



STATE REPRESENTATIVE
WILL METCALF

District 16 Newsletter

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Committees

- Natural Resources (VC)
- Calendars
- International Relations and Economic Development

STATE OF TEXAS
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES



86TH LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

Dear Friends,

The final gavel has fallen and the 86th Texas Legislative Session has officially come to a close. It is an honor to serve the citizens of House District 16 in Austin, and I look forward to seeing all of you around Montgomery County now that I am back home. It is my hope that this newsletter provides you with a degree of insight into the new laws passed by the legislature and how this might affect you in your daily lives.

The Texas economy has produced great results since the last legislative session. Even with major property tax reform and relief, as well as overhauling the state's outdated public school financing system, the legislature passed a fiscally responsible balanced budget that funds the state's top priorities and still remains within all four required budget limitations. This will ensure that Texas retains its superior credit ratings and that the taxpayers pay no more than what is absolutely necessary.

The Legislature came into this Session with a primary focus on four issues: public education finance reform, property tax relief and reform, school safety, and natural disaster response and recovery. I am proud of the accomplishments of this Session, but there is always more work to be done.

This newsletter will provide you more detailed information on the state budget, major accomplishments of the legislature and updates on my own legislation.

May God bless you, your family, and the great State of Texas!

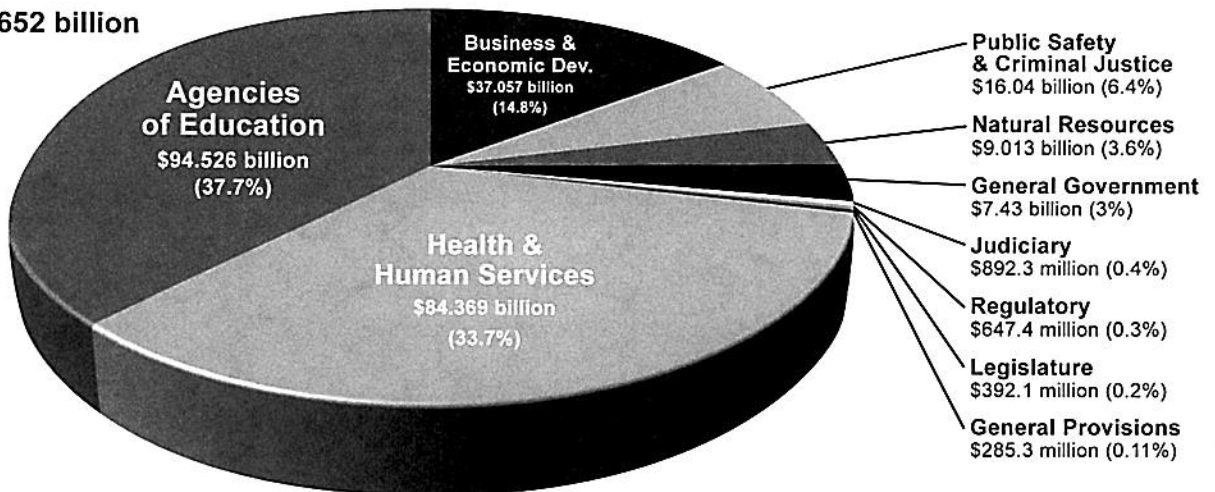
Sincerely,

Will Metcalf
State Representative
House District 16

STATE BUDGET

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.

Source: Legislative Budget Board

The Texas Constitution and state statutes set a number of restrictions on the state budget. All of these limitations must be met by every state budget. These limitations include:

The Pay-as-You-Go Limit: This limits the budget to the amount of revenue predicted to be available by the Comptroller.

The Spending Limit: The Spending Limit restricts budgetary growth to less than the rate of growth of the economy.

The Debt Limit: The state debt cannot exceed 5% of the average general revenue funds for the previous 3 years.

The Welfare Spending Limit: Welfare grant spending may not exceed 1% of the state budget.

The Texas budget operates on a biennial basis. This means that when the Legislature meets, it sets a budget for the next two years on the basis of revenue projections from the State Comptroller in order to meet the pay-as-you-go budget limitation. The 2020-2021 Texas Budget is within all of these limitations.

BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS:

Total Budget: \$250.7 billion for fiscal years 2020 and 2021.

Healthcare: \$84.37 billion. This represents about one third of the Texas budget.

Education: \$4.5 billion in transformational education reform; \$2 billion for additional educator compensation; and \$200 million for school safety improvements, including building renovations, security personnel, new security technology, and emergency response training.

Border Security: \$800.6 million, maintaining previous funding levels to continue border security operations.

Property Tax Relief: Through House Bill 3, the state budget provides over \$5 billion in statewide property tax relief.

Teacher Retirement System: The state will put over \$1 billion into the Teacher Retirement System. This payment will provide a 13th check to retirees, necessary payments to make TRS stable and solvent, and funds to ensure retired teacher healthcare premiums do not increase.

Hurricane Harvey Relief: Over \$2 billion from the Economic Stabilization Fund to the Governor's Office for recovery and preparedness grants.



Representatives Metcalf, Bell, and Toth working together for the interests of all Montgomery County.

MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF THE 86TH LEGISLATURE

“THE TEXAS PROPERTY TAX REFORM & TRANSPARENCY ACT OF 2019” - SENATE BILL 2

Co-Sponsored by Representative Metcalf

Through a combined effort of bills, property taxes will be reduced and future growth slowed. Senate Bill 2 is an essential piece needed to ensure that property tax breaks do not evaporate within a year or two, as they have under past attempts to lower property taxes. Senate Bill 2 limits the rate of revenue increases from cities, counties and utility districts from 8% to 3.5% over the previous year without triggering a rollback election. If local revenues increase by more than 3.5% from the previous year, the local taxing entity would be forced to conduct an election to rollback the tax rate to the 3.5% level of gain. SB 2 also expands opportunities for property owners to protest or appeal appraisal values.



Representative Metcalf discusses policy with Speaker Bonnen.

“THE TEXAS PLAN” SCHOOL FINANCE REFORM - HOUSE BILL 3

Co-Authored by Representative Metcalf

After over 30 years of litigation and patchwork fixes, House Bill 3 comes as a comprehensive re-write of how the state addresses public school finance. For the last three decades, Texas has been in and out of court defending its school finance system, making small changes here and there, but remaining behind the curve and seemingly always caught in the cycle of litigation and legislative tweaking. And all the while, the state's share of funding public education has decreased, necessitating increases in local property tax payments. House Bill 3 is the most transformational change the Legislature has ever made to finally break that cycle. It puts new state money into the public education system, reducing

recapture (Robin Hood) payments by 47% this biennium so that local dollars stay at home, and compressing property tax rates statewide by an average of 8 cents in 2020 and 13 cents in 2021, with an additional 2.5% compression in 2021. HB 3 provides over \$5 billion in statewide property tax relief by increasing the state share of public education funding from 38% to 45%. All six school districts in House District 16 stand to gain significant funding under HB 3, and with those gains, teachers and other school district employees will see raises that are well deserved and long overdue with over \$2 billion provided for increases in pay.

THE TEXAS SCHOOL SAFETY PLAN - SENATE BILL 11

Joint Sponsored by Representative Metcalf

Following the tragic school shootings at Parkland, Florida and Santa Fe, Texas, Representative Metcalf identified school safety as a top priority for the 86th Legislative Session, conducting multiple roundtables with stakeholders from the local education community, experts from Sam Houston State University, and the Texas State School Safety Center. The Legislature agreed and made school safety a priority this Session. The main school safety

bill, Senate Bill 11, establishes threat assessment teams to work to identify potential threats against schools before they take place, strengthens the state's mental health initiatives, ensures that teachers are equipped with effective emergency communication access, and requires that school districts appoint school safety committees to address updates to school security plans.

FLOOD PLANNING AND PREVENTION - SENATE BILL 7 AND SENATE BILL 8

Senate Bill 7, with the passage in November of the Constitutional Amendment proposed by House Joint Resolution 4, creates two funding accounts. The Flood Infrastructure Fund (FIF) will provide funding for flood planning, mitigation and infrastructure projects. The Texas Infrastructure Resiliency Fund (TIRF) will contain four accounts to assist local communities in drawing down federal dollars with matching funds for recovery projects that qualify for federal funding.

