



JULIE JOHNSON

STATE REPRESENTATIVE ★ DISTRICT 115



86TH LEGISLATIVE SESSION

TEXAS HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES



STATE REPRESENTATIVE
DISTRICT 115

Dear Neighbor,

It was an honor to represent the constituents of House District 115 in my first legislative session. I am so proud of the work that Team HD115 accomplished. We went in with a goal of building bridges with the community to better understand the needs of the district and laying a foundation for meaningful policy, and we did just that. This newsletter will provide an overview of the work lawmakers accomplished this session, including key pieces of legislation and my legislative agenda.

In January, lawmakers were sworn in and began the 86th Legislative Regular Session. Over 140 days, members of the Texas House of Representatives had one of its most productive and amicable sessions in recent years. With a shared priority of solving 'kitchen table' issues that affect all Texans, members worked across the aisle to address school finance, disaster recovery and relief, and healthcare. This session saw over 7,000 bills filed, and ultimately 1,429 bills were sent to the Governor's desk for his signature.

Even with all of the accomplishments of the session, there is still more work to be done. Many of the legislative priorities were funded through one-time appropriations and will need permanent solutions to remain viable in the future. When the Texas economy is thriving, lawmakers are able to fund the state's priorities. We must remain diligent in the future that these essential policy solutions, like school finance, receive continued appropriations in times of financial shortfalls.

As we transition from working in Austin back to the district, we look forward to meeting with the constituents of HD 115 to hear the concerns and needs of our community firsthand. Your input and voice is essential to ensure that the priorities of the district and state are addressed. If you should ever need assistance, please do not hesitate to reach out to the HD 115 Capitol or District Office. It has been a privilege to serve you this legislative session, and I look forward to meeting with you during the interim and continuing to represent House District 115.

Warm Regards,

Julie E. Johnson

SESSION HIGHLIGHTS

Texas Budget

The budget determines how our state allocates funds over the next two years and this year was a step in the right direction for efficiently and strategically using Texans taxpayer dollars to better serve our great state. This session, lawmakers approved a \$250 billion budget that took important steps towards funding public schools, disaster preparedness, mental health, and human trafficking prevention. Here are some highlights:

Education

- \$5 billion in property tax relief
- \$4.5 billion for transformational education reforms
- \$2 billion for dynamic teach compensation
- \$200 million for school safety improvements
- \$80 million for TEXAS Grants

Transportation

- \$6.1 billion to TxDOT for non-tolled highway construction
- \$210 million for the driver's license program to reduce wait times, improve customer services, hire new employees, and add three additional offices

Sexual Assault & Human Trafficking Prevention

- \$56.6 million to eliminate the rape kit backlog and increase crime lab capacity
- \$8.6 million for rape crisis centers and sexual assault nurse examiners
- \$3.4 million for the expansion of the Human Trafficking Prevention section at the Office of the Attorney General
- \$1.5 million for the creation of a Human Trafficking Team and to increase inspections of establishments at the Texas Department of Licensing and Regulation



Discussing budget items with Chairman John Zerwas.

Health & Human Services & Mental Health

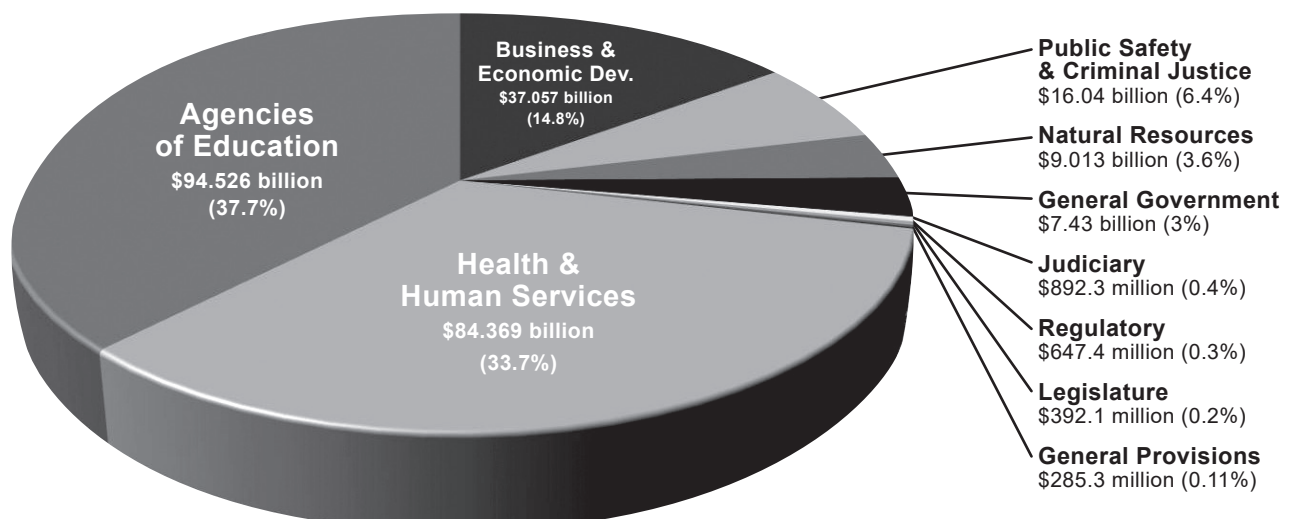
- 24.3% increase in women's health funding
- \$86 million in rate increase for community care and Intellectual and Developmental Disability (IDD) providers, pediatric home therapists, and pediatric private duty nursing
- \$48 million for rate increases and cost growth for Early Childhood Intervention
- \$7.7 billion for behavioral health and substance abuse services

