

State Representative Dan Huberty

House District 127 - Monthly Newsletter

October 2, 2015

Dear Fellow Texan,

Welcome to our new newsletter. The month of September was an especially busy month for bill implementation. Because so many bills went into effect last month, the focus around the dome was ensuring that the legislation we passed last session was going into effect appropriately and expediently.

This month's newsletter will outline what was going on in Austin this past month, policy focus from last session, and a few pieces of information and events that we believe will be useful for you and your family for the upcoming month. With the upcoming November elections, this newsletter focuses on the upcoming constitutional amendments that you'll have the opportunity to vote on. You'll also be able to read about Governor Greg Abbott's initiative for Texas to be the top state for women-owned businesses. This newsletter additionally contains information about the Veteran Land Board's Disaster Relief Initiative. If you, or someone you know, is a Veteran whose home was either damaged or destroyed during the floods earlier this year, scroll down to find information on how the state can help you or them.

Please take a moment to find me on social media. These websites are the best way to keep in touch with me on a day-to-day basis. You can find me on Facebook, and you can follow me on Twitter. If you wish to unsubscribe from this newsletter, just reply to this email, and we'll be sure to take you off our subscribe list.

If you have questions about specific policy areas, or need anything at all, please do not hesitate to contact me or my staff. You can just respond to this email, or contact my staff (whose information can be found at the bottom of this email). We're always happy to help you.

Sincerely,

Dan Huberty

What's Going On in Austin?

"My Goal Is To Make Texas The No. 1 State For Women-Owned Businesses"

Governor Greg Abbott for *Forbes*

If every woman-owned business in America were able to add just one new job tomorrow, the nation would reach full employment.

Women business owners are a powerful economic force, and my goal is to make Texas the most welcoming home for them. That is the message I will share today with the National Association of Women Business Owners in San Antonio as the organization celebrates 40 years of encouraging women entrepreneurs.

There are over 9.4 million women-owned businesses in the nation, employing over 7.9 million people and generating nearly \$1.5 trillion in revenues according to the 2015 State of Women-Owned Businesses study from American Express OPEN and Womenable.

Women are now majority owners of nearly one in three U.S. firms, and 887 net new women-owned enterprises open every day.

Unsurprisingly, many of these startups are finding the freedom to flourish in Texas.

The Lone Star State is second only to California in the number of women-owned businesses, but they are growing at a rate well ahead of both California and New York. In fact, businesses owned by women in Texas are growing at more than twice the rate of all firms nationwide.

Women cite the vision for an idea as the top motivation for going into business for themselves in a survey by the National Association of Women Business Owners. We see that same entrepreneurial passion here in Texas, and women are making gains in every industry sector.

Here are just three success stories from San Antonio.

Securing financing was a challenge June Bratcher faced when she started her business at her kitchen table with just \$200 in grocery money. Daisy Charter and Shuttles has since grown to a million-dollar enterprise with nationwide service and more than 50 employees.

Finding expert answers to help her "fast forward through business mistakes" was a struggle for Darlene Kirk, CEO and founder of Kirk's Global Compass. Today, with a staff of 21 at her marketing and professional services company, she encourages other women business owners to take advantage of peer-to-peer support systems.

Competing for government contracts designated for small businesses helped Julissa Carielo gain credibility when she launched her construction business. Honored as the Small Business Owner of the Year by the San Antonio Hispanic Chamber of Commerce last year, she now employs a team of 50 at Tejas Premier Building Contractor Inc. and gives back to the community.

There are more success stories like these every day all across Texas. San Antonio is the top metro area in the nation not only for the number of women-owned firms, but also for the jobs they create and their economic clout. Dallas is second in number, and Houston is No. 1 in revenue and fourth in number.

That success is diverse. Texas is second in the nation in the number of Latina-owned businesses and third

in the number of businesses owned by African-American women and by Asian-American women. And as I noted on my recent trip to Mexico to promote expanded trade, businesses owned by Hispanic women in Texas will create more jobs this year than those in New York, California or any other state.

