



GENE WU

STATE REPRESENTATIVE ★ DISTRICT 137



Issue 4

NEWSLETTER

May 2015

Dear Friends,

The Texas Legislative Session ends on June 1, 2015. With less than three weeks remaining, the House has passed some 700 pieces of legislation. Most of the bills that we passed have received strong bi-partisan support. Every time I cast a vote I am looking out for the best interest of our district and the future of Texas.

In this issue we discuss major legislation that has recently been considered: the floor debate surrounding Texas gun laws, an update on the budget; and the movement of the pre-K bill. We also fill you in on the progress of bills that I have authored as they make their way through the Legislature.

With the help of a great staff, nine of the bills I authored have passed out of the House with overwhelming bipartisan support. We will discuss the recent passage of my proposals to improve our higher education system and modernize our judicial system. We also share highlights from committee.

Aside from our work on legislation, we also took time to recognize special guests and visitors to our Capitol. We welcomed students from the HISD Congress; remembered former Houston Mayor Bob Lanier; received our newest member into the House of Representatives; and hosted the Asian-Pacific American Heritage Day at the Capitol.

In the District, come out Saturday, May 16 and enjoy the 23rd Annual Gulfton Parade & Festival. Find out more in our Community Announcements section.



I hope you enjoy our updates. Please don't hesitate to contact our office with your comments, concerns or inquiries. Your feedback is always appreciated.

Sincerely,



Gene Wu

Office Contact Info:

District137.Wu@house.state.tx.us
<http://www.house.state.tx.us/>

Capitol Address:

Room E2.810
P.O. Box 2910
Austin, TX 78768
(512) 463-0492
(512) 463-1182 Fax

District Address:

6500 Rookin, Building C
Houston, TX 77074
(713) 271-3900
(713) 271-3902 Fax

UPDATES FROM THE LEGE - FLOOR ACTION

The House and Senate have each proposed a budget plan to allocate funding for the agencies, institutions, and programs in the areas of public education, higher education, health and human services, public safety and criminal justice, and transportation for the 2016-2017 state budget. Now it is up to five select members from each chamber to hash-out the details and find a compromise. We have great representation on the budget conference committee with two of the five House members from Houston: Chairman Sylvester Turner, and Chairwoman Sarah Davis. If we don't agree on a budget before June 1st, we will have to return for a Special Session.

In mid-April we considered **HB 910**, filed by Representative Larry Phillips, and debated our gun laws in Texas. HB 910 will allow Concealed Handgun License holders to carry handguns openly in either a belt or chest holster. The bill was originally heard in the House Homeland Security & Public Safety Committee, with droves of witnesses coming to testify for and against the controversial bill. Much of the debate on the bill centered around proposed amendments that would allow large urban counties to prohibit the open carry of handguns due to public safety and law enforcement concerns. However, all such amendments were voted down. The bill ended up passing by a vote of 96 to 35.

I am a gun-owner and I am in favor of protecting our Second Amendment rights. However, I cannot support measures that I believe negatively impact public safety and are strongly opposed by our business community. I want to protect the private property rights of individuals and businesses who do not want to have guns openly carried on their property. I voted against HB 910 because I think it is unnecessary and would create dangerous situations for our state's law enforcement agencies.

Last week, the Senate approved **HB 4**, the pre-K bill, on a 25-6 vote. HB 4 sets aside \$130 million over two years for an early education grant program, offering up to \$1,500 per child to eligible school districts who adopt new standards. This measure is based on the High Quality Prekindergarten Program proposed by Governor Abbott this year. Since HB 4 was amended in the Senate, we will meet in a conference committee to agree on the final version before it heads to Governor Abbott. I am proud to be a co-author for HB 4 which incorporates many of the ideas that we proposed in our own Pre-K bill, HB 296, which was left pending in committee when HB 4 was voted out.

At the beginning of this month we passed HB 298 by a vote of 132-6 and HB 331 by a vote of 140-0. Last week we passed HB 326 by a vote of 144-1, HB 327 by a vote of 133-12, HB 823 by a vote of 123-20, and HB 1264 by a vote of 138-4.

