



State Representative ★ *District 129*

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★ **84TH LEGISLATIVE REPORT** ★



P.O. Box 2910 • Austin, Texas 78768-2910

DENNIS PAUL
State Representative



★ PRO-LIFE VICTORIES ★

In the legislature we passed critical pro-life bills, further defunded Planned Parenthood and expanded funding for alternatives to abortion. Here are just a few of the pieces of legislation I was happy to support.

House Bill 3994 – Seeks to improve the protection of minors by addressing necessary reforms to the judicial bypass system. This legislation allows the judge to ask more substantial, relevant, and considerate questions of the minor girl.

Additionally HB 3994 extends the date and time by which a court is required to rule on an application and by which an appellate court is required to rule on an appeal of the original court’s ruling and changes the venue requirement for judicial bypass court hearings.

House Bill 3074 reforms the statute governing end-of-life care to ensure that vulnerable patients are not denied the basic human care of food, water and pain management. The current Texas Advance Directives Act lacks clarity given the complexity of end-of-life care. The most glaring flaw in current law allows food, water, and pain medication to be withdrawn with no medical standard for their withdrawal.

HB 3074 will improve patient care by ensuring that food and water are provided unless it hastens the patient’s death, causes major medical problems, causing pain that cannot be relieved, is ineffective or is in conflict with the patient’s documented wishes.

State Representative

★ **DENNIS PAUL** ★



*Representing Harris County
Committees: Insurance, Pensions
www.capitol.state.tx.us*

Dear Friends and Neighbors:

It is a privilege to represent you and our wonderful region of Texas, House District 129. During my first Legislative Session, many of you contacted the office with opinions about various issues facing our district and our great state. We appreciate your involvement and encourage you to continue expressing your opinions to all of your elected officials: it does make a difference!

Due to hard work, great staff, and supportive constituents a lot of good legislation passed this session. Of the 6,476 bills and joint resolutions that were filed, 1,288 were passed and became law. The 84th Session was a fast paced affair with a lot of work to do in a short period of time. I like the way the Texas system works: most of the members of the legislature have full time employment elsewhere, so we are glad to serve in Austin, get the work done in an efficient manner, and get back home to our daily lives.

This report provides a snapshot of the 84th Legislature, including several bills I worked on, and other important legislation that was passed. From my perspective, the biggest accomplishments were a strong budget that keeps the growth of government below population growth and inflation; meaningful tax cuts, Second Amendment protection, pension reform, strengthening pro-life measures, and helping to secure our border while cracking down on human trafficking.

From time to time my office sends out an electronic newsletter on items of importance to the district. You can sign up to receive these email notices by simply sending a request to district129.paul@house.state.tx.us. Printed reports are usually sent only once a year, so the electronic newsletter will keep you better informed, especially during the fast-paced Legislative Session.

Thank you for taking the time to read this report and become better informed about the issues facing Texas. Being actively involved in your government will make Texas a better place to live, work, and raise a family. Serving the people of House District 129 has been a fantastic and humbling experience for Eliza and me thus far. We thank you for your support and look forward to continuing to serve you in Austin and across HD129.

God bless you and the great state of Texas!



Dennis Paul

A handwritten signature in cursive that reads "Dennis Paul".