Whether launching a micro-enterprise employing the proprietor only or a small business hiring other employees, women are looking for the same opportunities as all entrepreneurs: more access to capital, fewer barriers to entry and greater freedom to grow.

Texas offers more of these growth opportunities for women business-builders:

- Texas imposes no personal income tax and no corporate income tax, and we just cut the business franchise tax by 25 percent.
- We are speeding up permitting processes and have eliminated occupational licensing fees for more than 600,000 Texas professionals.
- Occupational license and exam fees are now waived for veterans with the required education, training and experience gained in the military, and new veteran-owned business are exempt from franchise taxes for the first 5 years.
- My office hosts Small Businesses Forums in communities around the state offering expert advice on financing, networking, marketing and more.
- We are also connecting Texas business women to resources offered by government agencies and private entities through the Governor's Commission for Women.
- And I proudly approved \$2.2 million in funding this legislative session to establish a Center for Women in Business at Texas Women's University in Denton to provide more of the tools needed to succeed.

Women investing in themselves represent one of the greatest potentials for job growth, and my goal as governor is to make Texas the No. 1 state for women-owned businesses.

Texas Secures Conditional ESEA Waiver for 2015-2016



Photo from [Spring Branch ISD](#).

AUSTIN – Commissioner of Education Michael Williams was notified today by the U.S. Department of Education that the department has approved the state's request for renewal of flexibility from specific provisions of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), also known as the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act, through the end of the 2015-2016 school year.

However, federal officials also stated that the state must meet specific conditions to continue ESEA flexibility beyond 2015-2016, placing Texas on "high-risk status."

ESEA flexibility beyond this school year would be dependent on the state meeting specific conditions that would require statewide use of specific teacher and principal evaluation and support systems, as well as utilizing them to inform personnel decisions at the local level.

Though Commissioner Williams welcomed approval of the waiver, he said the state is not changing its position on allowing local school districts to make decisions on using evaluation systems of their choosing.

“Throughout the waiver application process, I have made it clear to federal officials that I do not have nor will I ever seek the authority to compel local school districts to use one uniform teacher and principal evaluation system statewide,” said Commissioner Williams. “Our state believes strongly in local control of our schools. As a result, we will continue discussing this specific point with the U.S. Department of Education, but they should not expect any shift in Texas’ position.”

According to the approval letter, Texas must demonstrate how the state will ensure all school districts and charters implement teacher and principal evaluation and support systems that meet ESEA requirements, including the use of growth in student learning as a significant factor. Federal education officials also seek a statewide approach to measuring growth in student learning based on state assessments for those teachers of tested grades and subjects. Finally, the U.S. Department of Education expects Texas districts and charters to utilize those teacher and principal evaluations for personnel decisions beginning in 2016-2017.

Federal officials have given the state until Jan. 15, 2016, to meet the conditions.

Texas may also request reconsideration of its high-risk status, but must do so by Oct. 9. Commissioner Williams said the state will seek that reconsideration. To date, Texas and South Dakota are the only states in the current round of renewals granted a federal waiver with a high-risk designation.

Commissioner Williams noted that federal officials are aware that – separate from the waiver process – the Texas Education Agency (TEA) has been working with schools districts and the regional Education Service Centers to develop new teacher and principal evaluation and support systems with the intent of offering it as a resource to improve instruction. During the 2014-2015 school year, TEA piloted these systems in 64 school districts and 430 campuses across the state. As part of the refinement phase, 256 districts and approximately 2,000 campuses statewide are implementing the systems this school year.

“Statewide rollout of our new state-approved appraisal system would occur in 2016-2017, but would not be mandatory,” said Commissioner Williams. “I believe a majority of our school districts representing roughly 85 percent of the state’s student population would make use of these new appraisal systems. However, that choice will be made at the local level, not by the federal government.”

The State of Texas secured a conditional waiver from the U.S. Department of Education in 2013 giving the Texas Education Agency and more than 1,200 school districts and charters relief from certain ESEA provisions. However, the waiver was granted provisionally as USDE reviewed specifics related to new teacher and principal evaluation systems in Texas.

