Since the end of the 80th Legislative Session, many positive changes have been made at the Texas Department of Transportation. Some of these changes include the formal adoption of statutory principles to help address public concern over the direction of state transportation policy. The Transportation Commission adopted a minute order reaffirming five statutory requirements and issuing two new protections for future transportation infrastructure development. Most importantly, the TTC formally approved the original Trans-Texas Corridor (TTC) I-69 route which would have cut large sections through House District 28 and other parts of Texas. The TTC will now focus its attention to upgrading the existing US Highway 59 to create the long awaited through House District 28 and other parts of Texas. (TTC I-69) route which would have cut large sections through House District 28 and other parts of Texas. The TTC also approved the Trans-Texas Corridor and the Interregional Transportation Policy. The Transportation Commission has formally agreed to adhere to the following statutory requirements:

- The state will retain ownership of its state highways and will not transfer this ownership to private developers.
- Any contract entered into by the Department will contain provisions that allow the state to buy back any facilities that have been leased to a private developer.
- The Department will only approve initial rates for toll projects in a public meeting and in coordination with local metropolitan planning organizations.
- Tolling will only be imposed on new capacity, and the amount of non-tolled lanes on existing roads will not be reduced.

The Transportation Commission minute order also is:

- Supported monumental legislation enacting a moratorium on the Trans-Texas Corridor (TTC) and Comprehensive Development Agreements (CDA) previously entered into by the Department.
- Approved transportation infrastructure and strengthened oversight of TTC.
- Removed unfair tolling practices and updated tolling restrictions in Fort Bend County.
- Supported monumental legislation enacting a moratorium on the Trans-Texas Corridor (TTC) and Comprehensive Development Agreements (CDA) previously entered into by the Department.
- Approved transportation infrastructure and strengthened oversight of TTC.
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The Transportation Commission minute order also includes any limitations or prohibitions on improvements needed to exist or future highways.

The Transportation Commission Constitution? For example, dual credit course work. ______

Do you support diversifying public education by creating publicly funded schools with focuses in business, health, and other needed fields?______________________

Public Safety

- Strengthened penalties for car break-ins.
- Increased highway safety by allowing drivers over age of 85.
- Required fingerprinting & background checks to prevent child predators from working at public school campuses.
- Authorized $10.00 to protect and secure our border, including a $5.00 air to border sheriffs' and law enforcement groups.

This announcement comes in a series of positive changes that the TTC in response to an overwhelming amount of public concern and disapproval of the massive Trans-Texas Corridor which was approved in 2003 with little public input or legislative debate. After dozens of public hearings and town hall meetings across the state, the TTC saw over 28,000 public comments opposing the TTC.

Spotlight on Zerwas Legislation

Education

- Delivered a $13 billion / 31.9% increase in public education funding, a $2.4 billion / 17.9% increase in higher ed. funding, and $62 million for additional financial aid / student work study programs.
- Reduced state aid TAKS test with end-of-course exams to keep schools accountable for student performance while moving away from wooden metrics.
- Delivered a well-designed raise to our retired teachers in the form of a 13th check.
- Established the Texas Tomorrow Fund bill to allow former teachers to look in today’s rates for their children’s higher education needs.

Transportation

- Expanded the Texas Emissions Reduction Program (TERM) to reduce emissions from high-polluting vehicles from our roads.
- Reduced statewide emissions from power plants by publishing building energy codes and providing accreditation standards for state buildings.
- Passed energy conservation measure to reduce consumption during peak times and thus expand the capacity of existing power plants and transmission lines.
- Worked to increase availability of renewable power production in Texas.

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Energy/Environment

- Passed Medicaid reforms to help enroll more of those who are eligible in the program and increased reimbursements to doctors and hospitals performing uncompensated care while maximizing efficiencies and cost containment strategies.
- Reformed the Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP) to help more working Texans’ children get the healthcare they need by eliminating the 90-day enrollment waiting period and extending the renewal cycle from 6 months to 12 months.
- Passed energy conservation measure to reduce consumption during peak times and thus expand the capacity of existing power plants and transmission lines.
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Health Care

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Improved Trans-Texas Corridor which was approved in 2003 with little public input or legislative debate. After dozens of public hearings and town hall meetings across the state, the TTC saw over 28,000 public comments opposing the TTC.

For this section, please share with me your priorities for your tax dollars spent by ranking the following areas of funding from highest (1) to lowest (9)

- Public Education
- Transportation
- Health Care
- Environment/Energy
- Tax Reform

If you wish to add a category, please use this scale to give me your position on these issues.

1 (strongly support) 2 (support) 3 (neutral) 4 (strongly oppose)


Do you think more funding is needed to be appropriated to Border and Homeland Security? ________________

If so, please explain how.

Would you support extending Texas’ tax free holiday in August?___________

Would you support indexing the state fuel tax to better finance transportation projects?___________

Do you think that employers who knowingly employ undocumented workers should face tougher penalties when voting in an election? _____

Do you think that employers who knowingly employ undocumented workers should face tougher penalties? _____

Do you believe that all future budget surpluses should be used for education needs?_______

Labor

- Passed voter-approved constitutional amendment to require a recorded vote on final passage of all non-ceremonial legislation with results posted on the internet.

Tax Law

- Passed $4.2 billion in state property tax relief, the largest tax cut in Texas history.
- Saved taxpayers $600 million by abolishing the outdated telephone infrastructure tax.
- Passed voter-approved constitutional amendment to lower the maximum homeowner appraisal cap from 8% to 10%, regardless of appraisal frequency.

If you wish to add a category, please use this scale to give me your position on these issues.

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Representative Zerwas is Preparing Legislative Agenda for 81st Legislature

Since the ending of the 80th Legislative Session, Representative Zerwas has been processing and working with constituents to prepare legislation for next session. Constituents may submit proposals for Representative Zerwas to file as legislation for the 81st Legislative through a variety of ways. Please contact Representative Zerwas’ capital office and ask for a “Request for Sponsorship” form. We can e-mail, fax or mail it to you.

This option helps to ensure your voice is heard in Austin and Representative Zerwas encourages your participation in the legislative process.

Revised Margins Tax

In 2007, the 80th Legislature again revised the franchise tax with HB 3928. This bill clarified language in HB 3 with substantive changes, including the increase of the small business exemption from businesses with total revenues of $200,000 in total revenue to businesses with up to $600,000 in total revenue. While Representative Zerwas supported this margin tax revision legislation during the 80th legislative session, he remains opposed to the margins tax revision.

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I look forward to continuing to serve as your State Representative at the Capitol in Austin. To ensure that your voice is heard, please submit the enclosed questionnaire. Together, we can make Texas an even better place to live.