Dennis Paul

*State Representative
House District 129*



DISTRICT 129 ★ 84th LEGISLATIVE REPORT ★ FALL 2015

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★ TEXAS BUDGET ★

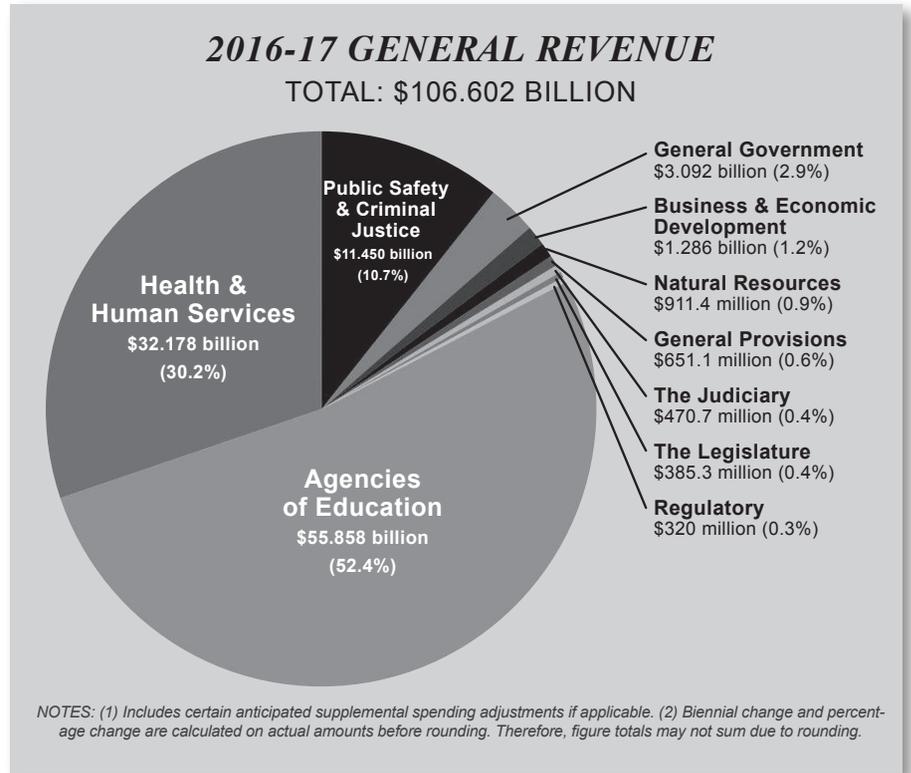
The Texas 2015-2017 budget, \$209.4 billion represents growth of 3.6 percent, less than 2 percent per year. The legislature stayed well beneath the constitutional spending cap, and kept the budget below what would be necessary to account for population and inflation increases. This left more than \$11 billion in the state's Rainy Day Fund. Our budget provides additional funding for education, border security, transportation and child protection.

The budget fully funded our classroom enrollment growth and adds an additional \$1.5 billion to public education funding.

The budget redirects the money in the State Highway Fund for transportation, effectively increasing funding by more than \$1 billion for each biennium. House Bill 1 – Ends diversions of the gas tax and ensures all of the money in the State Highway Fund will be used for transportation.

We provided \$840 million for border security. This allowed for the hiring of 250 new Department of Public Safety troopers.

In an effort to protect Texas children, we increased funding for Child Protective Services by \$332 million to address serious challenges protecting abused children, while funding behavioral health and substance abuse is increased by \$244 million.



★ BORDER SECURITY ★

The passage of House Bill 11 bolsters the ranks of the Texas Department of Public Safety by increasing the number of troops stationed on the border and enhances penalties for human smuggling. HB 11 establishes a transnational intelligence center on the border to analyze crime data and to serve as a real-time, around-the-clock intelligence hub for state and local law enforcement agencies. Additionally it creates a new offense for smuggling, if a person knowingly transports or harbors someone in the country illegally for profit.



Rep. Paul with Texas Game Wardens at the border.

The legislation requires DPS to form a plan to establish southbound checkpoints on international bridges to search for weapons, contraband, and bulk cash.

I was happy to support the passage of House Bill 10, a bill aimed at curbing, catching and stopping the criminals committing the crime of human trafficking in the state of Texas. Specifically, HB 10, would among other things, create a Child Sex Trafficking Prevention Unit, require the Texas Education Agency to report trafficking of a child, and make it easier for victims of trafficking to seek compensation from the Crime Auxiliary Fund. The passage of this bill will help put a stop to this horrible crime in Houston and across Texas.

In Senate Bill 374 will require state agencies and public universities to use the E-Verify system to protect against the hiring of those who are in the country illegally.

House Bill 12 – Establishes a Border Prosecution Unit, which will facilitate cooperation among prosecutors, provide investigative assistance, and develop best practices for the investigation of border crimes.

★ VETERANS AFFAIRS ★

House Bill 437 allows service members coming back to jobs at state agencies following military service to receive benefits without the waiting period.

House Bill 19 strengthens the network of preventative services and mental health resources available to members of the military, veterans and their families.

Senate Bill 503 authorizes the Texas Economic Development and Tourism Office to provide loans for economic development projects to communities affected by base reduction or base realignment.

