. Funding the water plan seems to have picked up significant momentum this session, and the tone in the meetings was positive and affirmative. Our office is heavily invested in this legislation and will continue to monitor and help ensure that it comes to fruition. We'll have more water bills coming up in committee in the next few weeks and will continue to keep you posted as to their progress.

### **Survey Says**

In our last newsletter, we asked what you thought about HB 150, which would require that the U.S. and Texas flags at all state office buildings be flown at half-staff when a Texan military service member is lost on the battlefield. Here are the results:

To provide a way to honor Texan service members who are killed in action, I filed H.B. 150, which requires both the United States and Texas flags at all state office buildings to be flown at half-staff for one day in recognition of a member of the United States Armed Services from Texas who has been killed in action. Do you support H.B. 150?



### **A Cowboy-Cajun Health Care Program?**

As you may know, Governor Perry is refusing to expand Medicaid in Texas, despite many Republican governors across the country including from Florida, Arizona and New Jersey, who have started negotiating with the federal government on developing a state strategy to provide health care to growing populations that are eligible for Medicaid. There is a lot of discussion in Austin about what our strategy will be moving forward.

The Legislature is presented with a great challenge in reconciling a political decision with a business one. While we recognize the federal government is broke, we are working with Louisiana Governor Bobby Jindal on a plan that Texas may wish to follow. The proposal would provide more flexibility on implementation and how to address funding needs. We look forward to learning more about the Louisiana plan and possibly creating a Cowboy-Cajun plan to solve our health care delivery challenges.



Team Larson in front of the Alamo after viewing the Travis letter

### **In the News**

As always, please feel free to contact me if I may ever be of assistance to you by phone at (210) 402-5402 or by email at [lyle.larson@house.state.tx.us](mailto:lyle.larson@house.state.tx.us).

Best,

Lyle Larson