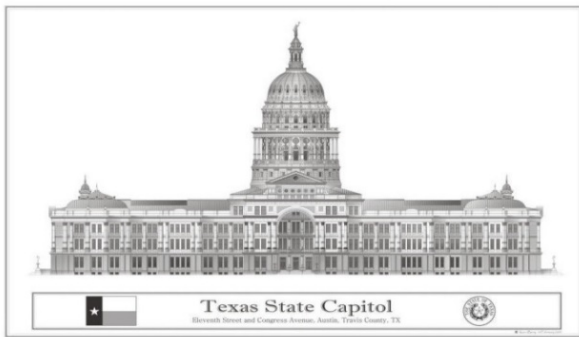




House District 1 - Bowie, Franklin, Lamar & Red River counties
District & Capitol Report - 85th Legislature
August 2018



Around the District. "Fall Listening Tour."



As announced last month, my office is planning a series of meetings around House District 1 the last week of September. My plans this year provide an opportunity for "focus group" discussions on specific topics so

that attendees will have more time to delve into and discuss issues. The format includes four individual focus group discussions with each one scheduled 45 minutes on these topics: agriculture and natural resources; local governments; education; and open topics/general discussion. People can attend one or all four of the focus group discussions they are interested in since these are "come and go" events. Please make sure to bring your electronic device to the meetings since I will

be using an interactive software to engage with the audience during the following meetings:

September 24 - 3-7 p.m. - **Texarkana** - Texarkana College Truman Arnold Bldg., 2nd-floor Patman Room, Texarkana College; 2500 N. Robinson Road, Texarkana 75599

September 25 - 3-7 p.m. - **Clarksville** - McKenzie Memorial Methodist Church, Fellowship Hall (inside the main building), 1809 South Donoho, Clarksville 75426

September 26 - 3-7 p.m. - **Paris** - Bobby R. Watlers Workforce Training Center, Room 1202, Paris Junior College, 2400 Clarksville Street, Paris 75460

September 27 - 4-8 p.m. - **Mount Vernon** - Mt. Vernon ISD High School Lecture Hall, Mt. Vernon High School, 509 Texas Highway 37, Mt. Vernon 75457

In addition to these afternoon focus group meetings throughout House District 1, I will also be holding countywide school district meetings, as well as discussions with faculty, staff and students at the three higher education institutions in my district. I especially would like to thank the organizations and people who have helped schedule these important meetings.

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Voice Your Opinions! To help prepare for these focus group discussions, please complete my survey found at: <https://goo.gl/forms/IL6OhGk1oI5RHYYv2>. Your responses will help my staff and me know more about what issues are important to you. If you have any questions about the survey, contact Becky Calahan on my Capitol office staff at 512-463-0692 or rebekah.calahan@house.texas.gov. Additional details will be posted on my social media accounts as we get closer to the end of September. **Please complete the survey by Friday, September 7!**

Congratulations to Paris ISD! Earlier this month, the Texas Commissioner of Education, Mike Morath, announced that 61 school districts and district charter schools, including Paris ISD, received the postsecondary readiness distinction as part of their 2017-18 accountability ratings. The postsecondary readiness distinction takes into account factors such as graduation rates, ACT/SAT participation and performance, Career and Technical Education (CTE) graduates, and dual-credit course completion rates. *Way to go Paris ISD!*

New A-F accountability rating system for school districts. There are 23 public school districts in House District 1, and 18 of them scored a "B" or higher on the new rating system unveiled on August 15. I want to thank all of the teachers, students and parents who work hard everyday making the public schools in Northeast Texas such a success. Individual campuses will receive an A-F accountability rating in August 2019.

TPWD announces prescribed burn at Pat Mayse. The Texas Parks & Wildlife Department (TPWD) informed my office earlier this month that it plans to conduct one or more prescribed burns in the Pat Mayse Wildlife Management Area in Lamar County later this year between October 1 and December 29, 2018. If you live in or will be traveling to this area during the last quarter of the year, please be alert to fire equipment and smoke. The area of the prescribed burns will be west of the lake on either side of FM 1499 near County Road 35650 near Sanders Creek. You can sign up for text messaging about these burns at text number 81010 with the message of @pmburn. Prior to any burn

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commencing, TPWD will notify city and county emergency services dispatch centers, local fire departments and the Texas Commission on Environment Quality. For additional information, please contact Jacob White, wildlife biologist at the Pat Mayse Wildlife Management Area at jacob.white@tpwd.texas.gov.

Around the Capitol. DPS warning about start of new school year. Almost all schools are now back in session for the 2018-19 school year, and the Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS) "reminds drivers to slow down and be alert in school zones and wherever children are present." School buses are required by state law to stop at all railroad crossings.



