



86th Legislature Report - House District 1
Bowie, Franklin, Lamar & Red River counties
May 2019

Around the District. NETT recommended for funding. The Texas Parks & Wildlife (TPW) recently announced that the Northeast Texas Trail (NETT) is being recommended for almost \$1 million in funding (\$974,400) from the National Recreational Trails Fund to repair bridges and railings, erect new signage, clear and grade areas and road crossings. The



following parts of NETT are being recommended to receive this funding, but they must receive final approval by the TPW Commission prior to receiving the grants:

- Clarksville NETT;
- Red River County NETT;
- Northeast Texas Trail Coalition NETT;
- Avery NETT; and
- Annona NETT. Here is a link to the NETT website: <http://netexastrail.org/>.

TxDOT public meeting. On June 6, the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) will conduct a public meeting on the proposed reconstruction and widening of FM 1397 (Summerhill Road) between University Avenue to 0.1 mile north of North Park Road in Texarkana. The meeting will be held at the First Baptist Church Atrium, 3015 Moores Lane,

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Texarkana, Texas 75503, and it is scheduled from 5:30 - 7 p.m. Here is a link for more information: <https://www.txdot.gov/inside-txdot/get-involved/about/hearings-meetings/atlanta/060619.html>.

Texas Business Conference in Texarkana. The Texas Workforce Commission will hold an employment law conference in Texarkana from 8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m., on June 21, at the Hilton Garden Inn - Texarkana Convention Center,



2910 S. Cowhorn Creek Loop in Texarkana. The registration fee is \$125 and it includes all materials; topics include: employment law and hiring legally; drug testing; background

checks and social media; employee handbooks; federal & state wage & hour laws. For more information and to register, visit:

<https://twc.texas.gov/files/businesses/texarkana-tbc-registration-twc.pdf>, or for more information call 512-463-6389.

Around the Capitol. Legislature adjourns sine die. The regular session of the 86th Texas Legislature adjourned on May 27, 2019. Unless the governor calls a special session, the legislature will not gather again until the 87th

legislature convenes on January 12, 2021. This edition of my newsletter focuses on the major priorities of this session including school finance, property tax reform and the state budget for 2020-21.



Rep. VanDeaver during the 86th Legislature. House Photography.

Property tax and school finance reform. At the January start of this session, the state's elected leadership (governor, lieutenant governor and Speaker of the Texas House of Representatives) announced it was their intention that this year's session would tackle the root causes

of rising property taxes, which was declining state support for our public education system and increasing property values. Over the last decade, the state's share of funding our public schools declined from approximately 46 percent to 38 percent, which shifted the burden of school funding to local taxpayers in school districts causing dramatic increases in local property taxes for homeowners and businesses. This year's property tax reform legislation was Senate Bill 2, and the school finance bill was House Bill 3. Changes in statutes from both bills were needed to accomplish the goals of reducing homeowners' and businesses' property taxes and to direct more funding to the classrooms. Here is a high-level summary of these key pieces of legislation:

Property taxes - SB 2 - lowers property taxes by increasing the state's share of public school funding as outlined below:

- Establishes a 3.5% tax cap on cities and counties, which means these local governments cannot increase their tax revenue above that rate without an automatic election for voter approval;
- Provides over **\$5 billion** in statewide property tax relief;
- Lowers school property tax rates by an average of 8 cents in 2020 and 13 cents in 2021;
- Provides an additional 2.5% tax compression starting in 2021;
- Ensures taxpayer dollars are used responsibly by requiring districts to conduct efficiency audits before going to voters with a tax increase; and,
- Increases the state's share of education funding from 38% to 45%

School finance - HB 3 - puts **\$4.5 billion** more money into classrooms to accelerate student achievement as outlined below:

- Establishes a 2.5% tax cap on school districts, which means school boards cannot increase their tax revenue above that rate without an automatic election for voter approval;
- Significantly increases the Basic Allotment per student from \$5,140 to \$6,160;
- Funds full-day Pre-K for low income students;
- Adopts high-quality K-3 reading standards so students read at grade level by 3rd grade;
- Creates the first dyslexia identification program in Texas history;
- Accelerates student achievement via College, Career & Military Readiness

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(CCMR); outcomes bonuses, dual-language programs, and extended year



Representatives Keith Bell (Kaufman County) and VanDeaver talking on the House floor during session. House Photography.

summer programs for students;
 •Creates a "Do Not Hire" registry to protect children in the classroom;

- Funds transportation at a rate of \$1.00/mile and quadruples funding for building and equipping new facilities; and
- Directs more funds to schools with higher concentrations of under-served students, including dropouts, students in special education, and residential treatment facilities.

Employee compensation. An additional **\$2 billion** in funding was added to provide pay raises for all teachers, librarians, school nurses and counselors. House Bill 3 also directs school districts to use some of their increased funding to provide raises for other staff as well. The Texas Education Agency is currently "crunching the numbers" and will be distributing information to school districts as soon as possible.

Retired school employees. Legislation (**SB 12**) also passed and funds were appropriated in **SB 500** and **HB 1** to stabilize the actuarial soundness of the Teacher Retirement System of Texas (TRS) by increasing state and local school district contributions by \$524 million in the 2020-21 biennium. All "regular service" retired

school employees, who retired prior to December 31, 2018, will receive a 13th-month check equal to their current annuity payment not to exceed \$2000. The cost of the 13th-month check to the state is \$589 million. Retired school employees have also been very concerned about increases in their health insurance premiums, which experienced a dramatic restructuring and major cost shifting after the 85th session in 2017. This session, the legislature appropriated \$231 million to TRS-Care that will prevent any increase in retiree health insurance premiums through December 31, 2021.

The bills mentioned above are hundreds if not thousands of pages long, and it will take several weeks to fully comprehend the impact of this legislation before they take effect on September 1, 2019. Here is a link to the Texas Legislature online if you want to view the bills mentioned in this newsletter directly: <https://capitol.texas.gov/>. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact my Capitol staff at 512-463-0692.

My legislation. While working with the appropriations and public education committees on the above issues, I was also trying to get the legislation I filed this session across the finish line. I authored 29 House Bills



Rep. VanDeaver laying out one of his bills to the House of Representatives. House Photography.

and sponsored four Senate Bills this year. As of press time, 11 have either already been signed by or sent to the governor awaiting final action. The

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deadline for final gubernatorial action is Father's Day, June 16. My June newsletter will include a final summary about the outcome of my legislation after the governor's signing deadline.



Staff. If you contacted my Capitol office this session, you talked with any

one of my staff as pictured l-r: Ryan Marquess, Grace Kelly, Trish Conradt and Kaitlynn Johnston. They did a great job and were a tremendous help in getting my legislation passed this session. Thanks to all of them for their hard work and dedication not only to me but to everyone in House District 1.

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.

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