★ 2ND AMENDMENT RIGHTS ★

Senate Bill 11 authorizes a concealed handgun license holder to carry a concealed handgun while on a college campus. This legislation allows for universities to establish rules, regulations, or other provisions concerning the storage of handguns in dorms or other residential facilities owned or operated by the university.

To be eligible for a concealed handgun license in the state of Texas, citizens must pass state and federal background checks, pass both an educational course and shooting proficiency test, and are over the age of 21.

We passed House Bill 910 which allows concealed handgun license holders to openly carry handguns.

Individuals are still required to obtain a concealed weapons permit to openly carry.

This requires individuals to pass a background check and show evidence of handgun use proficiency but does not prevent or restrict private businesses from prohibiting licensed individuals from carrying a handgun on their premises.

★ PENSIONS REFORM ★

Concern over the ability of public retirement systems to meet their long-term obligations has grown in recent years. As required by the 83rd Legislature, in December 2014, the State Pension Review Board (PRB) published a study on the financial health of public retirement systems in Texas that examined their ability to meet long-term obligations. In conducting the study, the PRB actively involved retirement systems and industry representatives in its committee and board meetings. The study highlighted key findings and provided PRB's recommendations on how a retirement system may mitigate the risk of not meeting those obligations.

Based on some of the recommendations of this study, I filed and passed House Bill 3310 which seeks to assist public retirement systems with meeting their long-term obligations by increasing transparency and providing a way for the system and its sponsoring entity to work together to ensure continued actuarial soundness.

H.B. 3310 amends current law relating to the funding policies, actuarial valuations, and reporting requirements of certain public retirement systems. Texas will not have any exposure for these debts.

★ TAX RELIEF ★

House Bill 32 reduces the rate of the franchise tax by 25 percent and extends the eligibility for EZ computation to businesses with \$20 million or less in total revenue. HB 32 represents a \$2.6 billion tax cut in the upcoming biennium. HB32 will provide significant economic stimulus for Texas businesses.

Senate Bill 1760 makes a number of important changes to the Property Tax Code to increase transparency and promote efficiency in the property tax system. It requires an affirmative

vote of at least 60 percent of the governing body of a local taxing unit that wishes to exceed the effective tax and requires local taxing units to justify the necessity of a tax increase on notices and election ballots. Additionally, it requires the Comptroller to publish an annual ranking of local tax rates in Texas, from the highest rate to the lowest.

We, the legislature, were happy to pass a \$10K increase in the homestead exemption for all homeowners.

★ TEXAS WINDSTORM INSURANCE ASSOCIATION ★

Since its inception, the Association has undergone significant legislative reform. Today, the Association provides coverage to over 200,000 policyholders including residential, commercial, and governmental and schools.

During the 84th legislative session we passed Senate Bill 900 which authorizes the Insurance Commissioner to contract with a licensed TPA or MGA and adopt rules to manage and administer the Association, if necessary. The bill amends the board makeup to reflect greater industry expertise and geographic representation; and, requires the association to build and maintain an actuarially sound financial structure.

TWIA is not funded by General Revenue or other state dollars. SB 900 does not change that. SB 900 also does not raise premiums or raise assessments on any policyholder in the state.

The TWIA Board is currently made up of The Board of Directors membership is established by statute with the following representatives: Four members of the Board of Directors must be representatives of the insurance industry; four members must reside in four separate first tier coastal counties, with at least one member being a licensed non-captive agent; one member must be a representative of an area of this state that is not located in

the seacoast territory, with demonstrated expertise in insurance and actuarial principles; and one non-voting member.

Senate Bill 900 amends the makeup of the Association's board to incorporate additional professional expertise and reflect coastal representation by region. The new Board makeup will be (3-3-3).

Additionally, it is important to understand the funding structure. The first funds expended in the event of a storm remain the Catastrophe Reserve Trust Fund and premium dollars paid by coastal residents. SB 900 does not change this. In recent years the CRFT has grown substantially, resulting in its largest balance in history.

The "First dollar" of statewide assessments is only collected after this \$1.1 billion in reserves is paid out. That is no sooner than the current funding structure. To reach this 'first dollar', Texas would need to experience a 1 in 25 year storm at minimum.

The TWIA Board alone can raise rates for TWIA policy holders. They may raise rates up to 10% annually with approval of the Insurance Commissioner. The board also has authority to request a rate above 10% with the approval of the Insurance commissioner post event.