



JULIE JOHNSON

STATE REPRESENTATIVE ★ DISTRICT 115



87TH LEGISLATIVE SESSION

TEXAS HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES



STATE REPRESENTATIVE
DISTRICT 115

Dear Neighbor,

It was an honor to represent the constituents of House District 115 during my second legislative session as your State Representative. With a better understanding of the legislative process, I started the session with a goal that built upon the hard work of Team HD 115 from the last session. 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 87th Legislative Regular Session. Over 140 days, members of the Texas House of Representatives had one of its most unpredictable, and at times contentious, sessions in recent years. Coming into the legislative session, many members thought the main priority addressed would be the COVID-19 pandemic. However, in February, after Winter Storm Uri hit Texas and the power grid failure left millions of Texans without power, priorities shifted. It was a difficult session, where at first legislators were faced with a budget shortfall and many of our local governments, and schools were left struggling due to the pandemic. Overall the session was filled with many partisan debates that did not benefit Texans and had few bipartisan victories. The 87th Legislature saw over 7,300 bills filed, and ultimately 1,159 bills were sent to the Governor's desk for his signature, 20 of which he vetoed, including funding for our legislative staff.

At the conclusion of the 87th Legislative Regular Session, members were expecting to come back for multiple special sessions. In these special sessions, many important items were addressed, including a 13th check for retired teachers, additional funding for foster care, restored funding for legislative staff, and distribution of pandemic relief funds. Additionally, another item that will be addressed is redistricting of the Texas House, Texas Senate, State Board of Education, and Congressional districts across the state. With Texas' increasing population, the state must redraw districts based on the new Census numbers. This could affect who represents you in the upcoming 2022 election cycle.

As we transition between special sessions, and eventually 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 are 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 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 \$248 billion budget that took important steps towards funding public education, disaster preparedness, mental health, health care, and human trafficking prevention. Here are some highlights:

Public Education

Continuing to maintain the funding levels committed by HB3 from the 86th Session

- An increase of \$486M, totaling to \$8.6B for public education funding
- \$664M for schools affected by the pandemic
- \$1.25B for financial aid programs
- An increase of \$39.5M totaling \$897.6M for benefits and health insurance for retired teachers through TRS-Care

Disaster Preparedness

- \$4.2M for enhancements to Public Utility Commission for regulatory response and oversight of ERCOT
- \$3B for ongoing disaster recovery from Hurricane Harvey

Mental Health

- \$1.2B for community mental health services for adults, children, and crisis services

Human Trafficking Prevention

- \$57.6M to combat human trafficking



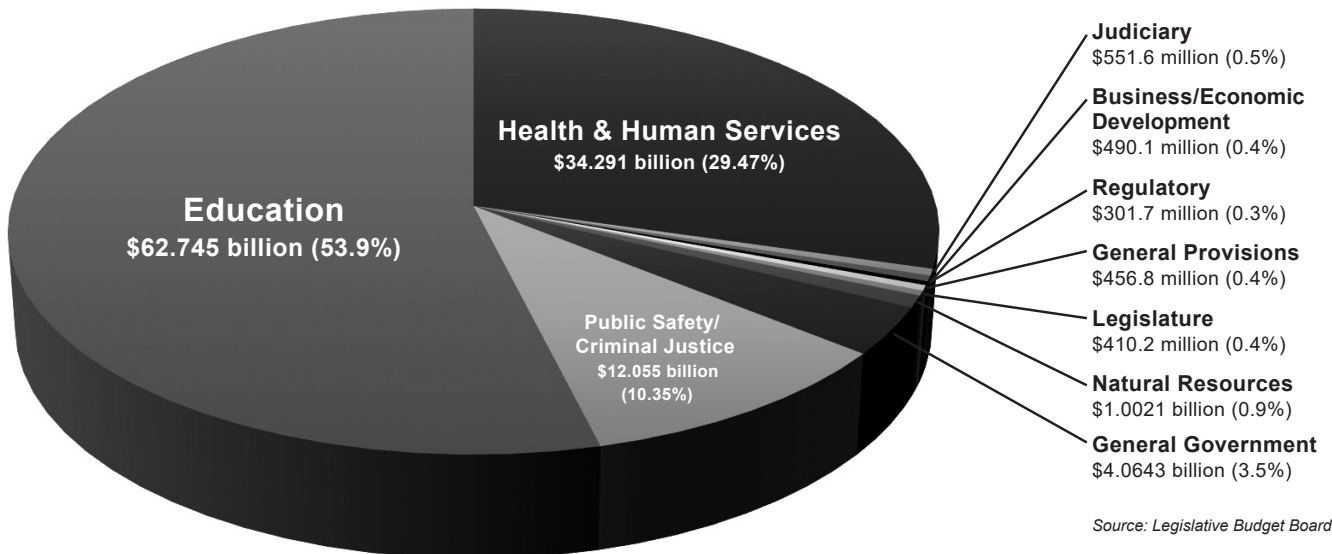
Discussing budget items with Chairman Capriglione and Rep. Howard.

