



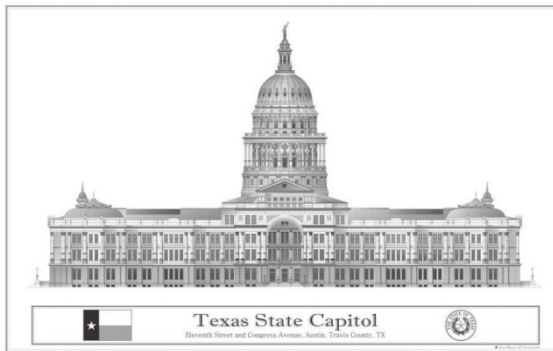
GARY

VanDeaver

STATE REPRESENTATIVE



House District 1 - Bowie, Franklin, Lamar & Red River counties
District & Capitol Report - 85th Legislature
August 2017



Around the District. School year begins. Students have headed back to school for the start of the 2017-18 school year, so that means more traffic and distracted drivers. Please pay close attention to school-zone speed limits, school crossings, and warning signals. It is vitally important that everyone do everything possible to keep our treasured children and grandchildren safe. Additionally, state law requires that approaching drivers stop when a bus is stopped and operating a visual signal - either red flashing lights or a stop sign. Drivers who illegally pass school buses face fines up to \$1250 for the first offense and potential criminal charges if they cause serious bodily injuries.

Around the Capitol. Special session adjourns. Earlier this month the first-called special session of the 85th legislature adjourned after passing several items on the governor's call. Without legislative action this summer, five state agencies would have begun a one-year closure process and shut their doors on August 31, 2018, since their "sunset" legislation failed to pass during the regular session. One of the affected agencies was the Texas Medical Board (TMB) that licenses and disciplines physicians in Texas. In the special session, **Senate Bill (SB) 20**

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passed and continues not only the TMB, but also the Board of Examiners of Psychologists, Board of Examiners of Marriage and Family Therapists, Board of Examiners of Professional Counselors, and Board of Social Workers Examiners until September 1, 2019. These agencies will go through another round of sunset review by the legislature in 2019.



(L-r: Governor Abbott, Reps. VanDeaver, Koop & King talking about issues during the special session.)

Other special session bills. **HB 21**, a scaled-back school finance reform bill, passed during the special session that includes an additional \$212 million for the Teacher Retirement System of Texas's retiree health insurance program known as TRS-Care. This additional funding will help school retirees offset a dramatic increase in their health insurance premiums and deductibles caused by structural changes made during the regular session to keep the program from collapsing.

SB 5 clarifies current law relating to mail-in ballot voter fraud by elevating existing penalties for those who knowingly and intentionally deceive, mislead, or misinform voters. I believe in doing everything possible to protect the integrity of our voting system to ensure that only legally registered Texas

citizens vote in our elections. I am pleased that SB 5 passed to give voting officials more authority to ensure that "vote harvesting" and other abuses of mail-in ballots is stopped and violators suffer greater penalties.

Pro-life bills adopted. During the special session, five strong pro-life bills were adopted to again confirm that Texans believe that all life is sacred. These bills include **HB 13**, **SB 11**, **SB 17**, **HB 214**, and **HB 215** that increase reporting requirements for abortions (**HB 13**); clarify that an attending physician may issue a DNR order when a patient's death is imminent, the order is medically appropriate and does not override the express wishes of the patient and be disclosed to a patient's authorized representative (**SB 11**); extended the Maternal Mortality and Morbidity Task Force to 2023 (**SB 17**); removes mandatory insurance coverage for elective abortions (**HB 214**); and creates two new reporting requirements for minors seeking abortions (**HB 215**).



(Red River County Judge, L.D. Williamson, & Rep. VanDeaver at the Clarksville Town Hall meeting.)

