



# TEXAS HOUSE *of* REPRESENTATIVES

*James White*

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

CORRECTIONS  
CHAIR

REDISTRICTING

JUDICIARY &  
CIVIL JURISPRUDENCE

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **Texas House Unanimously Moves Passage of Conservative Texas State Budget & Additional Appropriations** - Bi-Weekly Legislative Update 3/29/19 -

(Austin, TX) - The Texas State House took actions to approve the Texas State budget. This is the only legislation that the Legislature is constitutionally required to pass during the 140 session. General Appropriations Bills, otherwise known as the state budget, are introduced by the House and Senate at the start of the legislative session following an assessment of the Legislative Appropriation Requests (LARs) submitted by state agencies over the interim and the Comptroller's Biennial Revenue Estimate (BRE).

The Legislature may change the state budget through a supplemental appropriations bill after the budget has been approved. Because the regular session begins in January, with eight months remaining in the two-year budget period, the Legislature sometimes appropriates funds to supplement an agency for the last fiscal year of a biennium.

The Comptroller anticipates state lawmakers will have \$119.1 billion for spending over the FY 2020-2021 budget cycle, which is roughly 8.1 percent more funding available compared to the last biennium.

The House Appropriations Committee has been hard at work preparing House Bill 1, the state budget for the upcoming biennium, while the Senate recently passed and sent over Senate Bill 500, the supplemental budget which will address the obligations and critical needs of the state in the final months of FY 2019.

House Bill 1 (HB 1) spends \$116.5 billion of general revenue (GR), well under the Comptroller's BRE of \$119.1 billion. The bill also includes approximately \$2.3 billion of emergency items funded with the Economic Stabilization Fund (ESF).

HB 1 responsibly funds items Texas taxpayers expect and deserve, like public education, mental health, school safety, and sexual assault prevention education and training. HB 1 is fiscally conservative spending taxpayer dollars efficiently and effectively to provide critical government services, while coming in well below all four Constitutional spending limits.



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**Article I - General Government:** Funding the critical services Texans expect efficiently and effectively.

- **Standing up for Texas Veterans:** The Texas Veterans Commission is provided with an additional \$7M GR to meet the increasing demand for veterans assistance in underserved rural areas; to expand the Women Veterans Program; to expand the Veteran Entrepreneur Program; and to provide more funding for Veterans Treatment Court grants.
- **Protecting Victims of Sexual Assault:** Sexual Assault Crisis Centers under the Office of the Attorney General are provided with an additional \$7.5M GR to eliminate waitlists, expand crisis centers into 15 counties, and cover projected caseload.
- \$10M GR is appropriated for grants to Sexual Assault Forensic Exam-Ready (SAFE-Ready) Facilities for education and training so that acute care hospitals are fully equipped and trained to care for victims of sexual assault.
- **Rebuilding Texas after Harvey:** \$100M ESF is provided to the Office of the Governor for disaster response and recovery grants.

**Article II - Health and Human Services:** Putting the health of Texans first.

- **Prioritizing Mental Health for all Texans:** HB 1 includes \$173.4M GR to address capacity demands for behavioral health services including fully funding additional inpatient psychiatric services and access to residential treatment beds for children. Included in this amount is funding for substance abuse disorder (SUD) treatment, including \$23.6M GR to address the waitlist for pregnant women and women with dependent children.
- **Assisting Children with Developmental Challenges:** The Early Childhood Intervention (ECI) program is provided with an additional \$72.6M GR in order to fund caseload growth and develop provider stability.
- **Critical Healthcare for Texas Women:** \$88.1M GR is provided to the three women's health programs at the Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) to meet caseload growth and fund providers that serve rural and underserved areas.
- **Protecting Vulnerable Texans:** Adult Protective Services (APS) at the Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) is provided with \$6.5M to fund additional caseworkers. Another \$22M GR is provided for salary increases and bonuses for APS frontline caseworkers, investigator caseworkers, supervisors, and support staff.