Senate Bill 8 requires the Texas Water Development Board to create a statewide flood plan. The statewide plan will be based on regional plans that take into consideration local flooding conditions. The statewide plan will ensure that Texas is better prepared going forward.

DISASTER RESPONSE IMPROVEMENTS - HOUSE BILL 26 AND HOUSE BILL 2325

Both Authored by Representative Metcalf

The Texas House passed a package of bills related specifically to addressing the lessons learned after Hurricane Harvey. This included House Bill 26 and House Bill 2325, both championed by Representative Metcalf. House Bill 26 will ensure that a release from a dam made during a disaster comes with sufficient warning and information to help first responders and residents downstream to avoid the level of destruction that occurred during Harvey.

House Bill 2325 will improve disaster communications statewide during a disaster. Cross agency and local first responder communications need to align more effectively and provide better and more accurate information to the public. House Bill 2325 accomplishes this by standardizing communications and making sure the most up to date and accurate information is sent out.

ADDITIONAL NOTABLE LEGISLATION

PRO-LIFE VICTORIES:

Co-Authored and Co-Sponsored by Representative Metcalf

HB 16 - Makes explicitly clear that infants who survive abortion procedures receive the same diligent, professional medical care given to any other child born.

SB 22 - Closes loopholes that allow tax dollars to subsidize abortion providers by preventing any governmental entity from entering into certain transactions with abortion providers or their affiliates.

SB 24 - Requires a physician to hand deliver informational materials to mothers seeking an abortion when the initial consultation is conducted over the phone.

HB 1504 - Expands patient protections under the Texas Advance Directives Act by requiring physicians to make a reasonable effort to transfer patients who are on life support and subject to the "10 day rule" to other physicians who are willing to provide life-extending treatment, should the families of the patients decide on that course of treatment.

HB 902 - Makes the offense of assault involving a bodily injury a third-degree felony if the assailant knew the victim was pregnant at the time of the assault.

ENHANCING FREEDOM AND LIBERTY:

SB 18, Co-Sponsor - Prohibits institutions of higher education from taking action against a student organization or denying the organization benefits on the basis of a political, religious, philosophical, ideological, or academic viewpoint expressed by the organization.

HB 234, Co-Author - Prohibits local governments from regulating the

sale of lemonade or other nonalcoholic beverages by an individual under age 18 from a stand on private property.

HB 1631, Co-Author - Bans the use of red light cameras in Texas.

SB 1978, Co-Sponsor - Makes clear that a governmental entity may not take any adverse action against a person based wholly or partly on religious grounds.

PROTECTING SECOND AMENDMENT RIGHTS:

HB 302, Co-Author - Protects the rights of owners and tenants of residential property who possess guns on property they control and allows them to move their guns from their vehicles to that property.

SB 535 - Removes churches or places of worship from prohibited locations and gives them the right to either allow or prohibit license to carry holders.

HB 1143 - Ensures schools cannot prohibit a handgun license holder from storing firearms and ammunition in a locked vehicle in a school parking area.

HB 1177, Joint Author - Allows Texans to carry their firearms with them in a mandatory emergency evacuation without fear of breaking the law or being forced to leave their handguns behind in vehicles or homes.

INCREASING TRANSPARENCY:

SB 1264, Co-Sponsor - Ends surprise medical bills that arise after disputes between an insurance company and medical provider.

HB 1992 - Prohibits companies and telemarketers from falsifying their numbers when making phone calls.

HB 2041, Co-Author - Requires free-standing emergency centers to disclose to patients what services are in-network and the average price that someone may pay for a procedure.

PUBLIC SAFETY:

HB 3809 - Empowers survivors of child sex abuse by extending the civil statute of limitations to 30 years for personal injury lawsuits arising from the abuse.

HB 4345, Co-Author - Allows nonprofits and churches to share information about sex abuse allegations against former employees without becoming vulnerable to lawsuits.

ECONOMIC TRANSPARENCY AND PROTECTION:

SB 12, Co-Sponsor - Calls for the state level of contribution to TRS to be increased gradually over a multi-year period. Additionally, retirees will receive a one-time supplemental 13th check of up to \$2,000 on average.

SB 30, Joint Sponsor - Requires more specific bond language on a ballot and will require each different bond to be listed as a separate proposition.