HB 298 improves our higher education system by making the college credit transfer process between community colleges and four-year public universities more transparent and efficient. Currently, there is a lack of clarity about which courses will transfer for credit; causing students to end up paying for more credit hours in order to graduate. This bill, if passed into law, will require public universities to clarify which courses they will accept as transfer credit. This will ensure hardworking students in community colleges are not wasting their time and money by taking courses they will not be able to transfer into a future degree.

HB 331 and **HB 326** modernize our judicial system. HB 331 allows for electronically filed Texas Child Protective Services (CPS) documents and records to be sealed in the same manner as physical ones. Treating both types of documents equally ensures that children in CPS cases are properly protected and that their information is kept private. HB 326 updates Texas law to allow for a magistrate to accept a request for a search warrant that is made via phone or e-mail. Current state law requires officers and prosecutors to either physically present or fax their requests for search warrants to a judge, which can be cumbersome and cause delays when seconds count.

HB 327 calls for a study to investigate the public availability of Class C misdemeanor records. Class C misdemeanors are the lowest level offense, but they can have lasting repercussions; capable of derailing college and career plans if they mistakenly appear on an individual's record. This study will examine the ways different Texas cities and counties handle their Class C misdemeanor records so that policymakers may have a better understanding of this issue.

HB 823 seeks to improve public safety on our roadways with harsher penalties for commercial vehicle operators who violate vehicle safety standards relating to brakes, tires, or load securement. A more substantial minimum fine amount will help in deterring and punishing repeat violators.

HB 1264 allows law enforcement to dispose of unnecessary toxicological material, like blood and urine samples from concluded intoxication-related cases. Current law is causing the Houston Police Department's storage facilities to be overwhelmed with over 22,000 old samples.

If you would like to keep up with bill movement and track legislation, please visit www.legis.state.tx.us.

UPDATES FROM THE LEGE - RESOLUTIONS AND RECOGNITIONS



On April 22, we welcomed 100 HISD Student Congress members who traveled to Austin to visit their State Capitol. The HISD Student Congress is an organization run by students for students. Started in 2014 the HISD Student Congress gives a voice to its 200,000 by establishing a formal communication mechanism between students and administrators and developing ongoing opportunities for student input. It will engage the HISD student body, affirming unilaterally that students have the most vested interest in their own education and that their input should be a vital part of HISD's planning.

On April 29, we remembered former Houston Mayor Bob Lanier who passed on December 20, 2014 at the age of 89. His wife, Elyse, joined us to receive SCR 17 which paid tribute to his memory and his enormous contributions as a public servant and civic leader.

First elected in 1991, Bob Lanier served three terms as Houston's mayor over a six-year tenure. Among his many accomplishments, he reduced crime by increasing police patrols, revitalized the downtown area, improved infrastructure in disadvantaged neighborhoods, and was an unyielding champion of ethnic diversity.



On April 30, we received our newest member into the House of Representatives. Meet State Representative Ina Minjarez, a former prosecutor in Bexar County. Minjarez won a special election in March and was sworn in to represent House District 124, a portion of San Antonio in Bexar County. This fills the last vacancy for this legislative session.

House District 124 was previously represented by José Menéndez who won a promotion to the upper chamber. Senator Menéndez represents Senate District 26.

On May 6, I joined State Representatives Angie Chen Button and Hubert Vo to celebrate Asian-Pacific American Heritage Day at the Capitol with a resolution, HR 2027, honoring their wide-ranging contributions to this state and nation. I'm proud to represent a district so culturally rich with Asian culture, and the state of Texas, which has the third largest Asian population in the country. We welcomed many leaders from our Southwest Houston Asian community who came to visit their Capitol.



COMMUNITY ANNOUNCEMENTS

The 23rd Annual Gulfton Festival

"Strengthening the community one block at a time!"



23 Years of Community Commitment

Saturday, May 16, 2015

11:30 am – 2:00 pm

Burnett Bayland Park
6200 Chimney Rock

11:00 am

Parade begins at Benavidez Elementary School
& will travel down Gulfton to Chimney Rock

Games, Music, Food & Fun for the entire family!!

Benefiting: The HPD Gulfton Storefront

Sponsored by:



For additional information contact (281) 610-5237