**Article III – Education:** Preparing young Texans to compete in the workforce of the future.

*Public Education*—Investing in Texas school children to prepare them for college or career.

- The Foundation School Program (FSP) is provided with an additional \$9 billion in GR to fund HB 3 as introduced.



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- With this \$9 billion, the state is 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.
- The Texas Education Agency (TEA) is provided with \$50M GR for special education grants.
- TEA is also provided with \$64.5M (out of \$109.4M total allocated for school safety efforts) for increased investment in Communities in Schools and the agency's Safe and Healthy Schools initiative.

*Higher Education*—Ensuring Texas students have access to a quality higher education so they can compete in the workforce.

- \$80M GR is provided for TEXAS Grants to maintain 70% of eligible students in all pathways. This amount funds growth and maintains the percentage of eligible students for these grants.
- \$18.5M GR is provided for the small institution supplement to help growing institutions that do not yet generate enough formula funding to operate on their own.

**Article IV** – Judiciary: Ensuring all Texans have access to a fair and efficient legal system.

- The Supreme Court's Basic Civil Legal Services program receives an additional \$6M GR for veterans and \$10M GR for victims of sexual assault.
- The Office of Court Administration is appropriated an additional \$3.4M GR to create nine additional child protection courts, as well as \$1M GR for the Children's Commission to provide judicial training to Child Support Courts.
- The Texas Indigent Defense Commission is appropriated \$10M GR-D to provide grants to counties for indigent defense, as well as \$10M GR for grants to public defender offices for the specialized representation of indigent defendants with mental illness.

**Article V** – Public Safety and Criminal Justice: Ensuring law enforcement has the resources it needs to keep our families and communities safe.

- The Department of Public Safety (DPS) is appropriated \$6M ESF for crime lab equipment replacement and remodel of the Garland Crime Lab; and approximately \$2M GR is given to fund crime analyst training and education in drug and toxicology disciplines.
- HB 1 also includes an appropriation of \$38M GR, contingent on legislation that requires DPS to reduce the DNA backlog and increase crime lab capacity.



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- \$168M GR is provided to the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) for a correctional officer and parole officer pay raise and career ladder restructuring.
- \$26M ESF is provided to complete the installation of video surveillance cameras at TDCJ facilities, with another \$2M GR appropriated for body worn cameras.
- Approximately \$8M GR is provided to TDCJ to expand jail diversion services into rural areas for offenders with special needs and expand specialized mental health caseloads.
- The Texas Military Department is provided with \$6M GR to recruit, train, and equip an increase of the Texas State Guard.

**Article VI** - Natural Resources: Using our natural resources responsibly, now and in the future.

- The Water Development Board is appropriated \$8.5M GR for strategic mapping, floodplain mapping, hydraulic river and coastal mapping, and flood monitoring.

**Article VII** - Business and Economic Development: Expanding economic opportunity to every corner of the state.

- The Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs is appropriated \$3M GR to fund a youth homeless initiative.
- \$200M GR is provided to the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) for improvements to the Drivers License Program, contingent upon the transfer of the Driver License Program from DPS to DMV.
- The Texas Workforce Commission is appropriated \$6M GR for the Jobs and Education Training Program and \$1.3M GR for the Apprenticeship Training Program.

The House spent over 11 hours debating the legislation and about 300 pre-filed amendments. Now the budget heads over to the Texas Senate for consideration.

Before voting on the budget, the House also took a vote on SB 500. The main focus of SB 500 is to fund FY 2019 obligations, while also funding critical needs such as Hurricane Harvey damage, using GR and the ESF. Senate Bill 500 spends \$2.7 billion of general revenue and approximately \$4.3 billion of the Economic Stabilization Fund. Comptroller Hegar previously estimated that the ESF would have nearly \$12 billion for budget emergencies. Highlighted below are several key areas SB 500 funds.

