



GENE WU

STATE REPRESENTATIVE ★ DISTRICT 137



Issue 10

Winter 2015

NEWSLETTER

Dear Friends,

I hope everyone had a wonderful Thanksgiving Holiday taking time to count the year's blessings and enjoy the company of family and friends.

I am pleased to announce that I have been appointed to a new Texas House Committee on Federal Environmental Regulation. The committee will examine new proposed EPA rules. This is good news for Houston, especially since the energy industry, which will be most affected by these rules, is so integral to our city. Here is the press release announcement from Speaker Joe Straus earlier this month: [TEXAS HOUSE TO STUDY IMPACT OF EPA RULES](#).



In this issue you will find the results from state ballot propositions voted on earlier this month, facts on health insurance and how to enroll in a plan, information on the new "single sticker" rules for your car, and a spotlight on a local non-profit that can help you learn a second language.

We have also included a photo page from recent events as well as special recognition for the launch of an innovative and transformative local project known as "**Seeds of Sharpstown**".

Finally, the **Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT)** will hold a **public meeting on Thursday, December 10th** to present a **proposed project for I-610 elevated express lanes** from I-10 (West) to US 59. We invite you to attend to provide input (see details on page 5).

Sincerely,

Gene Wu, State Representative - District 137
District137.Wu@house.state.tx.us, 713-271-3900

We hope you enjoy our periodic e-newsletters.
To view previous issues, you can visit our website [here](#) and click on the "Newsletters" tab.

Previous Events



Clockwise from top left - Gene with fellow Texas House members advocating for higher pay for fast food workers; Gene welcomes 73 new U.S. citizens from 30 different countries at a Naturalization Ceremony in District 137; Gene shares his story with students from YES Prep and Liberty High School at a job readiness workshop hosted by the Baker Ripley Advisory Council; Gene congratulates Crime Stoppers of Houston on their new headquarters; Gene joins U.S. Congressman Al Green in celebrating the Chinese Community Center for their work in the Southwest Houston community; Gene spends a Saturday cleaning up the Sharpstown neighborhood with students from HBU; Gene with WWII veteran Lewis Yee, honoring all veterans on Veterans Day.

Seeds of Sharpstown

Seeds of Sharpstown is an innovative concept developed to promote the incredible value of one of Houston's great hidden gems, Sharpstown. With over 6,800 single family residences, it remains a vibrant community that is embracing its reemergence as an ideal place to call home. The goal is to create unique events that highlight the diverse strengths and outlooks that illustrates how Sharpstown is poised for its future growth.

I was honored to support the launch of this project as a member of the host committee at their inaugural art installation event last month. The exhibit underscores the evolving identity of Sharpstown, a neighborhood coming back into its prime.



Rep. Wu presents a commemorative proclamation to Michael Prentice, co-founder of the Seeds of Sharpstown.

I encourage everyone to visit the Seeds of Sharpstown art installation at 7831 Fondren Rd, 77074 before it closes on January, 3, 2016. To make arrangements, contact Joseph at joseph@seedsofsharpstown.com. Learn more about Seeds of Sharpstown [here](#).

Congratulations to all those involved on their vision, investment, and effort to reimagine Sharpstown in such a creative and transformative way.

SEEDS OF SHARPSTOWN IN THE NEWS:

ABC: <http://abc13.com/society/home-revamped-transformed-into-piece-of-art-in-sharpstown-area/1052424/>

KUHF: <http://www.houstonpublicmedia.org/news/abandoned-house-in-sharpstown-reimagined-as-art-exhibit/>

Results of State Ballot Propositions

Voters overwhelmingly approved all proposed amendments .

Proposition 1, raises the homestead exemption for school districts from \$15,000 to \$25,000. This proposal drew 86 percent support and is expected to save the average homeowner in Texas about \$126 per year.

Proposition 2 was proposed in order to address a quirk in state law that only allowed spouses of disabled veterans who died after Jan. 1, 2010 to be eligible for a 100-percent property tax exemption and would extend this exemption to all spouses of disabled veterans who have passed. This was the least controversial of all of the propositions on the ballot and passed with 91 percent support.

Proposition 3 would eliminate the constitutional requirement that statewide officials live in Austin. The measure passed with the support of 66 percent of voters.

Proposition 4 allows charitable foundations of professional sports teams to conduct charity raffles known as the "50/50" games at stadiums. This type of raffle lets the winner keep half the pot while the other half goes to charity. This measure passed with 69 percent support.

