



TEXAS HOUSE *of* REPRESENTATIVES

James White

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

CORRECTIONS
CHAIR

REDISTRICTING

JUDICIARY &
CIVIL JURISPRUDENCE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Friday, January 29, 2021

Contact: Saul Mendoza
(512) 463-0490

It's Your Money: Texas Comptroller Announces Biennial Revenue Estimate - Weekly Legislative Update 1/22/21 -

(Austin, TX) - The Texas House and Senate did not convene this week. However, my office spent the week meeting with various stakeholders and constituents, reviewing filed bills to oppose and support, to include surveying our state's fiscal condition. This review of our state's budget picture begins with the state's Biennial Revenue Estimate (BRE).

Article III, Section 49a of the Texas Constitution requires the Comptroller, Glenn Hegar, to prepare a state revenue estimate for the remainder of the fiscal year and upcoming biennium and present it to the Legislature at the start of the legislative session. This revenue estimate is important because subsequently in Section 49(b), the state constitution binds the Legislature to this estimate. Although it would represent fiscal irresponsibility, the Texas Constitution only allows the Legislature to spend in excess of the Comptroller's estimate in the case of an "emergency and imperative public necessity" and with a four-fifths super-majority vote of the total membership of the Texas House and Senate.

So therefore, when I am asked, "Why didn't the Legislature spend more hard earned taxpayer dollars," I respond, "Because we don't have a printing press in Austin. Your Texas Constitution doesn't allow deficit spending, and our Texas taxpayers expect fiscal conservatism and responsibility."

On January 11th, 2021, Comptroller Hegar released an updated BRE for our current 2020-2021 biennium and upcoming 2022-23 biennium. The revenue estimate represents a 0.4 percent decrease from funds available for the 2020-21 biennium. This decline is a direct result of the COVID-19 pandemic, which caused revenue collections to fall well below what the Legislature expected when it approved the 2020-21 budget in 2019; therefore, the ending 2020-21 balance will be close to a negative \$1 billion. The Texas Legislature is projected to have \$112.5 billion in revenue available to satisfy constitutional and core government functions in the current budget cycle or the upcoming 2022-2023 biennial budget, which starts on September 1, 2021.

In addition, Comptroller Hegar estimated that the state's Economic Stabilization Fund (ESF) (colloquially known as the Rainy Day Fund [RDF]) would have nearly \$11.6 billion. This is \$0.4



TEXAS HOUSE *of* REPRESENTATIVES

James White

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

CORRECTIONS
CHAIR

REDISTRICTING

JUDICIARY &
CIVIL JURISPRUDENCE

billion less than what was available during the 86th Legislative Session. General revenue involves fee and tax collections assessed and collected in Texas and not dedicated for a specific purpose: sales taxes, fuel taxes, business franchise taxes, e.g. In his 2022-23 revenue estimate, the Comptroller's office anticipates a total general-purpose spending revenue of \$112.53 billion, which is an anticipated \$6.59 billion reduction or 5.53 percent decrease from the previous 2020-21 biennial revenue estimate (\$119.12 billion).

This decrease in total spending revenue means that your state legislature still must exercise fiscal prudence and focus taxpayer money to core constitutional functions such as public education, disaster response and mitigation, public safety, mental health and early childhood therapy, bridges and roads, and our parks and boat ramps.

I am committed to working with my colleagues in producing a fiscally conservative budget that meets the needs of our commitments and obligations as a state. We are blessed to live in the state with the financial wherewithal to provide the opportunities to our next generation of Texans and provide comfort and security to the most vulnerable. We can do this without accumulating excessive levels of debt and taxing our citizens out of their businesses and homes. In fact, it is not prudent of us to tax these businesses and individuals in the midst of a pandemic when grants and unemployment insurance benefits barely are meeting the needs of Texans to stay afloat when our government has mandated closures and partial reopening of our Texas economy.

