

## TEXAS FAMILIES FIRST

### FREEDOM to Learn with Phone Free Classrooms



It will come as no surprise that 97% of students are on their phones during typical school hours—texting, posting, filming, scrolling, watching - rinsing and repeating. Despite many school districts having policies against phone use

session. Phones can be slipped in locking neoprene pouches at the beginning of the school day and kept out of sight in lockers with immediate consequences for visible phones in classrooms, hallways, and cafeterias. In other words, still available in emergencies or for parental communication before and after school, but out of constant, addictive reach during instructional and social time.

It's exciting to see that several school districts within HD 19 are already leading the way on this issue, and districts around the state that have already implemented phone-free classrooms are reaping rewards. After a pilot program in Richardson ISD, discipline issues and cyberbullying decreased, and student social interactions improved, while 100% of teachers reported an increase in educational instruction.

As a parent, I am more committed than ever to keeping my young children away from smartphones and social media apps in order to allow them to develop and connect in the real world. As a lawmaker, I know that I have a responsibility to our teachers, administrators, and parents to help stem the ubiquitous presence of phones in classrooms and set our students up for success by minimizing distractions.

Teachers and parents alike may be grateful for a “new normal,” with more engaged children and focused time in the classroom. Students will finally feel what it is like to be unleashed and free from a prison of our creation. Who knows, they may even start making eye contact again!

With our school districts leading the way, I will remain ready to provide the support and resources necessary from the State level to give our students this freedom to learn.

in class, the reality is that enforcement is a challenge when an endlessly compelling internet portal can be easily hidden behind a book or under a desk. We send our kids to school with an addictive combination of a television, boom box, and walkie-talkie, and expect them to pay attention during class.

In what has been coined the “New Great Depression,” the number of high schoolers who agree with the phrases “I can't do anything right,” “I do not enjoy life,” and “My life is not useful” has doubled since 2010. That's an unprecedented spike. Constant cellphone use has exacerbated a mental health crisis among our youth, who have been relentlessly exposed to online content during critical years of formation and growth, including during school hours.

Our students and teachers need uninterrupted time to focus on math, science, reading, writing, and in-person socialization, which can only be done by providing an educational environment that is conducive to learning, and free of inappropriate influences. In collaboration with our local school leaders, I plan to file a bill to prohibit students from using phones during class time in the next legislative

### Pro-Family for a STRONG Future

Thriving families build strong communities. In Texas we value life, so it is imperative that we are also committed to supporting mothers and babies through pregnancy and beyond. That's why the legislature allocated an additional \$20 million in funding to the Thriving Texas Families program this session. This program offers broad support services to pregnant mothers and their families. The clear goal is



to promote childbirth as an alternative to abortion and to increase access to various means of support for child development. A variety of services, including medical care, counseling, and even items like diapers are available to pregnant women through three years after birth. Services like grief counseling are also available to women who have experienced a miscarriage or other loss of a child.

Streamlining the adoption process and costs are also an integral part of a healthy families program. We are working alongside families and service providers to make sure that we reduce barriers for loving families to adopt a child into their lives. Adoptive parents are also eligible for some services up to two years after finalizing their adoption. Texas has a statewide network of food banks and private charities that have been stepping up as well, thanks to generous donations. Pregnancy resource centers provide a wonderful support system for families in need, with everything from counselors to formula all under one roof.

In an effort to spur more childcare options and reduce the cost of services, we passed legislation to provide a tax credit to qualifying childcare facilities. Lowering the cost of overhead operation will make opening and operating these centers easier, and in turn, hopefully give parents more options at a lower cost.