Under key components of the state’s waiver, Texas schools are no longer designated as having met or made Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). Instead of federal ratings of designations for all schools in Texas, only the lowest performing 15 percent of schools are identified as Priority or Focus Schools. Those schools are subject to a series of federally-prescribed interventions.

Additionally, Texas school districts are no longer required to set aside 20 percent of their Title I federal dollars to provide Supplemental Educational Services (SES) for students at low-performing campuses. A district is now free to use those funds on academic intervention programs it deems most effective for its students.

To view all materials related to the state’s waiver request (including the Sept. 29 letter from the U.S. Department of Education), visit the [Texas Education Agency website](#).

Policy Focus

While there were several policy areas that Rep. Huberty focused on this session, a major focus was reducing the stress on our students by shortening the time length for their assessments. This bill was great for our district, as well as our entire state. You can read briefly about Rep. Huberty's Policy Focus below:

Reducing Standardized Tests for Students (H.B. 743)

One of Representative Huberty's priorities during the 84th Legislative Session was to reduce the number of high stakes assessments that our students in grades 3-8 are forced to take every year. With the help of his fellow Public Education Committee members, the Legislature was able to pass Representative Huberty's House Bill (H.B.) 743, which helped address

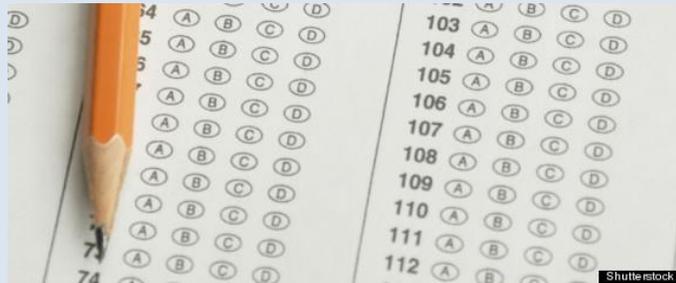


Photo from [Huffington Post](#).

the issue of over testing by limiting the amount of time spent on assessments. The new law imposes specific time limit requirements for the administration of grades 3-8 STAAR assessments. For grades 3-5, the assessments must be designed in such a way that 85% of the students can finish within 120 minutes. For grades 6-8, 85% of the students must be able to finish the assessments within 180 minutes.

After much back and forth with the Texas Education Agency (TEA), the bill will not take full effect this school year. Rep. Huberty had the opportunity to meet with TEA to discuss the implementation of H.B. 743 over the last two months. During these meetings, TEA explained that the majority of the Spring 2016 assessments for grades 3-8 had already been developed by the time the bill was signed into law by Governor Abbott in June. Since the development of the assessments begins in spring, and the law was passed in the summer, the agency did not have sufficient time to redesign the assessments by the beginning of this school year.

Following careful consideration and negotiation, two major aspects of the bill will be implemented by TEA for the 2015-16 school year. The first provision to be implemented before the Spring 2016 testing period will require the writing assessments for grades 4 and 7 to be redesigned to one-day only assessments, as opposed to two-day assessments that were in effect before the passage of H.B. 743. Secondly, TEA will require that students be moved if they finish their assessments before the four-hour time limit for these exams has expired. It is the hope of Rep. Huberty and the rest of the Legislature that this will help to alleviate concerns about a distracting testing environment for those students that need the entire four hours to complete their assessments.

This is certainly not the outcome we had all hoped for, but I believe, after several conversations with TEA and the Commissioner, we have come to a good compromise that will allow for the successful and complete implementation of H.B. 743 for the 2016-17 school year, while giving students some additional testing relief this year.

(Please keep in mind that these bills are not the only bills that Rep. Huberty championed. There will be more in detail about the other bills he filed in upcoming newsletters.)

Constitutional Amendments - November Ballot

Next month, several constitutional amendments will be on the November Ballot. These amendments, approved by the Legislature earlier this year, require citizen vote. It is important to ensure that you voice your opinions on these matters through voting, as they will affect you greatly over the next few years.