Disaster Preparedness

- Over \$2 billion from the Economic Stabilization Fund (ESF) for disaster grants, the Floor Infrastructure Fund, school districts, higher education institutions, the General Land Office, Soil and Water Conservation Board and the Texas Parks and Wildlife for Hurricane Harvey related expenditures

2020-21 All Funds

Total: \$250.652 billion



Notes: (1) Amounts estimated or budgeted for the 2018–19 biennium include supplemental spending adjustments in Article II for Medicaid and foster care, but do not include adjustments from Senate Bill 500. (2) Contingent funding of \$11.5 billion for House Bill 3 has been moved from Article IX to Article III, Public Education, for the purposes of this comparison. (3) Excludes Interagency Contracts. (4) Biennial change and percentage change are calculated on actual amounts before rounding. Therefore, figure totals may not sum due to rounding.

SESSION HIGHLIGHTS

Education

House Bill 3- School Finance

The prosperity of our great state lies in our ability to cultivate an educated workforce and provide teachers with the resources they need to educate our children. A big win for the legislature this session was House Bill 3 by Rep. Dan Huberty, which I coauthored.

House Bill 3, the “Texas Plan”, invests more money into classrooms than ever before by lowering property taxes, reducing recapture, and treating hardworking educators like the professionals they are by dedicating funding for dynamic raises in their compensation. The bill dedicates \$4.5 billion to student-centered education reforms, over \$5 billion for property tax relief, \$2 billion for dynamic raises for hardworking educators, and significantly reduces recapture. We’re funding full-day Pre-K for low-income students, targeting money toward schools with higher concentrations of underserved students, and establishing the first-ever dyslexia identification program.

As a result of House Bill 3, all of the HD 115 school districts are projected to receive additional millions in funding for Fiscal Years 2020 and 2021. Recapture payments back to the state are also expected to be reduced, which allows our local taxes to stay in our local school districts. Carrollton-Farmers Branch ISD is expected to see a reduction of over \$81 million in recapture payments, over \$49 million for Coppell ISD, and over \$426 million for Dallas ISD.

Retired Teachers

Senate Bill 12 and Senate Bill 500 raised the state’s contribution to the Teacher Retirement System (TRS) from 6.8% to 8.25% beginning in Fiscal Year 2020 through Fiscal Year 2025. The bill brings actuarial soundness to TRS immediately, dropping the funding period from 87 years presently to 29 in Fiscal Year 2020 and 24 in Fiscal Year 2025. Texas teachers spend their lifetimes investing in our kids, it was about time we invested in our retired teachers.

Higher Education

Higher education saw growth in all areas of the state. The legislature appropriated \$79.8 million for TEXAS grants and set an annual rate of \$5,992 for the Graduate Medical Education formula. A new medical school was established at the University of Houston and a Veterinary Medicine program at Texas Tech University. Additionally, \$2.5 million was appropriated for non-formula support for Public Community/Junior Colleges.



Celebrating a legislative victory with Rep. Senfronia Thompson and Rep. Carl Sherman.

One bill that addressed some of the biggest concerns with our students in District 115 was Senate Bill 25 by Sen. West, which addresses the transferability of college course credits. Senate Bill 25 will help make it easier for college students to transfer course credits between institutions, which should help them graduate sooner with less cost. The bill will require public junior colleges and general academic institutions to develop course sequences for each degree and certification program offered. Provisions in the bill will require students to file a degree plan earlier in their college careers so that they have a set path toward graduation earlier in the process. This bill is a crucial step in helping our students as they navigate through our institutions of higher education. The more time and resources we can save our students during this process, the quicker they can enter the workforce prepared and ready to help our economy move forward.