Health Care

- An increase of \$10.2M to the Healthy Texas Women program, totaling \$352.6M in all funds for Women's Health Programs
- \$8.4B in behavioral health funding across 25 state agencies
- An additional \$30M investment in mental health beds in for rural and urban communities across Texas
- \$86M for new mental health beds in state hospitals
- \$123.5M for rural hospitals
- \$76.9 to decrease the waitlist for community waivers regarding individuals with intellectual, developmental, and physical disabilities

2022-23 General Revenue

Total: \$116.368 billion



Energy Grid

After the chaos and danger of Winter Storm Uri, Texas leaders called for the prioritization of strengthening and repairing the Texas energy grid. Below are highlights of accomplishments made during the regular session, however, not nearly enough was passed to strengthen the energy grid and avoid the potential of a future grid failure. I am proud to have supported numerous bills that will protect Texans and hope that the Legislature will continue to prioritize more energy reforms in the future to prevent another disaster.

Funding

The Legislature dedicated funding to enhance the Public Utility Commission and regulatory oversight of ERCOT activities. Weatherization of the Texas power grid was only partially addressed by providing the funding mechanism necessary to encourage electric utilities to winterize their facilities. Unfortunately, this does not include an enforcement mechanism.

Policy Changes

Reformed the ERCOT board to ensure those on it are from Texas and passed reforms to increase the reliability of the ERCOT grid, making sure Texas is better prepared for future extreme weather emergencies. Improved the collection and dissemination of public health data during times of an emergency.

Consumer Protections

Protected consumers from sky-high electric bills by banning the sale of products that leave consumers vulnerable to extreme fluctuation in electricity prices.

SESSION HIGHLIGHTS

COVID-19

This session was unique for Texas in the fact that there were many long-standing health needs, such as leading the nation in uninsured among children and adults, which needed desperate attention in addition to the immediate needs from the pandemic, e.g., utilization of masks, PPE equipment, and vaccinations. The pandemic brought about unprecedented challenges to our state, and this session there were several pieces of legislation that will protect our economy and Texans. There is still much work to be done as we assess the long-term impacts of COVID-19, and I remain committed more than ever to addressing these pressing needs in future sessions.



Strategizing with Rep. Ramos and Rep. Romero.

Business Protections

SB 6 provides civil liability protections for large and small businesses, religious institutions, non-profit entities, healthcare providers, first responders, and educational institutions during a pandemic. This allows businesses and healthcare industries that are working in good faith from being sued during a pandemic and includes a retroactive clause for any businesses sued during COVID-19. SB 25 seeks to clarify and allow essential caregivers in-person visitation rights to a loved one in long-term care facilities. These caregivers are provided with training to allow them to safely go inside a facility for scheduled visits to help ensure their loved one's physical, social, and emotional needs are being met.