Below, each amendment is briefly explained. The Texas House Research Organization put together a comprehensive guide explaining all of the amendments in an easy to navigate document. Here, you'll be able to discover what supporters say, opponents say, and basic summaries of each of the amendments.

[Check it out here!](#)

Amendment No. 1 (S.J.R. 1)

The constitutional amendment increasing the amount of the residence homestead exemption from ad valorem taxation for public school purposes from \$15,000 to \$25,000, providing for a reduction of the limitation on the total amount of ad valorem taxes that may be imposed for those purposes on the homestead of an elderly or disabled person to reflect the increased exemption amount, authorizing the legislature to prohibit a political subdivision that has adopted an optional residence homestead exemption from ad valorem taxation from reducing the amount of or repealing the exemption, and prohibiting the enactment of a law that imposes a transfer tax on a transaction that conveys fee simple title to real property.

Amendment No. 2 (H.J.R. 75)

The constitutional amendment authorizing the legislature to provide for an exemption from ad valorem taxation of all or part of the market value of the residence homestead of the surviving spouse of a 100 percent or totally disabled veteran who died before the law authorizing a residence homestead exemption for such a veteran took effect.

Amendment No. 3 (S.J.R. 52)

The constitutional amendment repealing the requirement that state officers elected by voters statewide reside in the state capital.

Amendment No. 4 (H.J.R. 73)

The constitutional amendment authorizing the legislature to permit professional sports team charitable foundations to conduct charitable raffles.

Amendment No. 5 (S.J.R. 17)

The constitutional amendment to authorize counties with a population of 7,500 or less to perform private road construction and maintenance.

Amendment No. 6 (S.J.R. 22)

The constitutional amendment recognizing the right of the people to hunt, fish, and harvest wildlife subject to laws that promote wildlife conservation.

Amendment No. 7 (S.J.R. 5)

The constitutional amendment dedicating certain sales and use tax revenue and motor vehicle sales, use, and rental tax revenue to the state highway fund to provide funding for nontolled roads and the reduction of certain transportation-related debt.

Am I Registered to Vote? Where do I go?

Before the November 3rd elections, it's important to know whether or not you're registered to vote. You can check if you're registered on the [Texas Secretary of State's Website](#). If you're not, be sure you take the time to register now, so that when November comes around, you're prepared.

Head over to [Harris County Clerk Stan Stanart's useful website](#) to find your precinct. Here, you can also find a sample ballot, so that you're as prepared as possible when it comes time to vote.

Over 20,000 Ballots for the November 3rd Election are in the Mail

HOUSTON – “If you meet the requirements to vote by mail, there is still plenty of time to submit a request for the November 3, 2015 election,” said County Clerk Stan Stanart, the chief election officer of the County. “Seniors and the disabled are able to receive their ballot at home versus walking or driving to a poll.”

In Texas, voting by mail is available to voters who are at least 65 years of age, ill, disabled, incarcerated but not convicted, or out of the county or country during the Early Voting Period and on Election Day. For this election cycle, the deadline to request a mail ballot is Friday, October 23. All requests for a mail ballot must be received, not postmarked, by the County Clerk's Office by the Oct. 23 deadline.



Texas Election law was recently expanded to allow eligible mail voters to submit a mail ballot application by email. “Voters may find the mail ballot application on [www.HarrisVotes.com](#), which should be filled out, signed, and scanned as a PDF or JPG document before being attached to an email and sent to [BBM@cco.hctx.net](#),” explained Stanart. Ballot-by-mail applications may also be submitted by FAX, regular postal mail, or courier. More details can be found at [www.HarrisVotes.com](#).

“There are approximately 356,000 voters in Harris County that meet the age requirement to vote by mail,

according to the latest county voting records. Of those, 56 percent reside in the city of Houston,” noted Stanart. “As of Monday morning my office has received over 25,000 requests from voters seeking to vote by mail in this election.”

For more information about the ballot-by-mail process or to obtain an application, voters can call the Harris County Clerk’s office at 713.755.3150, Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., or visit www.HarrisVotes.com.