Along with the revenue estimate, the Legislative Budget Board (LBB) released the 2022-23 General Appropriations Bill by the Texas House. The House proposes a state budget of \$119.7 billion in General Revenue for 2022-23, which is a 4.09 percent increase over 2020-21. Despite the claptrap from uninformed critics and political hacks, every budget that I have voted for and signed into law by either Governor Rick Perry or Governor Greg Abbott, has included withdrawals from the ESF/RDF. As of the initial appropriations bill filed, there are no recommendations to appropriate from the fund. This is most likely to change due to the deficit of the proposed budget, how the Legislature will appropriate federal COVID-19 relief funds, and what the Comptroller has set as our estimate of available funds in the BRE.

As we received information on the upcoming budget, myself and the legislative office ensured that we spent the week productively. We have been joining weekly seminars with the Office of the Attorney General in regards to human trafficking and the actions the Attorney General has taken to combat the problems.



TEXAS HOUSE *of* REPRESENTATIVES

James White

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

CORRECTIONS
CHAIR

REDISTRICTING

JUDICIARY &
CIVIL JURISPRUDENCE

We met with our local food banks and Feeding Texans in regards to the needs of the district and what we can do to assist. Our food banks have been critical to ensuring that our fellow Texans obtain basic needs. Many are on government and charitable assistance for the first time in their lives and getting resources for a hot meal are critical in the midst of this pandemic.

Our local county judges and I have a weekly call with the Texas Department of Health Services (DSHS) in regards to COVID vaccines. I receive multiple requests a day from our elderly who are in need of a vaccine but do not have access to one. This high demand for the Moderna and Pfizer vaccine has created the problem. Additionally, we are getting more centers that can properly maintain and distribute the vaccines. I joined our judges in asking the DSHS and the Texas Department of Emergency Management to send more vaccines and proper equipment to maintain the vaccines at the ideal temperatures.

Additionally, I saw the great news that our Lumberton High School cheerleaders brought home the UIL 4A Spirit State Championship. This is a remarkable achievement for these young ladies! What an incredible honor for the Lumberton community as this is the first time that the school has held this prestigious title.

I also send my congratulations to Coach Brandon Prouse of Deweyville ISD. The Southeast Texas Coaches Association chose Coach Prouse as their Coach of the Year. Coach Prouse has guided the district's sports programs since becoming the athletic director back in 2017. His leadership led the Deweyville Pirates to advance to the University Interscholastic League playoffs during the 2020 season. Lumberton ISD had the honor of having eight students earn a spot in either the Texas All State Band or All State Choir. I am proud to congratulate Lianna Blankenship, Garrett Owens, Kara Rumsey, Lindsey Kubsch, Emma Nelson, Grace Flanakin, Lanie Arevalo, and Seth Thibodeau. They have all represented Lumberton with honor and have made their families and educators proud.

David Bellow one of our outstanding fathers from Jasper and member of Texas Equal Parenting also visited with me. He is a terrific advocate for stronger families and I look forward to continuing to work with him throughout the session.

In conclusion, it is your money, your rights, your state, and your Capitol. Every Texan admits that visiting their 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



