



# TEXAS HOUSE *of* REPRESENTATIVES

*James White*

*House District 19  
Jasper, Newton, Hardin, Polk, Tyler*

CORRECTIONS  
CHAIR

REDISTRICTING

JUDICIARY &  
CIVIL JURISPRUDENCE

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Tuesday, February 26, 2019

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(512) 463-0490

### **Chairman White Welcomes Juvenile Justice Professionals; Files Public Education Legislation; and Holds Corrections Committee Hearing with Criminal Justice Advocates** - Weekly Legislative Update 2/15/19 -

(Austin, TX) - This past week, I had the privilege to welcome over 200 juvenile justice professionals from every region of Texas. From small, medium and large county operated juvenile probation departments to state facility personnel these professionals dedicate their lives to the rehabilitation of our justice-involved youth.

From over 5,000 commitments to state facilities in 2007 down to just 748 last year our men and women in the field of juvenile justice have put forth a great effort to reform the justice-involved youth from their communities by keeping more and more of the youth within their communities. A lack of funding and resources, especially in rural areas, can make this task difficult. The state facilities who treat the most severe cases struggle to keep staff and programming in place for the treatment these justice-involved-youth need. Every session the juvenile justice professionals across our great state of Texas have risen to the challenge and met all the expectations mandated by lawmakers. These professionals always strive to make our system-involved youth productive, law abiding citizens.

I am extremely honored to work with the probation chiefs in our district: Terry Allen (Tyler), Edeska Barnes (Jasper/Newton), Monica Kelley (Hardin), and Earnest Jackson (Polk). Additionally, I would like to highlight the work that the Texas Juvenile Justice Department has accomplished under the leadership of Camille Cain. She and her staff have facilitated conversations among our locals and the state that will ultimately lead to better outcomes for our Texas youth.

As legislators continue to file bills before the March 8th deadline, I would like to highlight a few of the bills I have filed that would affect the public education system:

#### **House Bill 114**

HB 114 would provide high school students with valuable knowledge regarding college credit and military service. Veterans, military service members, and students going into the military are sometimes unaware of the availability of college credit awarded for military experience,



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education, and training obtained during military service. It should not be difficult for our current and future servicemen and women to secure college credit from the training and experience they earned in the military. That is why my bill would facilitate greater communication between high school counselors and community colleges, TWC, apprenticeship programs in the area, and military recruiters so that they can identify students who are enlisted to join the armed services and provide them with information on how their military service can translate into college credit upon returning to civilian life.

### **House Bill 507**

HB 507 would create a task force of parents, stakeholders, law enforcement, and any agencies that are at any point providing services to a child. It is my hopes that this group of outstanding Texans can provide recommendations to parents on how they can be more engaged in the development of their children. Additionally, I am eager to see programming that the state agencies would be able to provide and help keep our most vulnerable children be healthy, educated, and diverted away from the juvenile and criminal justice systems.

### **House Bill 636**

HB 636 would require open-enrollment charters schools to provide the same contractual disclosures that we currently require of our Texas public schools. Current law requires that public entities report all contracts approved by a governing board and that are worth more than \$1 million. Parents want to know how their schools are being run, and the discrepancy between public and charter schools on this disclosure needs to be addressed. My legislation would place charters and public schools equal footing.

### **House Bill 692**

HB 692 would prevent public schools from placing homeless youth in out-of-school suspensions. Many times these youth do not have a place to go and putting them out on the streets could put them in danger or in situations where they get wrapped up in the juvenile justice system. School administrators should consider alternative punishment for these youth.

### **House Bill 811**

HB 811 would allow for schools to consider how a student's homelessness contributed to the disciplinary infraction that warranted the action. Homeless youth are some of the most vulnerable members of society, yet they tend to be disciplined at disproportionate rates as compared to their non-homeless peers. Homeless youth experience unique barriers to success in the classroom, including a lack of stable housing and support from caring adults; limited access



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to basic necessities like food and medical services; a lack of consistent access to bathing and laundry facilities; unreliable transportation; and histories of trauma and abuse. As such, our schools should take into account a student's homeless-status when disciplinary action is deemed necessary.

### **House Bill 1077**

HB 1077 would provide relief to taxpayers on their property taxes by shifting some of the tax burden onto a sales tax. Under the legislation, the tax rate would increase by just 1-penny to 7.25% from 6.25%. The State Comptroller would then allocate the funds to the Texas Education Agency (TEA) to help reduce the school district maintenance and operation (M&O) property taxes. The Comptroller's office provided me with data on how much money we could generate each fiscal year:

	Revenue Raised by Fiscal Year (Thousands of Dollars)				
Sales Tax Rate Increase	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
1%	4,347,500	4,551,800	4,756,600	4,970,600	5,194,300

### **House Bill 1119**

HB 1119 would boost teacher compensation. As we all know, school finance has been a contentious issue in Texas for decades. Along with endless amounts of litigation, the state has experienced record population growth and subsequently an increase in student population. This is why Texas needs a school finance formula that attempts to address these growing concerns. An answer begins by understanding that students and teachers make up the nucleus of Texas public education. Nothing in public education can occur without students and teachers.

### **House Bill 1687**

HB 1687 eliminates burdensome state-required assessments and end-of course assessments that are not required federally. The legislation would no longer require testing in writing in fourth and fifth grade, and social studies in eighth grade. I firmly believe that burdensome assessments disrupt important classroom instruction.

Lastly, it was a pleasure to have the Texas Probation Association, Sheriffs Association of Texas, Texas Criminal Justice Coalition, R Street Institute, Texas Appleseed, Texas Public Policy Foundation, ACLU of Texas, and the Texas Inmate Families Association provide testimony to



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the House Corrections Committee. These outstanding organizations serve as a resource in criminal justice policy and offer great insight into our current system and what we can do better moving forward. Additionally, some of the folks who testified are either families of justice-involved people or have been previously incarcerated themselves. Their stories are a true testament to the work that needs to be done in the state. Thanks to them Texas is a national leader in criminal justice reforms.

The Capitol of Texas belongs to you and visiting the Capitol during the biennial legislative session is a great experience. To assist in arranging your visit please call Saul Mendoza, my Chief of Staff, at (512) 463-0490. Or, you can email him at [saul.mendoza@house.texas.gov](mailto:saul.mendoza@house.texas.gov).

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