Veterans Land Board Disaster Relief Initiative



As you are well aware, thousands of homes throughout Texas were damaged or destroyed as a result of the Memorial Day Weekend Floods, with 121 counties declared disaster areas. To address the needs of Veterans and military member homeowners who have been affected by the recent disaster, the Texas Veterans Land Board (VLB) has established a Disaster Relief Initiative. The initiative will be administered through July 22, 2016, by the Chairman, and the Executive Secretary, as directed by the Chairman. There are two components to the initiative, both of which are intended to potentially provide new funding to affected Veterans. The following parameters will apply:

Component 1: Home Purchase Disaster Relief Initiative for Veterans whose primary residence (either owned or rented) was destroyed by the disaster and need assistance in purchasing new housing:

- The Veteran must have resided in a Texas County that has been declared a disaster areas (by either FEMA or the Texas Governor) at the time of the disaster. A listing of applicable counties can be found in the Governor's proclamation of July 22, 2015, which is available at the following website: <http://gov.texas.gov/news/proclamation/21236>
- The Veteran's residence must have been destroyed by the event leading to the disaster declaration. Borrowers should contact the VLB to obtain required certification for eligibility prior to applying for the loan.
- The VLB loan funds are a supplement to and not a replacement for any other grants or insurance proceeds that may be available to a qualified Veteran. All resources available through these programs must be utilized prior to determining the loan amount available from the VLB.
- The interest rate on the new housing loan will be reduced by 0.25% from the normal rate offered for home purchase financing. For disabled Veterans (defined as those with a VA established disability of 30% or greater), this would amount to a total 0.75% interest rate reduction by combining the two available discounts.
- The home to be purchased need not be in the affected country, but must still be within the state of Texas.
- Eligible Veterans must apply for the disaster relief initiative by July 22, 2016.
- Veterans may find a participating mortgage lender at www.TexasVeterans.com.

For owner borrowers, any mortgage debt associated with the destroyed property must be satisfied either prior to or concurrent with the funding of the new mortgage.

Component 2: Home Improvement Disaster Relief Initiative for Veterans whose primary residence (owned) was damaged by the disaster and need assistance in repairing their housing:

- The Veteran must have resided in a Texas county that has been declared a disaster areas (by either FEMA or the Texas Governor) at the time of the disaster. A listing of applicable counties can be found in the Governor's proclamation of July 22, 2015, which is available at the following website: <http://gov.texas.gov/news/proclamation/21236>
- The Veteran's residence must have been damaged by the event leading to the disaster declaration.
- The VLB loan funds are a supplement to and not a replacement for any other grants or insurance proceeds that may be available to a qualified Veteran. All resources available through these programs must be utilized prior to determining the loan amount available from the VLB.
- The interest rate on the new home improvement loan will be set at 0.00%.
- Eligible Veterans must apply for the disaster relief initiative by July 22, 2016.
- Veterans may find a participating mortgage lender at www.TexasVeterans.com.

Please note that for both components the Veteran must still meet all other standard qualification requirements for the applicable loan. For more information, Veterans may call 1-800-252-VETS (8387) or email vlbinfo@glo.texas.gov.

Texas Veterans Land Board - George P. Bush, Chairman
Stephen F. Austin Building - 1700 North Congress Avenue - Austin, Texas 78701-1496
P.O. Box 12837 - Austin, Texas 78711-2873
512.463.5060 - 800.252.VETS - Fax: 512.475.1425

Constituents at the Capitol

During September, **Amy Harrison** (right), who works in U.S. Representative Ted Poe's Kingwood office, came by for a tour with **Gladys Llanes** (left) from U.S. Senator Marco Rubio's office. Here they are pictured on the Texas House of Representatives Floor.

The two enjoyed a private tour of the Capitol building, as well as a tour of our office. It was great visiting with them!



Photo courtesy of Gladys Llanes.

If you or your family would like to visit the Texas Capitol, call our Capitol office. We can arrange a private tour for you, and make sure that we show you around our office as well. Our contact information can be found at the bottom of this email.