Access to Healthcare

Of the few health care bills that passed, which I signed onto and supported, they will have an important impact on Texans' lives in very distinct ways. HB 4, known as the Telehealth Bill, allows most of the waivers implemented during the pandemic to become permanent fixtures in the healthcare system. These include but are not limited to increased care in rural areas by allowing rural health centers to bill for telehealth services, allowing HHSC to implement audio-only benefits for behavioral health services, and allowing Medicaid to send text messages to clients. Additionally, numerous bills were passed to reign in skyrocketing prescription costs. HB 18 seeks to help Texans who do not have insurance obtain prescription drugs at a lower price, and SB 827 aims to help Texans with diabetes by putting price caps in place for the cost of prescription insulin.

Infrastructure

As we all saw during the pandemic, access to the internet was crucial for maintaining healthcare appointments, working remotely, and attending school. HB 5 will address this by rapidly increasing access to broadband in our state. This bill which I support and signed onto, will create a State Broadband Development Office, a Statewide Broadband Plan, and a Broadband development program that will award grants, low-interest loans, and other financial incentives to expand access to and adoption of broadband.

Education

School Finance and Emergency Response

This session the legislature's commitment to public education investments continued and fully funded the strides made in the last session with HB 3. Additionally, to ensure that children do not fall further behind due to COVID-19 learning loss, the legislature directed \$2 billion to address the costs of COVID-19 and Winter Storm Uri in classrooms and lowered the high-stakes nature of the STAAR exams for 5th and 8th grade students.

Retired Teachers

The Pensions, Investments & Financial Services Committee passed the 13th check and cost of living adjustment (COLA) bills early in the regular session. HB 3507 created a one-time supplemental payment for retired teachers and HB 3214 created a much-needed cost of living adjustment for retired teachers receiving retirement benefits. The one-time supplement payment is expected to be addressed in the special session.



Visit the Capitol

The State Capitol Building is open to the public all year, with the exception of major holidays. The Capitol's visiting hours are 7:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. on weekdays and 9:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. on weekends. Professionally guided tours of the Capitol are available throughout visiting hours, free of charge.



Going over HD 115 priorities with Speaker Phelan.

LEGISLATIVE ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND PRIORITIES

During the 87th Legislative Session, I authored 37 pieces of legislation, joint-authored 13 pieces of legislation, conducted 17 committee hearings, and gained the support of many individuals and organizations for my legislative efforts. Our work varied from improving healthcare access, protecting consumers, standing up for women's healthcare issues, and access to healthcare for those with special needs and/or disabilities.

Live Well Texas - HB 3871

My priority legislation of this session was HB 3871, known as the Live Well Texas Program which would have provided health care coverage to approximately 1.5 million Texans. HB 3871 was the companion bill to Senator Nathan Johnson's SB 117. This program was carefully crafted to include numerous synergistic provisions like encouraging physician participation through Medicaid-Medicare reimbursement rate-parity, promotes individual responsibility and transition to employment, and of note allows an opt-out provision if the 90/10 federal match goes away. The bill had 76 members that signed on in support, but it was not deemed a priority of the House and therefore never received a committee hearing or had the opportunity for debate on the House floor.

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 that 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 410 and House Bill 907- which would have alleviated some prior authorization requirements and made access to health care easier for many Texans. While our bills did not pass, this was a very important step in beginning the conversation around access to care and the roadblocks Texans face. HB 907 specifically would limit prior authorizations to once a year for the medications of individuals with autoimmune diseases, including prescription drugs used to manage or treat type I diabetes and rheumatoid arthritis.



Visiting with members on the House floor.

Special Needs and Disabilities

This session I filed numerous bills to increase access to care for those with special needs and disabilities. HB 440 would give the patient the choice to purchase a more expensive hearing aid or cochlear implant with better technology than the plan allows – but pay the increased cost themselves. HB 2984 would increase access to treatment for autism by raising the age of when the diagnosis occurred in order to qualify for treatment from 10 to 22 years of age.



