



STATE REPRESENTATIVE

Ron Reynolds



District 27 Citizen Update

FORT BEND (PART) ★ FALL 2021

Texas House of Representatives



Dear Friends and Neighbors,

Thank you for the honor, privilege and responsibility of serving a sixth term as your State Representative in the Texas House during this 87th legislative session and multiple special sessions that followed. These legislative sessions have focused on many contentious priorities set by the state leadership; Governor Greg Abbott, Lieutenant Governor Dan Patrick and Speaker of the House Dade Phelan. The COVID-19 pandemic brought many challenges to the convening of the legislature; like no other in the 10 years serving in the Texas House. It has been a long ongoing battle with the COVID-19 virus; enduring the loss of loved ones, unemployment challenges, and the closing of many businesses in our communities.

My top priorities for the 87th legislative session and special sessions were to continue to fight for affordable health care and Medicaid expansion, meaningful criminal justice reforms, promote jobs and economic development for small, women and minority-owned businesses, equal pay for equal work, and funding our public schools, as well as teacher pay raises and a 13th check for retired teachers. In addition, address the problems that we saw during the COVID-19 pandemic; unemployment benefits, paid sick leave for all employees, raise the minimum wage and bridging the digital divide. Lastly, we focused on addressing the problems exposed by Winter Storm Uri, and the unnecessary loss of over 700 Texans lives due to the state not being prepared for extreme inclement weather conditions; winterizing our energy infrastructure and power plants, and addressing the devastating impacts that our fellow Texans endured.

We had a very productive session and are proud of the many accomplishments that we were able to make in the 140 days of the regular session. I authored, co-authored, sponsored and co-sponsored 234 pieces of legislation. This newsletter will highlight some of the major legislation that has passed and as well as some of the legislation that was part of my progressive, legislative agenda. In addition, included are missed opportunities of the session and contentious legislation that I joined with many colleagues in fighting against.

It was an honor to serve once again as the ranking member of the Environmental Regulation Committee, as well as a new appointment to the powerful Committee on Energy Resources. During the interim, I will be requesting that the Environmental Regulation Committee look at the impacts of Climate Change to see how we can start mitigating the effects in Texas, as well as requesting Energy Resources Committee to look at better ways to protect and expand our electric grid, winterize the utility infrastructure, and diversify energy resources to protect consumers during extreme weather.

I look forward to returning to the district, so that we may continue our work together and address the needs of our District 27 citizens and our community. Serving as "Your Voice In Austin" is a true blessing and privilege; thank you for your trust! It is exciting to represent Fort Bend, one of the most diverse and fastest growing counties in the country. May God continue to bless you and inspire each of us to work for a better future for all!

Yours In Service,



CRIMINAL JUSTICE, POLICE AND GUN CONTROL REFORMS

The vast and deep inequities in our criminal justice system, permits wealth, not culpability, to shape outcomes. Many people charged with crimes lack the resources to investigate cases or obtain the help they need, leading to wrongful convictions and excessive sentences, even in capital cases. Racial disparities persist at every level from misdemeanor arrests to executions. Texas' systems for deciding who should remain behind bars while awaiting trial have long been criticized for unfairly keeping poor people locked up simply because they don't have the cash to post bail. Police brutality cases like George Floyd, have brought light to the public on the much needed police reforms.

For over 10 years, Rep. Reynolds has fought for Criminal Justice reforms making them a top priority. Reforming Texas' cash bail system and police reforms in Texas is long overdue. This session and special sessions that followed, Rep. Reynolds was honored to author, co-author and sponsor an extensive list of much needed reforms; some passed and are current law, and others were major missed opportunities:

- **HB 52** would have closed the notorious gun show loop-hole. Current law requires that no gun can be sold by a licensed gun dealer without a criminal background check, this would add gun shows to that list.
- **HB 88** "The George Floyd Act" was a police use of force and accountability omnibus bill.
- **HB 715** would have required the appointment of a special prosecutor when there is an officer-involved injury or death. The special prosecutor, appointed by the Attorney General, would be from a different area than that which is served by the officer.
- **HB 929** The Botham Jean Act "Bo's Law" Safe at Home, will strengthen and clarify the castle doctrine, and make it an offense for police officers to turn off body cameras during an investigation. EFFECTIVE 9/1/2021
- **HB 959** would have added subpoena power to municipal civilian complaint review boards in municipalities of 500,000 or more.
- **HB 1089** would have made changes to the Texas Tort Claims act that will allow peace officers and their employers to be sued for negligence and gross negligence for personal injury and death.
- **HB 1272/HB 2009** "Breanna's Law" would have banned no-knock warrants/entry except for under very limited circumstances.
- **HB 2077** comprehensive bail reform would have provided for the use of pretrial risk assessments in criminal cases, set out procedures governing bail proceedings, established educational requirements for justices of the peace, and, contingent on approval of a related constitutional amendment, created an exception to the right to bail for certain criminal defendants.
- **HB 2081/SB 1055** "Lisa Torry Smith Act" creates a Class A misdemeanor offense for a driver who injures a pedestrian or certain other vulnerable road users within the area of a crosswalk. EFFECTIVE 9/1/2021
- **HB 2357** codifies the best practices of law enforcement agencies investigating abuse and sexual assault of children. Law enforcement would now be obligated to offer the victim,

their parent, conservator, or legal guardian a pseudonym. At this time law enforcement is only required to use a pseudonym upon request of the victim. EFFECTIVE 6/15/2021

