



# TEXAS HOUSE *of* REPRESENTATIVES

*James White*

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

CORRECTIONS  
CHAIR

REDISTRICTING

JUDICIARY &  
CIVIL JURISPRUDENCE

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Friday, April 19, 2019

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(512) 463-0490

### **Texas House Moves Passage of the Texas Plan; Historic School Finance Reform** - Weekly Legislative Update 4/5/19 -

(Austin, TX) - Today the Texas House of Representatives overwhelmingly passed House Bill 3, which I co-authored, that invests \$9 billion in Texas classrooms to boost student achievement, support teacher quality, reduce recapture and provide property tax relief. Following a full day of productive discussion on the House Floor, I voted in support of HB 3, which passed the House with 149 votes.

School finance reform is the top priority for the Texas House this session and was declared an "emergency item" by Governor Greg Abbott in his biennial State of the State address. HB 3 is the first major rewrite of school finance laws undertaken without the threat of a court order, and it puts a stop to decades of patchwork fixes by creating a more equitable public education system.

Following the passage of HB 3, I joined Speaker Dennis Bonnen and dozens of fellow State Representatives at a news conference in the State Capitol. Speaker Bonnen thanked the Texas House for authoring this monumental legislation and for being at the forefront of championing Texas students and teachers.

HB 3 is one of the most historic and important pieces of legislation this state has seen in decades because it invests in our children, our teachers and our future workforce. This legislation devotes an unprecedented \$9 billion to public education and property tax reduction.

Through HB 3 and HB 1, we're lowering school district property taxes by an average of 5.5% statewide, or \$2.7 billion. Every Texan will see a permanent property tax rate reduction and the bill provides the option to lower property taxes further in the future.

#### **Policy Highlights of HB 3:**

- Invests in Texas students and teachers by adding approximately \$9 billion in funding above enrollment growth and current law entitlement over the next two years;
- Empowers local school districts to put more money in their classrooms by raising the Basic Allotment from \$5,140 to \$6,030, an \$890 increase per student;



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- Devotes \$2.7 billion toward property tax reduction;
- Lowers school district property tax rates by an average of 5.5% statewide;
- Reduces recapture by 38% this biennium;
- Guarantees that 25% of the new money will go toward increasing compensation for school district employees;
- Requires voters to authorize tax rates above \$1.01 in an election (three cents lower than current law). Before going to voters for a tax increase, districts must also conduct an efficiency audit to ensure taxpayer dollars are being used responsibly;
- Establishes an early reading program that funds full-day, high quality Pre-K for low-income students, setting the right foundation for students to be able to read at grade level by third grade;
- Allots funding to districts to recruit and retain quality teachers who take on the challenge of teaching at high-needs or rural schools;
- Raises the minimum teacher salary schedule;
- Enhances the yield on the "enrichment" pennies, allowing schools to earn and keep more money for property taxes levied above the standard Tier 1 tax rate;
- Requires school districts to conduct an efficiency audit -- before going to voters for a tax increase -- to ensure taxpayer dollars are being used responsibly
- Requires local school boards to set student achievement goals for 3rd grade math and reading
- Updates the transportation funding model from a burdensome linear density model to a simplified one dollar per mile reimbursement;
- Allocates resources to low-income students based on census blocks that are tiered according to economic disadvantage. HB 3 prioritizes students with the highest needs and provides more funding to schools with higher concentrations of economically disadvantaged students and generational poverty;
- Quadruples the amount allocated to fast growth districts to build and equip new instructional facilities funding to \$100 million per year;
- Adds a reimbursement for the cost of transporting homeless students and CTE students to work-based learning sites;
- Creates a professional development grant program to train teachers in blended learning instruction so they can effectively combine e-learning and traditional classroom instruction;
- Dedicates more money for dual language immersion education, which has proven to be more effective in producing greater achievement levels for multilingual and native English speaking students;



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- Equips districts with the resources needed to identify and intervene at the earliest signs of student dyslexia and related disorders;
- Establishes an extended year program that allows districts to combat "summer slide" by providing 30 days of half-day instruction for students in grades PreK-5 during the summer months;
- Expands career and technology education programs for students in grades 6-12 (previously grades 9-12), making students more skilled and better prepared for the workforce or post-secondary education; and
- Establishes a grant program for districts to offer parents of economically disadvantaged students with learning disabilities in grades 3-8 access to additional services to help improve educational performance.

## **How the Texas Plan Addresses Teacher Pay**

- HB 3 provides incentive-based increases to teacher pay, which rewards the teachers taking on the challenges of high needs and/or rural schools that struggle to attract and retain quality teachers.
- Teachers will be provided even more continuing education and training opportunities throughout their careers. HB 3 provides funding for professional development programs that train teachers in the latest instructional techniques.
- Instead of mandating an unsustainable pay schedule, local districts are provided with the money and discretion to determine teacher and school support staff compensation how they see fit.

## **How the Texas Plan Supports Gifted and Talented**

- School districts will continue to receive funding for gifted and talented programs, and TEA will continue to monitor those programs to ensure they are providing a rigorous and challenging education for gifted and talented students.

## **How the Texas Plan Identifies Our Students' Needs**

- HB 3 will prepare our youngest students for long-term success by investing in full-day, high quality Pre-K for low-income students. The bill also dedicates more money for dual language immersion education.
- The Texas Plan allows parents of students with learning disabilities in grades 3-8 to enter a program for additional services from their district.
- The Texas Plan allocates resources to low-income students on a sliding scale (rather than an equal weight) to prioritize students with the highest needs. It also provides more



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funding to schools with higher concentrations of economically disadvantaged students and generational poverty.

- School districts are equipped with the resources to identify and intervene at the earliest signs of student dyslexia and related disorders.

### **How the Texas Plan Helps Rural Districts**

- HB 3 empowers local school districts to put more money into classrooms by raising the Basic Allotment from \$5,140 to \$6,030. This funding adds significant resources to school districts while providing them the discretion to drive resources where they are needed most.
- HB 3 gives rural school districts the ability to earn and keep more money from local property taxes, provides added programs and resources for underserved students and updates the critical transportation funding model, which has historically been a burden on rural schools.
- HB 3 gives school districts the funding and the discretion to provide school staff salary increases as they see fit. This is particularly advantageous to rural school districts who need additional resources in order to attract and retain high quality teachers and fill shortages at rural schools.

Additionally, this week I received the news that my good friend Charlie Gee of Jasper, TX, had passed away during the week. Charlie was an integral part of our Southeast Texas community and left a lasting impact with us. He dedicated many hours not only to his logging business but also to the Jasper Volunteer Fire Department. I will miss my dear friend dearly.

Charlie is survived by his wife of almost 57 years, Sue Hollis Gee; daughter Sarah Smith and husband Sam; daughter Laura McMillon and husband Mitch; daughter Rebecca Soisson and husband Scott; daughter Jennifer Cline and husband Billy. Also by his brother Bill Gee, grandchildren (Matthew and wife Halea, Ashleigh, Charlie, John, Henry, Jacob, Emily, Michael, Brian, Brandon, and Grant), and four great-grandchildren.

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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