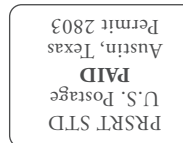
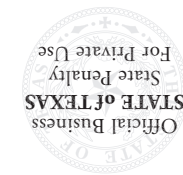
# ELLEN TROXCLAIR

*State Representative • District 19*

<p><b>CAPITOL OFFICE</b> P.O. Box 2910 Austin, Texas 78768-2910 (512) 463-0490 Phone District19.Troxclair@house.texas.gov</p>	<p><b>DISTRICT OFFICE KENDALL COUNTY</b> 624 North Main Street Boerne, Texas 78006 (512) 463-0490 Phone</p>	<p><b>DISTRICT OFFICE BURNET COUNTY</b> 100 Ave. G, 3rd floor Marble Falls, Texas 78654 (512) 463-0490 Phone</p>
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**COMMITTEES:** Culture, Recreation & Tourism • Homeland Security & Public Safety  
Community Safety, Select • Sustainable Property Tax Relief, Select

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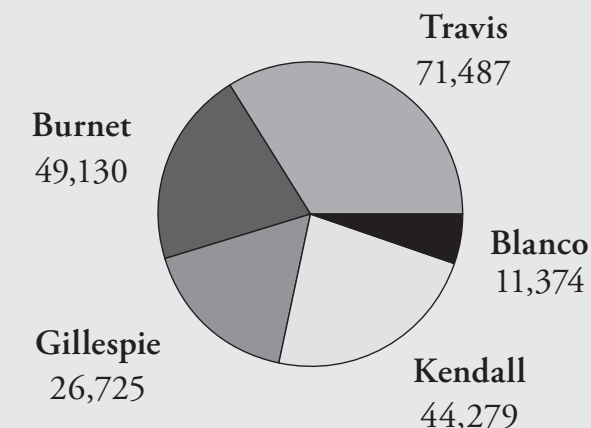


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**Ellen Troxclair**  
*State Representative*

### Let's look at the Hill Country!

Being the first to represent House District 19 in its revised geography is a tremendous honor. We are the very heart of the Hill Country, and our mix of rural communities and natural treasures is a sanctuary to us, and a draw to folks from around the world. Here's a peek at where we live, learn, work, and play!

### HD 19 Population





## REPRESENTATIVE ELLEN TROXCLAIR

*88th Interim Update • District 19*

Blanco, Burnet, Gillespie, Kendall, Travis (part)

88th Interim Update • 2024



## TEXAS HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

**Ellen Troxclair**  
*State Representative • District 19*

Friends,

What a blessing it is to live in the land of the free and the home of the brave. Despite the chaos and uncertainty that has seemed to engulf the recent months and years, Texans are always ready to step up to any challenge with courage and grit. There is a deeply engrained self-determination that has allowed our state to lead the way through it all - with a thriving economy that provides good jobs and good pay, with low taxes that allow us to save and spend more of our money as we choose, by setting our next generation up for success through investing in education, and by supporting families who want to provide the best for their children.

As we strive together to keep Texas a shining city upon a hill, it is an honor to serve as your voice at the Texas Capitol. From fighting to secure the border to addressing our water crisis, to so many issues in between, my first term in office has been non-stop. And it's full speed ahead!

As we remain beset by drought, preserving agricultural land, the food supply, and the water resources of the Hill Country are top priorities. We pushed for and passed record funding to invest in new water technology, programs, and research – an investment that will bear fruit in the coming years. We are also working with community leaders to ensure that they have the tools and resources to manage growth responsibly and to enact programs that incentivize smart water use.

The border crisis continues to impact communities across Texas. Operation Lone Star is stepping into the gaps that the federal government has left, significantly increasing the boots on the ground and the funding for border barriers. Doing everything we can to secure our border also means we are working to stem trafficking of humans and drugs into our country, maximizing punishments for stash house operators, dealers who sell fentanyl laced products, and those who are profiting from exploiting others.

Children under 18 are now protected from gender modification surgeries before they can legally consent, girls can compete on a level playing field with other biological girls, and stricter age verification requirements for online mature content mean children are now safer in Texas. Pro-family policies also received record funding and support.

The fight to keep Texas values at the forefront continues. We must ensure that our land is protected from hostile foreign ownership, that every child has access to an excellent education, and that we confront the federal-government-driven inflation that is affecting our quality of life.