Legislation that didn't pass. One of the biggest issues on the governor's call was for additional property tax relief. Unfortunately, the House and Senate just could not reach a compromise and the effort failed. During the special session just like in

the regular session, I filed bills (**HB 168 & HB 486**, respectively) that would have allowed local school districts that previously passed a tax ratification election (TRE) to lower their tax rate without having another election if they later needed to return to the previously voter-approved rate. HB 486 passed the House but was never heard in the Senate. HB 168 passed the House Ways & Means Committee but was never scheduled for a House vote.



(Rep. VanDeaver at the Mount Vernon Town Hall meeting.)

November general election. Constitutional amendments. Tuesday, November 7, is this fall's general election so Texans can consider the seven proposed amendments to the state's constitution that was adopted in 1876 and has been amended 491 times in the last 141 years. Only registered voters can vote in this or any election, so if you are not registered to vote be sure to register no later than Tuesday, October 10. The seven amendments range from property tax exemptions for partially disabled veterans or their surviving spouses to lowering expenses to borrowers securing a home equity loan to allowing financial institutions to offer prizes to promote savings. I have included information about three of the proposed amendments in this e-newsletter and will include

more information about the remaining propositions in the September e-newsletter. Here is a brief summary of Props 1, 2, and 3:

Proposition 1 (H.J.R. 21) - to authorize the legislature to provide for an exemption from ad valorem taxation of part of the market value of the residence homestead of a partially disabled veteran or the surviving spouse of a partially disabled veteran if the residence homestead was donated to the disabled veteran by a charitable organization for less than the market value of the residence homestead and harmonizing certain related provisions of the Texas Constitution.



(Public education supporters rallying at the Capitol.)

Proposition 2 (S.J.R. 60) - to establish a lower amount for expenses that can be charged to a borrower and removing certain financing expense limitations for a home equity loan, establishing certain authorized lenders to make a home equity loan, changing certain options for the refinancing of home equity loans, changing the threshold for an advance of a home equity line of credit, and

allowing home equity loans on agricultural homesteads.

Proposition 3 (S.J.R. 34) - limiting the service of certain officeholders appointed by the governor and confirmed by the senate after the expiration of the person's term of office.

More detailed information will be available later this fall from the Texas Legislative Council at http://www.tlc.texas.gov/const_amends.



(Rep. VanDeaver talking with House colleague, Rep. J.D. Sheffield (Gatesville) in the House Chamber. House Photography)

Hurricane Harvey. At press time, the Texas Gulf Coast is reeling from the impact of Hurricane Harvey, which is predicted to be the most expensive natural disaster in our country's history. My family and I are praying for everyone to be safe and weather the storm. Texans are very resilient, and I know that our state will do everything in its power to help our families, friends, and neighbors in what is predicted to be a long recovery. Please keep everyone in the affected areas in your thoughts and prayers. Additionally, here is a helpful link from the governor's office about Hurricane Harvey that also includes links to the

Salvation Army and Red Cross if you can make donations to help the victims of this historic event: <https://gov.texas.gov/hurricane>.

I also want to personally thank the Kimberly-Clark Corporation (Paris) that is currently working with the National Diaper Bank Network to facilitate product donations of diapers, wipes, adult and feminine care, and bath tissue to shelters throughout the Southeast region of Texas devastated by Hurricane Harvey. The devastation left by Harvey will impact the area for weeks to come, and K-C will continue providing support.

Texas Tribune at Texarkana College. *The Texas Tribune* held one of its regional forums at Texarkana College on August 30, where the *Tribune's* editor, Evan Smith, interviewed Rep. Chris Paddie (Marshall) and I about the legislative sessions this year, as well as discuss how Hurricane Harvey will impact the state for years to come. Thanks to all of the Texarkana College staff for making this event such a success!



(Rep. VanDeaver at Texarkana College; photo by Texarkana College.)

My office is here to help. I thank each of you for letting me serve you as your state representative. Please contact either the District office (903-628-0361) or Capitol office (512-463-0692) if there is anything you think we can do to help you.

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