

ANGIE CHEN BUTTON



The State of Texas House of Representatives



April 26, 2019

Friends,

This week I joined my colleagues in the Texas House of Representatives to pass legislation that invests in retired teachers by increasing the state's contributions to the Teacher Retirement System of Texas (TRS). The House's version of SB 12 funds a 13th check for retired teachers, makes the pension fund more stable and solvent, and incrementally increases the state's contributions to the fund over a five-year period.

I proudly co-authored HB 9, the House's companion bill for SB 12. "Because of Chairwoman Button's leadership, the Texas House has taken action to bolster the retirement future for Texas teachers," said Texas Speaker of the House Dennis Bonnen. Educators dedicate their lives to improving the lives of our children and strengthening the economic future of our state. As we work to make unprecedented investments to meet the needs of our classrooms, we must also work to meet the needs of our retired teachers.

The TRS currently provides retirement benefits to more than 420,000 individuals and requires an increased investment from the state to assure the fund remains financially healthy. The state is prohibited from issuing a cost-of-living increase or supplemental payment to retired teachers until the fund is deemed actuarially sound. This legislation would address that requirement.

Earlier in the legislative session, the Texas House of Representatives unanimously voted to pass HB 1, the state budget, which appropriates \$684 million from general revenue for the purposes of increasing the state's contribution to TRS and \$658 million from the Economic Stabilization Fund (ESF) for the 13th check.

Rowlett Municipal Court

This week, I laid out HB 4716 in the County Affairs Committee. I filed this bill for the City of Rowlett. The Uniform Municipal Courts of Record Act, in addition to providing for the general operation of municipal courts in Texas, provides for the specific operation of municipal courts of certain cities. When this legislation was originally passed many years ago, the City of Rowlett opted out of the provision. Rowlett has changed a lot over the years and would not like the court to operate according to the general provisions governing municipal courts under that act. HB 4716 provides for this repeal. The bill had great support and was voted out of the committee this week.



Rowlett City Manager Brian Funderburk was in Austin this week to testify for HB 4716.

Government Efficiency and Housing

The Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs Housing Tax Credit Program directs private capital toward affordable workforce housing. The 9% Housing Tax Credit Program is a highly competitive federal program administered by the state. Applications are scored and ranked within their region. Currently, community support from the State Representative is scored. This opens the door to numerous problems.

Some State Representatives have concerns over having the ability or available resources to make a thoughtful decision on each project while other State Representatives feel strongly that they should retain the ability to provide input.

I authored HB 1973 to make the process work better for each individual member and their community. Under the bill, if the State Representative does not wish to write a letter, the points will automatically be applied to the local governing body. If a State Representative chooses to write a letter, the points will be awarded as they are currently. This bill permits a member to refrain from writing a letter without impacting the success or failure of a project if they are not comfortable making a decision involving a real estate project. HB 1973 passed the House and is on its way over to the Senate.

Higher Education

Last week, the House passed HB 2000, a bill I was proud to co-author, which will authorize the issuance of \$3.6 billion in tuition revenue bonds to finance construction and infrastructure improvements at Texas higher education institutions, including buildings at my alma mater and District 112 gem UT Dallas. In the Higher Education Committee, we advanced bills that would better streamline the transfer process for students and potentially reduce costs.

Vietnamese-American Day

On Thursday, April 25, we celebrated Vietnamese-American Day at the Capitol, recognizing the contributions of Vietnamese-Americans in the State of Texas and the unique heritage and culture the community brings. Our state has been home to a growing population of Vietnamese-Americans, with more than 210,000 members, the state boasts one of the nation's largest Vietnamese-American communities. Vietnamese-Americans have demonstrated strong support for higher education and professional development in fields ranging from medicine and law, to sports, the arts and public service. Vietnamese is the third most commonly spoken language in the State of Texas and their influence will be forever engrained into Texas history.



Celebrating Vietnamese American Day on the House Floor with Representative Hubert.

Sincerely,

Angie Chen Button

If you would like to be added or removed from this mailing, please email Angie.Button@house.texas.gov.