America is the greatest county on earth because of the people and principles that bind us together: liberty, freedom, and the rule of law. We must remember that what unites us is more than what divides us.

Thank you for the trust that you have placed in me to represent you during this pivotal moment in history. I will continue to do all I can to keep us *safe, strong, and free*. May God bless you, our great State of Texas, and our United States of America.

In Liberty,

*Ellen Troxclair*

Ellen Troxclair  
Your State Representative



## INTERIM CHARGES

### Interim Charges Across the Texas House's Committees

A wider look at the work of the Interim

#### SECURING OUR SOUTHERN BORDER

The House will be reviewing state agencies' involvement in Operation Lone Star, currently funded with \$11 billion, to see how border security and international criminal activity has been impacted by Texas' efforts. The House will also take a look at the resources and authority given to state agencies for their border security initiatives. We're looking forward to making recommendations for increasing the safety and wellbeing of our personnel on the border, as well as the overall efficiency of agency operations.



The newly implemented rural law enforcement grant program is going a long way to ensure that sheriffs in rural communities can adequately staff their critical departments. Many of the counties that are being overrun by illegal immigration are small, yet critical to our efforts to stop trafficking. They are shouldering a large part of the burden of securing our state and the additional resources help in that effort.

#### KEEPING AMERICAN LAND OUT OF HOSTILE FOREIGN HANDS

Ensuring that we maintain control of Texas agricultural land and facilities is a real and growing concern. There are hearings scheduled to better understand and address the threat posed by hostile foreign organizations and related entities on the Texas economy, security, and values. By evaluating the ways in which hostile foreign organizations acquire property in Texas as well as the risks this poses to our security, we will hopefully be ready to pursue policy changes to mitigate these risks come next legislative session.

We will also be evaluating the impact on housing prices and rent caused by institutional buyers (large investors and corporations that buy single-family homes and then rent them out), often driving up prices for everyday Texans. We need to ensure families and individuals are not unfairly priced out of homeownership. We'll also be looking at insurance premiums and will be investigating solutions to help Texans more easily and affordably obtain property and casualty insurance coverage.



#### COMBATTING THE ESCALATING COST OF LIVING

We passed the largest property tax cut in United States history last session, giving Texans much needed relief and combatting federally-driven inflation. This was done by shifting the cost of our public schools from local property taxes to funding from state coffers. State revenue is largely driven by sales taxes, oil and gas taxes, and business taxes. Because of our thriving economy, that revenue has increased, even as other states like California are dealing with major deficits. We took \$18 billion from our surplus and put it towards schools, and lowered your local school property taxes by the same amount. The result is that schools still received the same amount of money, property taxes were reduced, and no other taxes were raised – a win/win/win.

Even more so, because we are reducing our reliance on property taxes to fund schools, we are also reducing recapture payments from "property rich" school districts being distributed to school districts with lower tax rolls, also known as "Robin Hood." If we are not using an innately inequitable method to fund schools (property values/taxes vary greatly across our state), there is no longer the need for "redistribution." This means more of your local tax dollars will stay in your community. Finally!

While this was a massive step in the right direction, there is still more to do. Interim studies for House committees include another look at a proposal to cap the annual increases to a home's assessed taxable value, a review of whether we can put more resources toward cutting school districts' tax rates as we did last year, and if the state's new \$100,000 homestead exemption is providing the relief we hoped.

## INTERIM CHARGES

### WATER RESOURCES & DEVELOPMENT ISSUES



Research is continuing on how the state's water re-use program may be effectively expanded, as well as looking to eliminate red tape or funding hurdles that need to be addressed. We will also be studying groundwater conditions and how our state's planning impacts these conditions. Boil water notices are another topic that will be under review. Evaluating the cause, frequency, and duration of boil water notices, naming solutions to keeping essential water infrastructure operating during system failures, and looking at ways to keep systems operational during a crisis as well.

