



THE HOUSE BUDGET

"This week in the legislature we tackled the budget, held committee hearings, and debated several bills on the House floor. After an 18-hour debate on HB 1, the House voted to pass a \$210 billion budget for the next biennium. The next step for the Texas House is to work with the Senate to finalize the Texas budget. Although I believe we could have done more to increase funding for public education, veterans, and healthcare by tapping in to the Rainy Day Fund, I believe that this budget is moving Texas in a positive direction. As we move forward with the budget, be assured that I will remain an active role in the budgeting conversations. I hope you have a great Easter surrounded by your family and friends. God Bless!"



THE TEXAS BUDGET DEBATED ON THE HOUSE FLOOR

Employee Retirement Systems of Texas (ERS): \$1.16 billion to fund state employee retirement at 9.5% with an additional \$390.2 million to fund a 2.5% salary increase. ERS has been underfunded for 19 of the past 20 years. These necessary budget items will help make the ERS fund solvent, ensuring that our state employees receive their hard earned retirement without placing the burden on the recipients.

Public Education: \$41.4 billion, a 4.4% increase, in funds for the Foundation School Program which directs money from the Texas Education Agency to school districts for operations and to some districts for facilities. Additionally, Rep. Muñoz supported an amendment by Rep. Yvonne Davis (D-Dallas) that adds an extra \$1.6 billion in funding for full day pre-kindergarten programs, contingent upon passage of HB 424 by Rep. Dutton (D-Houston).

Transportation: \$24.8 billion in funds for the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT), a 17% increase from the previous budget. This increase will allow the state to rely less on borrowed funds when funding future road projects.

Border Security: \$565.2 million to fund border security operations, with \$551 million going to the Texas Department of Public Safety. To keep an eye on spending of taxpayer dollars, Representative Muñoz filed amendment #206 that requires the Texas Department of Public Safety to submit a report each fiscal year detailing the effectiveness of various cost containment measures that the department has implemented.

Source: House Research Organization http://www.hro.house.state.tx.us/pdf/focus/2015CSHB_1.pdf

BILLS HEARD IN COMMITTEE

Pharr Foreign-Trade Zone (FTZ) HB 2515 allows the City of Pharr to begin the process of establishing a FTZ adjacent to the Pharr International Bridge. A FTZ is a secure area in which merchandise may be transported without formal customs entry, import quotas, and many other import restrictions. Taxes are accessed when the merchandise leaves the FTZ.

Medicaid Managed Care HB 2084 will create transparency in the Medicaid managed care rate-setting process by requiring reports that outline and explain the process by which payment rates are determined. This bill affects all Medicaid programs and CHIP, ensuring that reports are actuarially sound.

Teachers Retirement System HB 2168 ensures that retired teachers gain access to their benefits on the last working day of each month. Currently, retirees receive their annuity payments on the first day of the month. This bill provides retirees with their annuity payments earlier.

CONSTITUENTS AT THE CAPITOL



(1.) Mission Firefighters joined the Texas State Association of Fire Fighters at the Texas Capitol to stand for high-priority issues such as longevity pay, line of duty injuries, retirement, among others. **(2.)** Senator Hinojosa, Rep. Guerra, Rep. Longoria, and I were proud to welcome the Palmview High School Mariachi "Los Lobos" to the Capitol!