Debating legislation on the House floor.

Women's Health and Safety

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 133 by Rep. Toni Rose, which expanded Medicaid health care coverage for moms up to 12 months post-delivery. Rep. Rose has been the lead legislator on this effort, and this session we were finally able to see the bill become law. Even though the time frame of coverage was reduced to 6 months post-delivery in the final version of the bill, this legislation will save the lives of countless mothers. My own efforts to improve healthcare access for women include HB 3552 which provides protections for women to breastfeed in public and HB 1761 which required the formation of a task force to study child care accessibility and affordability in Texas. Additionally, HB 3671 ensured that convictions involving domestic or family violence are sent to the federal government for gun background checks, and HB 2987 increased the penalties for those who have committed indecent assault, with a particular focus on healthcare workers.

ARE YOU REGISTERED TO VOTE?

Request a Voter Registration Application at:

Dallas County Elections' Office
www.dallascountyvoteregistration.org/voter-information/register-to-vote/
or

Texas Secretary of State's Office
<https://vrapp.sos.state.tx.us/index.asp>

Your voter registration application must be received in the
**Voter Registrar's office, or postmarked at least 30 days
before an election** for you to be eligible to vote in that election.

LEGISLATIVE ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND PRIORITIES

Consumer and Patient Protections

HB 1110 is a solution that arose from the issues Texans faced as a result of multiple natural disasters, including Hurricane Harvey, the 2019 Dallas tornadoes, and most recently with Winter Storm Uri. This bill would ensure that homeowners with property insurance get more money upfront to make repairs to their home, instead of waiting for months or even years of paperwork, backlogs, and red tape to obtain reimbursement for critical repairs to one's residence. Texans deserve the full benefit of their home insurance coverage so they can start to rebuild their lives. Additionally, I filed HB 2035 which ensures that if a person goes to the emergency room in good faith a health insurance company is required to cover the cost of services and not deny coverage based on the final diagnosis.

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 1538 and Senate Bill 402 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 pass.

One victory for our local HD 115 cities was the defeat of HB 4072 by Rep. Morgan Meyer. This bill proposed changing local sales tax sourcing laws from "origin" to "destination" sourcing. HB 4072 would have invalidated countless local government multi-year incentive agreements resulting in significant revenue loss to Texas businesses without any study to assess the bill's impact. This bill would have devastated many of the HD 115's local governments and their ability to govern.



Debating legislation on the House floor.

Committee Assignments

Rep. Johnson was appointed to two House Committees for the 87th Regular Session. Over the course of the session, committees met on a weekly basis to hear testimony and vote on legislation pertaining to their designated issues.

Appropriations, which has jurisdiction over bills and resolutions that appropriate money to or from the state treasury. Rep. Johnson was also appointed to the Subcommittee on Article II, which focuses on the health and human services agencies in the state. This includes the Health & Human Services Commission, the Department of Family and Protective Services, and the Department of State Health Services.

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.

DISTRICT 115 AT THE CAPITOL

In past legislative sessions, we have had the opportunity to welcome our local cities, school boards, and constituents to the Capitol to recognize their hard work in the district. While we were unable to do that this session, we were able to honor many individuals and organizations with official Texas House resolutions. I was able to recognize Early College High School in Farmers Branch on its selection as a 2020 National Blue Ribbon School by the U.S. Department of Education, Metrocrest Services on its 50th Anniversary, and former Coppell Mayor, Karen Hunt, for her service to the community.

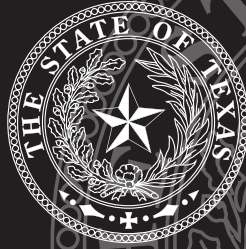


HD 115 student art work wall.

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STATE REPRESENTATIVE ★ DISTRICT 115

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JULIE JOHNSON
STATE REPRESENTATIVE



HELPFUL NUMBERS

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