We look forward to visiting with you in October!

House District 127 September Events



September 11, 2015 - The State Capitol flags at half-mast. Approved by Congress in December 2001, Patriot Day is an annually recognized National Day of Service and Remembrance to honor the 2,977 lives lost in the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center, The Pentagon and United Airlines Flight 93, on September 11, 2001.



September 22, 2015 - Rep. Huberty with Harris County Judge Ed Emmett at the State of Harris County Luncheon.



September 25, 2015 - Rep. Dan Huberty and Council Member Dave Martin with the City of Houston Lake Patrol Unit.

September 26, 2015 - Mothers Against Cancer Virginia Gandy Fun Run & Walk.



Upcoming October Events

**The Mission Northeast
12th Annual Luncheon**

**October 5, 2015
(11:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.)**

You can find more about this wonderful event here: www.missionne.org or by calling Mission Northeast at (281) 354-1200.

Location: East Montgomery County Improvement District, 21575 Highway 59 North, New Caney, TX

FamilyTime 5th Annual Purple Ribbon Luncheon

October 9, 2015
(10:30 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.)

FamilyTime Crisis and Counseling Center presents the 5th Annual Purple Ribbon Luncheon
Recognizing Domestic Violence Awareness Month and honoring The Women of Achievement 1990-2014

Find more information here: www.familytimececc.org

Location: Kingwood Country Club, 1700 Lake Kingwood Trail, Kingwood, TX 77339

Humble ISD Council of PTA's "Back the Future Day"

October 14, 2015
(10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.)

You can find more information here: <http://www.humbleisd.net/Page/67879>

Location: Humble ISD Administration Building, 20200 Eastway Village Dr., Humble, TX 77338

"In the Pink of Health" Luncheon

October 16, 2015
(10:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.)

Find more about the luncheon and sponsors here: <http://northeasthospitalfoundation.org/index.html>

Location: Houston Airport Marriott, 18700 John F Kennedy Blvd, Houston, TX 77032

Harris County Republican Party "Wine & Sign"

October 19, 2015
(6:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.)

Join us as we come together in support of our local Harris County Republican Party satellite office in Kingwood. For ticket information or to pay over the phone, please contact Thomas Mardik at Thomas.Mardik@harriscountygop.com or by phone at (317) 842-7160.

Tickets can be purchased in advance online by visiting: http://www.harriscountygop.com/wine_sign

Special Guests: **Congressman Ted Poe & Representative Dan Huberty**

Admission: \$25 includes wine and nibbles

Location: Nico's Bar & Grill, 21660 TX - 494 Loop, Kingwood, TX 77339

Early Voting

October 19-30, 2015

Early voting is a great way to beat the lines on Election Day (Nov. 3). To find the exact hours and polling locations near you, check [Harris County Clerk Stan Stanart's Website on Early Voting](#). You are not required to vote at your specific polling location during early voting. You can vote at wherever is most convenient for you.

Lake Houston Area Chamber of Commerce “Teachers of the Year” Luncheon

October 20, 2015
(11:30 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.)

The Teacher of the Year luncheon honors exceptional teachers from area public and private schools and Lone Star College-Kingwood. It's the business community's opportunity to thank our area educators.

Contact: Chris O'Dell, 281-446-2128; [Send an Email](#)

Admission: Deadline to register is 10-16-2015 and is \$30 for members or \$35 for guests. Reservations made after the deadline are subject to availability and will be at the rate of \$35 for members or \$40 for guests.

Location: Humble Civic Center, 8233 Will Clayton Pkwy, Humble, TX 77338

Kingwood Area Republican Women General Meeting

October 28, 2015
(11:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.)

Location: Kingwood Country Club, 1700 Lake Kingwood Trail, Kingwood, TX 77339

Election Day!

November 3, 2015
(7:00 a.m. - 7:00 p.m.)

You can find your specific polling location [here](#). Remember, you are required to go to your specific polling location.

We Hope to See You There!

Contact Information

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