Introducing Doctor of Day, Dr. Manoj Dobariya.

Health Care

Surprise Billing

Surprise medical bills have long left Texans in debt when they thought they had the security of a health plan. This legislative session, we had the opportunity to address this issue and potentially save Texans thousands of dollars through Senate Bill 1264. This bill allows for an arbitration process that takes the patient out of the billing dispute. This is the first step in eliminating surprise billing altogether.

Drug Pricing

Medications have become overpriced, leaving thousands of Texans paying more than they should for the medicines they need most. Fortunately, this session we were able to make a dent in addressing this issue by increasing transparency through House Bill 2536 which requires pharmaceutical drug manufacturers, health plans, and pharmacy benefit managers to report specific information regarding prescription drug prices and price increases, which would be publicly available online.

Medical Cannabis

Currently, 33 states have passed some form of medical cannabis legislation that collects both state and local taxes. This has not only contributed to economic growth, but also provides a safer alternative to opioids and other potentially harmful medications, especially for our seniors and veterans. I was proud to support HB 3703 which was signed into law by Governor Abbott and gives Texans with multiple sclerosis, epilepsy and spasticity access to medical cannabis oil containing low levels of tetrahydrocannabinol, the psychoactive element in cannabis known as THC.

LEGISLATIVE ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND PRIORITIES

During the 86th Legislative Session, I authored 38 pieces of legislation, joint-authored 24 pieces of legislation, conducted 19 committee hearings and gained the support of over 140 individuals and organizations for my legislative efforts. Our work varied from improving healthcare access, protecting consumers, standing up for women's healthcare issues, and providing property tax relief. In recognition of this hard work, I was named "Freshman of the Year" by Texas Monthly.

SB 1742/HB 2630

Senate Bill 1742 by Senator Jose Menendez was the Senate companion of our House Bill 2630. This bill was strategically developed to address the issue of balance billing through the availability of information. Current health plan online directories serve as the resources by which physicians are identified as in-network by patients and referring physicians. SB1742/HB 2630 provides a user-friendly way to identify which physicians and providers are in-network to avoid surprise medical billing. In addition, we were able to work on a bipartisan amendment with Representative Greg Bonnen to add language from House Bill 2327 to the legislation. This addition increases transparency and improves patient access to timely treatment options by working to ensure that physicians who are the most familiar with the delivery of healthcare in Texas are involved in utilization reviews for health benefit plan coverage. It also requires health plans to be more transparent in their prior authorization processes so that the physician can plan patient care appropriately and satisfy the prior authorization requirements in a more efficient fashion. After months of hard work and negotiations, the final bill was passed by both chambers and signed into law by Governor Abbott on June 14.

Women's Health

Women's access to healthcare continues to be an item of contention in the Texas legislature. While it may seem like an uphill battle, I am dedicated to pushing an agenda that lays a foundation for cultivating women's access to care. I was proud to coauthor House Bill 744 by Rep. Toni Rose, which expanded Medicaid health care coverage for moms up to 12 months post delivery. Unfortunately, this bill did not become law, despite overwhelming support by members of the Texas House. My own efforts to improve healthcare access for women were directed at the state's Healthy Texas Women program, which provides women's health and family planning services at no cost to eligible women. House Bill 2028 added more information about the services the Healthy Texas Women program can provide new mothers who qualify for the program in their notice of enrollment, including postpartum screenings and treatment. Additionally, the notice must include a list of approved providers in their area. This bill ultimately passed in the form of Senate Bill 2132 by Senator Beverly Powell allowing new mothers to be more informed of their postpartum care and resources.



Passage of first bill

Prior Authorization

Prior authorization requires a physician to obtain approval of the medical necessity and appropriateness of a health care service before it is provided. This is a burdensome process which can oftentimes create a block to care and limit access to timely medications. Lawmakers heard from doctors, organizations, and patients who testified in favor of our bills - House Bill 3058, House Bill 2408, House Bill 2520, and House Bill 3232 - which would have alleviated some prior authorization requirements and made access to health care easier for many Texans. While our bills did not make it to the house floor, this was a very important step in beginning the conversation around access to care and the roadblocks Texans face.



Rep. Johnson with her wife, Dr. Sue Moster.