TEXAS HOUSE *of* REPRESENTATIVES

James White

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

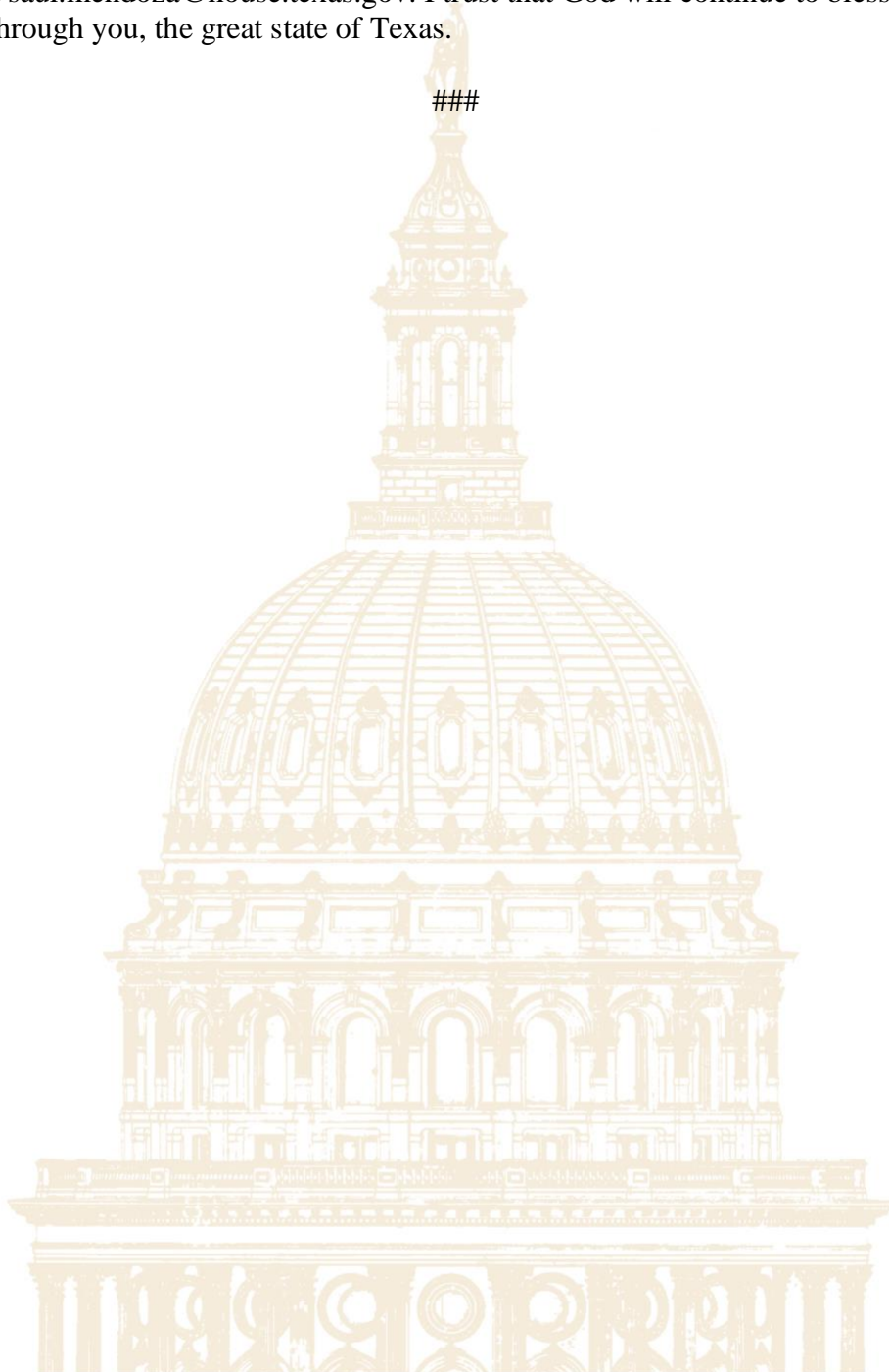
CORRECTIONS
CHAIR

REDISTRICTING

JUDICIARY &
CIVIL JURISPRUDENCE

email him at saul.mendoza@house.texas.gov. I trust that God will continue to bless you and your family and through you, the great state of Texas.

###



CAPITOL: P.O. Box 2910 • AUSTIN, TEXAS 78768-2910 • (512) 463-0490 • FAX (512) 463-9059

DISTRICT: P.O. Box 395 • WOODVILLE, TEXAS 75979 • (409) 283-3700 • FAX (409) 283-3702

JAMES.WHITE@HOUSE.TEXAS.GOV