Proposition 5 changes the population limit, from 5,000 to 7,500 people, for counties where the government can perform road construction. The measure passed with 83 percent support.

Proposition 6 places Texans' right to hunt, fish, and harvest wildlife into the Texas Bill of Rights. The measure passed with 81 percent of the vote.

Proposition 7 will make the state dedicate certain revenue streams and taxes to the State Highway Fund. This will increase the amount of funding promised to the construction of Texas highways and bridges. The measure passed with 83 percent support.

Getting Health Insurance

The good news: nationwide the Affordable Care Act has boosted health insurance coverage. The bad news: while 700,000 previously uninsured Texans now have health insurance, **Texas continues to rank last in health care coverage with both the highest rate and highest number of uninsured**, according to the U.S. Census. We are missing out on the many health benefits and cost reductions that the majority of other states have gained from the Affordable Care Act (ACA). Unfortunately the majority of our state's leadership continues to be ideologically opposed, and refuses to participate in the expansion of Medicaid, a key component of the ACA.

If Texas expanded Medicaid, more than 1 million low-income Texans would gain coverage, the state would receive an estimated \$100 billion in federal money over a decade, and our hospitals would save \$5.5 billion in annual costs. The benefits are enormous.

If you currently do not have health insurance, or are looking for a new plan, enrollment is currently open. For 2016 coverage, please enroll in a health plan before the January 31st deadline. Learn about your options and get covered today by visiting the Health Insurance Marketplace at <https://www.healthcare.gov>.

It is important to sign up and get covered in order to avoid fees for lacking health insurance — having health insurance is now the law.

Houston Language Partners

[Houston Language Partners](#) is a free not-for-profit resource open to all adults in Houston interested in practicing or learning a second language. Over 1,000 people meet up on a regular basis to practice a foreign language with a native speaker. It's a great way to supplement language classes and make new friends from other cultures. Anyone can join, and there are no requirements.

Texas Switches to a Single Sticker For Vehicles

As of March 1, 2015 vehicles are no longer issued inspection stickers. **Your registration sticker will serve as a combined proof of registration and inspection.**

When you get your vehicle inspected the inspector of your vehicle will simply upload your vehicle' status online, so you will not receive a sticker from them. Do keep your inspection report for your own records —just in case your vehicle report is not found in the online system.

Next, when you renew your vehicles' state registration, the state will confirm your vehicles' inspection and you will receive a single sticker. The total amount of fees you pay will remain the same as under the old system.

For more information visit <http://twostepsonesticker.com/>.



TxDOT Public Meeting | I-610 Elevated Express Lanes

The Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) will hold a Public Meeting regarding the proposed elevated express lanes on I-610 West Loop from I-10 West to I-69 (US 59) South. The purpose of the proposed project is to decrease traffic congestion, increase mobility, and improve operational efficiency and safety along I-610 West Loop within the Uptown/Galleria area.

The meeting will be held at The Junior League of Houston, 1811 Briar Oaks Lane, Houston, TX 77027. The meeting will be held in an open house format from 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.

No formal presentation will be made.

All interested citizens are invited to attend. Written comments from the public regarding this project are requested and may be presented for a period of 10 business days following the meeting. Written comments may be submitted in person at the Public Meeting or by mail to the Director of Project Development, TxDOT Houston District Office, P.O. Box 1386, Houston, TX 77251-1386. Written comments must be received by December 24, 2015 to be included in the Public Meeting Summary. Comments may also be emailed on or before December 24, 2015, to HOU-PIOWebMail@txdot.gov.

Where: The Junior League of Houston
1811 Briar Oaks Lane
Houston, TX 77027

When: Thursday, Dec. 10, 2015
5:30 p.m. - 7:30 p.m.

Purpose: The purpose of the meeting is present the proposed project to the public and gather comments.

Description: The proposed project would construct elevated express lanes that would primarily be located in the center of I-610 West Loop main lanes, from I-10 West to I-69/US 59 South. The express lanes may be tolled. The total length of the project is approximately 3.7 miles. The express lanes would be constructed within the existing right of way.

The environmental review, consultation and other actions required by applicable federal environmental laws for this project are being, or have been, carried out by TxDOT pursuant to 23 U.S.C. 327 and a Memorandum of Understanding dated Dec. 16, 2014, and executed by FHWA and TxDOT.