Local Governance

Elections are costly and can contribute to wasted tax dollars when unnecessary. We had the opportunity to save taxpayer dollars through House Bill 2394 and Senate Bill 941 by Senator Nathan Johnson, which would have allowed the City of Coppell to renew its local street maintenance sales tax for a 10-year period. This would allow the city to meet critical infrastructure needs as a major logistics hub near Dallas/Fort Worth International Airport without holding unnecessary, repetitive elections. Unfortunately, the legislative session ended before the bill could be scheduled for a vote on the House floor.

LEGISLATIVE ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND PRIORITIES



Rep. Johnson at the Governor's Mansion

Protecting Local Public Servants

It's so important that we hear and represent our public servants, especially those that continue to make sacrifices so that our communities remain safe and protected. In support of this effort, I filed House Bill 3293 for our Dallas firefighters. Currently, negotiation processes regarding the business leave time account for the Dallas firefighter employee organization is ineffective. The organization cannot collectively pool vacation and compensatory time from the organization's members to allow the members to attend to the business of the employee organization without losing pay. House Bill 3293 provided for two methods by which donations to the business leave time account of an employee organization by its members may be authorized for Dallas firefighters. While House Bill 3293 was overwhelmingly supported in the Texas House, it did not receive a hearing in the Senate.

Committee Assignments

Rep. Johnson was appointed to two House Committees for the 86th Regular Session. Over the course of session, committees met on a weekly basis to hear testimony and vote on legislation pertaining to their designated issues.

Insurance, which has jurisdiction over insurance and the insurance industry, as well as all insurance companies and other organizations of any type writing or issuing policies of insurance in Texas. Agencies falling under the purview of this committee include the Texas Department of Insurance, the Texas Health Benefits Purchasing Cooperative, and the Office of Public Insurance Counsel.

Judiciary & Civil Jurisprudence, which has jurisdiction over civil law, civil procedure in the courts of Texas, permission to sue the state, and courts and court procedures. Agencies falling under the purview of this committee include the Supreme Court, the court of appeals, the Texas Judicial Council, the Office of the Attorney General, and the State Office of Administrative Hearings.



Coppell ISD being honored on the House floor.

DISTRICT 115 AT THE CAPITOL

During this session I had the opportunity to recognize the hardworking constituents of House District 115. On February 20 we celebrated Irving Day, and February 27 we celebrated Coppell Day. Both cities were honored on the House floor with resolutions that highlighted their contributions and successes. Additional resolutions included the Coppell High School girls' cross-country team on winning the 2018 UIL 6A state championship and Coppell ISD for their service to the Dallas area.

We were also able to spotlight District 115 in a unique way in our Capitol office by displaying beautiful artwork by students from the Coppell and Carrollton- Farmers Branch school districts. The arts encourage essential skills needed for a student's development and increases their well-being leading to a more engaged learning experience. As a supporter of the arts in our schools, I was honored to showcase the talents of my young constituents to every visitor we hosted.



HD 115 student art work wall

JULIE JOHNSON

STATE REPRESENTATIVE ★ DISTRICT 115

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STATE REPRESENTATIVE



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STATE AGENCIES

Secretary of State Voter Info: (800) 252-8683
Texas Workforce Commission
Unemployment and Workforce Solutions: (800) 939-6631
Dept. of Family & Protective Services
Abuse/Neglect Hotline: (800) 252-5400
Youth & Runaway Hotline: (800) 989-6884
Dept. of Public Safety
Driver's License: (512) 424-2600
Roadside Assistance: (800) 525-5555
Texas Veteran's Commission
Veteran's Hotline: (800) 252-8387
Crime Victims' Compensation Program: (800) 983-9933
Texas Crime Stoppers Hotline: (800) 252-8477
Public Utility Commission
Utility Complaints: (888) 782-8477

Medicaid: (800) 252-8263
Medicare: (800) 633-4227

LOCAL SERVICES

City of Carrollton: (972) 466-3000
City of Coppell: (972) 462-0022
City of Farmers Branch: (972) 247-3131
City of Irving: (972) 721-2600
Dallas County District Attorney: (214) 653-3600

Metrocrest Services: (972) 446-2100
RAICES Dallas: (214) 295-9554
Legal Aid of NorthWest Texas: (214) 748-1234
Genesis Women's Shelter & Support: (214) 389-7700
North Texas Food Bank: (214) 330-1396
Mosaic Family Services: (214) 821-5393
Dallas County Public Defender: (214) 653-3550
Texas Bar Referral Service: (800) 252-9690