HJR 38, Joint Author - If approved by the voters on November 5, 2019, will amend the Texas Constitution to prohibit the state from ever imposing a statewide income tax.



Representative Metcalf watches the voting board during a House debate.

ADDITIONAL LEGISLATION AUTHORED AND SPONSORED BY REPRESENTATIVE METCALF

SALES TAX RELIEF AT COUNTY FAIRS - HOUSE BILL 2684

Current law only allows non-profit organizations, including county fair associations, to have two days of tax free sales in a year. Most county fair events last longer than two days, leaving non-profit sellers liable for the remittance of sales taxes on sales beyond two days. House Bill 2684 ties this exemption to the presence of a county fair, allowing non-profit sellers to sell their items tax free for the duration of the county fair. This will allow local charity organizations, including the fair associations, to maintain lower costs that can be passed on to the end consumer.

SAM HOUSTON STATE UNIVERSITY COLLEGE OF OSTEOPATHIC MEDICINE - HOUSE BILL 2867

Texas has struggled for a number of years with a lack of healthcare service coverage in rural areas. Sam Houston State University is attempting to address the rural healthcare issue by creating a college of osteopathic medicine in Conroe. Doctors of osteopathic medicine have a much higher rate than their MD counterparts of going into family practices and working in more rural and underserved areas. Sam Houston has also developed a financial model which does not seek any additional state formula funding. This creative approach to addressing the rural healthcare crisis will be located in Conroe, where it will provide more job opportunities and economic growth.

PAID LEAVE FOR SEARCH AND RESCUE VOLUNTEERS - HOUSE BILL 41

During the immediate aftermath of Hurricane Harvey, countless volunteers with search and rescue organizations spent time and money going through the floodwaters, through the debris and rubble searching for survivors. Current state law provides paid time off for state employees who volunteer as firefighters or emergency medical personnel. This did not extend to search and rescue. House Bill 41 corrects this oversight and provides paid leave time for search and rescue volunteers.

Senate Bills Sponsored by Rep. Metcalf

SB 450 - Increases efficiency for economic development corporation reporting to increase compliance and lower costs.

SB 563 - Requires federal disaster funds, their purpose, and eligibility requirements to be reported to the Texas Water Development Board. The Water Development Board will maintain a central website where Texans can see how much funding is available and the exact eligibility and application requirements for those funds.



Governor Abbott visits the House floor to discuss legislation with Representative Metcalf.

SB 942 - Matches changes at the federal level, giving Texas access to funds for a greater number of water infrastructure projects and on improved loan terms.

SB 2272 - Amends the Certificate of Convenience and Necessity decertification process to protect both landowners and the investments made by CCN holders that would otherwise be lost when a landowner leaves the service area.

LOCAL VICTORIES

NEW DISTRICT COURT FOR MONTGOMERY COUNTY- SB 891

Senate Bill 891 is an omnibus Court creation bill that creates many different district courts across the state of Texas, including the 457th Judicial District in Montgomery County. The new court will allow for the efficient use of judicial resources by lowering the case load of the other Montgomery County Courts and provide for the timely disposition of cases in the county.

THE JD LAMBRIGHT LOCAL GOVERNMENT ETHICS REFORM ACT - HB 1495

Co-Authored by Representative Metcalf

In March, Montgomery County lost a great public servant and friend when County Attorney JD Lambright passed away suddenly from a brief battle with cancer. JD was known for his high ethical standards as an elected official, and he fought to ensure that all elected officials in Montgomery County were held to that same standard. HB 1495 allows Montgomery County to create a county ethics commission that may adopt and enforce ethics standards. Additionally, HB 1495 includes a provision that increases transparency in regards to taxpayer funded lobbying. I was proud to see the JD Lambright Ethics Act signed into law by Governor Greg Abbott in JD's honor.



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STATE REPRESENTATIVE
WILL METCALF



86th LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

- FISCALLY CONSERVATIVE TEXAS BUDGET
- REFORMING PUBLIC SCHOOL FINANCE
- IMPROVING DISASTER RESPONSE
- LOWERING PROPERTY TAXES
- PROTECTING LIFE



It is Representative Metcalf's honor
to work for the people of House District 16.