It is illegal to pass a school bus that is stopped and operating a visual signal (either red flashing lights or a stop sign). Drivers that illegally pass a school bus face fines up to \$1250 for the

first offense; after the first offense, a driver can have his or her driver's license suspended for up to six months. Tickets issued for passing school buses cannot be dismissed through defensive driving. If serious bodily injury occurs when someone illegally passes a school bus, the driver can also be subject to criminal charges.

Distinguished Texas Teacher and Principal Recommendations. The Texas Education Agency (TEA) is asking Texans to recommend distinguished classroom teachers and/or principals for the Texas talent pool and who have demonstrated the following:

- Exceptional educational talent as evidenced by effective instructional practices and student learning results in the classroom and school;
- Exemplary educational accomplishments beyond the classroom that provide models of excellence for the profession;

- Contributions to education that are largely unheralded yet worthy of the spotlight;
- Strong long-range potential, as an early- to mid-career educator, for professional and policy leadership; and
- An engaging and inspiring presence that motivates and impacts students, colleagues, and the community.

Please complete a [Talent Pool Recommendation Form](#) for each individual, including a one-page letter explaining how this person meets the criteria outlined in this letter, and a resume for each recommendation. **All nominations must be received by 5:00 p.m. on Friday, September 7, 2018.** For more information, please contact TEA staff person [Allison Friedlander](#) by email.

West Texas Legislative Summit. At the beginning of this month, I joined my fellow legislators in San Angelo for the West Texas Legislative Summit hosted by Chairman Drew Darby. I was able to discuss the importance of eliminating standardized tests that are not required by the federal government.



(L-r: Chairman Darby (San Angelo); Senator Rodriguez (El Paso); & Rep. VanDeaver (New Boston))

Texas Sunset Advisory Commission (SAC). Several key state agencies are under "sunset review" this interim between the 85th and 86th legislative sessions. These

agencies include DPS, Texas Department of Motor Vehicles, the Texas State Board of Public Accountancy, the Texas Military Department and three river authorities including the Red River Authority of Texas. Sunset hearings are scheduled this week and decisions will be made by the commission that will determine what type of changes will be acted upon by the 86th legislature in 2019. Use this link to the SAC's website to not only listen to any of their hearings but to also see the agencies' self evaluations and staff recommendations to the commission: <https://www.sunset.texas.gov/>.

Covered by Blue Cross Blue Shield (BCBS) HMO insurance? You may have recently seen news articles about a change announced by BCBS of Texas in relation to visits to emergency rooms for people enrolled in a BCBS Health Maintenance Organization (HMO). Earlier this year, BCBS announced that they could possibly deny insurance coverage to its HMO members if it was later determined that the reason they went to an emergency room was not medically necessary.



The Texas Department of Insurance (TDI) intervened to stay this change until it had a chance to work with BCBS. The TDI and BCBS recently announced a refinement in the initially proposed plan to ensure that consumer protections are in place. Now, if members of a BCBS HMO plan go to an emergency room their claim will be (1) reviewed by a doctor; (2) any claim denials would come only after a review of medical records by a BCBS of Texas medical director. When the medical director is contemplating a denial, the provider will be offered a peer-to-peer conversation; and (3) consumers will be able to appeal if the claim is denied as not medically necessary. This

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would include an appeal to an independent review organization.

Texas Water Development Board (TWDB). The long hot, dry Texas summer has plunged more of the state into different levels of drought. The TWDB prepares a weekly drought monitoring map showing conditions across the state, as well as levels of major metropolitan water reservoirs. Here is a link to their website: <http://www.twdb.texas.gov/>.

Wrapping up interim committee meetings. House Committees are finishing up hearings on their interim charges to develop recommendations for the 86th legislature. The **House Select Committee on Opioid & Substance Abuse** held a two-day hearing earlier this month and listened to public testimony. The committee heard some very moving and personal stories of how Texans have been adversely affected by this epidemic. As a member of this committee, I look forward to the final report that will outline the impact of the opioid epidemic in Texas and what are the best treatment methods.

Additionally, the **House Committee on Public Education** also held a meeting in early August to discuss teacher compensation, as well as devote time to hearing about the state's charter schools. On September 5, I will attend the Article III subcommittee of the **House Committee on Appropriations** as it holds a hearing on the sustainability and funding of TRS-Care, which is the state's health insurance program for retired school employees. This hearing begins at 9 a.m.; you can live stream the meeting at www.capitol.texas.gov.

Social media. Please follow me on both my Facebook and Twitter accounts!

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.

Happy Labor Day! The observance of Labor Day traditionally marks the official end to summer though schools have been back in session for at least a couple of weeks.



Labor Day was started by the country's labor movement in the late 19th century to honor and pay tribute to the contributions of American workers. Labor Day became an official federal holiday in 1894. I want to personally thank all of the hardworking men and women, young and old, actively working or retired who have toiled all of their lives taking care of their families while contributing to their communities and making Northeast Texas a wonderful place live.