- \$2.7 billion ESF may be used for expenses related to Hurricane Harvey, including \$1.5 billion for reduced property values and increased costs and \$873 million to match local public needs
- \$1.34 billion in funding for the Teacher Retirement System



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- \$2.1 billion GR to fund a shortfall in Medicaid
- \$100 million GR to fund state children's hospitals
- \$250 million ESF to match local funding for damaged county roads.

Over the past two weeks I had the privilege to lay out many of my bills. There are a few that I would like to highlight:

- **HB 1570:** The 1987 founding legislation for the Rayburn County Municipal Utility District calls for a seven-member board of directors. Motivated by the transition to a professionally run district, with a full-time general manager and with staff development for all positions, and by the difficulty of finding seven qualified community volunteers willing to serve on the board of directors, the board voted in May 2018 to seek to amend the founding legislation to reduce, through attrition, the number of board positions from seven to five. By evolving into a professionally managed district, the board of directors is able to increasingly become an "oversight board" as opposed to a "working board" thus furthering the goal of creating a sustainable, systematically run district.
- **HB 2701:** This bill seeks to require the commission on law enforcement to adopt a training program for county jailers that would educate the jailers in regards to interactions with pregnant justice-involved women. This bill would further require each jailor to complete the training at least once every 48 months. The program would be based on obstetrical and gynecological practices and include general information on:
  - pregnancy, labor, delivery, and recovery;
  - identifying when a woman is in labor;
  - appropriate prenatal and postnatal care and first aid techniques specific to pregnant women; and
  - factors that increase the risk of a miscarriage.
- **HB 3116:** This bill creates best practices that jails may implement when an individual with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities (IDD) is jailed so they receive fair and reasonable accommodations and access to justice. The bill would form a taskforce that would expire in 2021 to study and make recommendations on the current policies and procedures, as well as the policies and practices that would improve jail standards.
- **HB 2116:** As it stands today, the Education Code provides guidelines for schools to identify and provide services for students who are at risk of dropping out of school. There are 13 identifiers that a school district can use to determine if a child is at risk of dropping out, but there is currently no guideline that helps identify students who have come in contact with the criminal justice system as potential drop-out risks. HB 2116 addresses this issue and effectively adds a 14th identifier by classifying students who have been



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incarcerated or who have a parent who has been or is currently incarcerated as at risk of dropping out for purposes of certain accelerated instruction and alternative education programs.

- **HB 918:** Newly released inmates face numerous challenges in reintegrating into the community and becoming productive members of society. One of the most crucial issues is obtaining employment. Many inmates lack basic identifying information like a state-issued I.D., and even more lack basic employment documentation like a resume. HB 918 seeks to better enable newly released inmates who will reside in Texas to successfully transition from incarceration into the workforce by requiring the Texas Department of Criminal Justice to provide a support packet for all incarcerated Texans leaving TDCJ that includes a state ID issued photo ID, birth certificate, Social Security card, resume, and documentation that they received a pre-release job interview.
- **HB 2233:** HB 91 in the 85th Legislative Session directed each licensing authority to review requirements related to an applicant's criminal history and make a recommendation regarding whether the requirement should be retained, modified, or repealed. HB 2233 is based on a review conducted by the Texas Department of Licensing and Regulation. HB 2233 removes the requirements that licenses for certain occupations be refused for the reason of a felony conviction or a crime of "moral turpitude" and removes provisions requiring an applicant for a specific license to demonstrate the applicant's honesty, trustworthiness, and integrity. Requirements such as "honesty, trustworthiness, and integrity," may sound sensible enough, but those are subjective terms that are interpreted differently by everyone, including licensing boards. They can be used to arbitrarily deny good people the opportunity to earn a living, and the revisions in HB 2233 will remove this unnecessary layer of subjectivity in our licensure code and create a more fair system for Texas workers.
- **HB 581 & 582:** These bills allow for the sell of fireworks on Juneteenth and Labor Day. This piece of legislation not only provides an opportunity for the stakeholders in the firework industry to be able to sell their goods but most importantly it helps to commemorate days that deserve our recognition.

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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