Our Culture, Recreation, and Tourism Committee convened recently to review a variety of efforts that are in place to protect and preserve farm and ranchland. Texas has partnered with trusts like the Hill Country Conservancy for years to give landowners the voluntary option to place a conservation easement on their property. These easements ensure that their lands and water resources are preserved as working land and not developed for other purposes. A bill we passed last session also allocated \$1 billion to state parkland acquisition through the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. This program has added 120,000 acres of land to Texas parkland since its inception in 1978, and the boost in funding will add to that preservation. What's more, it is yielding a great return on investment.

While it is great that so many want to join us here in Texas and further boost our economy, it is critical that we manage development in a responsible way in order to protect our state's beauty and resources for generations to come.

*"... unless a people are educated and enlightened, it is idle to expect the continuance of civil liberty, or the capacity for self government."*

*Texas Declaration of Independence, March 2, 1836*

It is such an honor to serve you and all of the hardworking Texans of House District 19. Your personal input and feedback are critical to this work at the Capitol, so please join me at upcoming events around the District or email me directly at [ellen.troxclair@house.texas.gov](mailto:ellen.troxclair@house.texas.gov) with your thoughts! My staff stands ready to assist should you need help interacting with state agencies and a host of other matters. Reach out to them at [District19.Troxclair@House.Texas.Gov](mailto:District19.Troxclair@House.Texas.Gov).

#### Visit the Capitol

*The State Capitol 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 free of charge.*



## TEXAS FAMILIES FIRST

### An Excellent Education for All: A TOP PRIORITY for Texas!

Did you know that total annual funding for our public schools is at a historic high? Last year, \$92.4 billion was allocated to funding our public schools, which is nearly one-third of our total state budget. This is up from \$52 billion in 2012, an increase of 80%. Even after adjusting for inflation, 2023 was still the year with the highest funding, with an inflation-adjusted increase of 23%.

Per-student funding has also consistently and significantly increased in the last decade. When you look at overall funding, per-student funding has risen by more than 46%, from \$10,600 in 2014 to \$15,503 today.

According to the Texas Education Agency, over that same time period the cumulative change in local and state funding has far outpaced the change in the average daily attendance between 2014 and 2025. Since 2014, the growth in the average daily attendance was 7%, while the growth in the state and local revenue increased by 54%. This means that the growth in funding was more than seven times greater than the growth in the average daily attendance. A win for Texas public schools and students!

As a product of an excellent public education myself, I believe we have a wonderful public education system in Texas that we must continue to support, through full funding. While there was support for a proposed \$7 billion boost in funding for public schools this past legislative session, including \$4 billion for teacher pay raises – that bill that did not advance this past session due to opposition to a limited program that would have allowed disabled and under-privileged children to use their family's tax dollars to seek the best education for their child.

While we are blessed to have many excellent school districts across the five counties of House District 19, this is simply not the case for too many children in Texas. Despite spending around \$15,000 per student per year, over 70% of 4th graders in Texas cannot read on grade level. Knowing that education is the most important indicator of future success, we can and must do better for these children.

Ultimately, we must pursue both fully funded public schools and the ability of parents to choose the best education for their children. My commitment to more public school funding, more educational choices for families, and an excellent education for each Texas child, is stronger than ever.



There are many other ways I am working to support teachers and students alike. For example, a bill I supported last session will now ensure that every district has access to rigorous, appropriate, and cohesive lesson content for all Texas students. This was enacted with the goal to provide teachers with high-quality, grade-level-appropriate instructional materials aligned with our well-vetted State standards. The legislature also allocated an additional \$324 million on top of existing funding for instructional materials. The materials are evidence-based, classical, historically accurate, patriotic, and completely transparent for parents to review. This will also allow educators a bit more time to focus on doing what they do best, focusing on preparing our students for success, and spending less of their time creating new lessons. Education excellence, transparency for parents, and proven curriculum are a winning combination for Texas children.