- **HB 2742** would have required that the reentry and reintegration programs were provided to an offender as soon as the offender is taken into the custody of the Texas Department of Criminal Justice.
- **HB 3157** amends current law relating to the criminal offenses of violation of civil rights of and improper sexual activity with persons in custody and increases a criminal penalty. EFFECTIVE 9/1/2021
- **HJR 96** proposed a constitutional amendment authorizing the denial of bail to an accused person if necessary to ensure the person's appearance in court and the safety of the community and of any person, including the victim of the alleged offense.



Rep. Reynolds was honored to be a Joint Author and work with Rep. Carl Sherman on the passage of "Bo's Law".

- **SB 69 (and SB 68/HB 2011 amended onto SB 69)** (Bans Choke holds) prohibits officers from applying deadly pressure to a person's throat, neck, or torso, blocking a person's nose or mouth, or impeding a person's circulation unless the officer is protecting themselves or another person from serious bodily injury or death. Chokeholds and other methods to restrict airflow involve compression of the neck. The bill also requires a peace officer who witnesses the use of excessive force by another peace officer to promptly make a detailed report of the incident and deliver the report to the reporting officer's supervisor. EFFECTIVE 9/1/2021

- **SB 2212** requires a peace officer who encounters an injured person while discharging the officer's official duties to immediately and as necessary request emergency medical services (EMS) personnel to provide the person with emergency medical services and, while waiting for EMS personnel to arrive, provide first aid or treatment to the person to the extent of the officer's skill and training. EFFECTIVE 9/2/2021
- **HCR 34** urges Congress to pass the federal George Floyd Justice in Policing Act.



Rep. Reynolds advocating for the George Floyd Act and other needed criminal justice reforms.

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE AND CLIMATE CHANGE

Environmental injustice, including the proliferation of climate change, systematically impacts communities of color and low-income communities. Rep. Reynolds is proud to author bills and fight for policies that provide for climate action planning, reduce the carbon footprint and address environmental justice issues in our neighborhoods and across the state.

- **HB 714** would have established the Texas Environmental Justice Council
- **HB 896** would have required TCEQ to create statewide standards that limit venting and flaring.

- **HB 897** would have required TCEQ and the RRC to study best practices to reduce methane gas and other pollutants.
- **HB 1533** would have created the Energy Efficiency Loan Guarantee Program under TERP that would provide low-interest loans for home-owners who otherwise might not have the economic capability to weatherize their homes.
- **HB 2482** would have required the RRC to plug at least 1,400 abandoned oil and gas wells per year to protect the environment.
- **HB 2689** would have created the Climate Change Impact Assessment Council to study the impacts of climate change.

ELECTIONS AND VOTER ACCESS

A government that is truly democratic ensures that its laws do not discriminate nor discourage people from voting, especially those belonging to underrepresented communities of color, young people, seniors, or low-income people. The government should legislate laws that make voting much easier for all citizens, particularly those underrepresented groups whose voices are often unheard in the halls of government offices. Rep. Reynolds prides himself in filing legislation and fighting for policies that makes voting more accessible and encourages greater voter participation;

- **HB 104** would have permitted online voter registration in Texas, joining the other 40 states that already provide it.
- **HB 110** would have made changes to the current suppressive Voter ID Law.
- **HB 120** would have reinstated straight-party voting in Texas.
- **HB 124** would have allowed automatic voter registration upon issuance or change of a driver's license or ID card by DPS.

FORT BEND COUNTY/LOCAL LEGISLATION

The highlight of every session for Rep. Reynolds is the opportunity to work with the Mayors, City Council Members and County Commissioner's to craft legislation that addresses the specific needs and concerns of the citizen's in Fort Bend County. This session provided for a robust agenda:

- **HB 72** will allow Fort Bend County to enact and enforce park use rules in the county parks. EFFECTIVE 9/1/2021
- **HB 78**, would have created a Mental Health Treatment For Incarceration Diversion Pilot Program for Fort Bend County. This would provide relief to jail overcrowding, and help the mentally ill get much needed services.
- **HB 1288** would have moved the election of the Fort Bend ISD Board of Trustee's currently held in May to the November uniform election date. This will be a critical change to increase voter turnout for an important election.
- **HB 1290** would have allowed County Assistance Districts to perform functions in the district or for the benefit of the district within the proximity of 2 miles outside of the district.
- **HB 1311** would have created six trustees elected by position from two multimember voting districts composed of three trustee positions each and one member elected at large for Fort Bend ISD. Residents of each multimember voting district are entitled to cast votes for each trustee position within the multimember voting district. This would ensure that the local community and area could elect the candidate of their choice that reflects the values and diversity of each district.
- **HB 1719** would have required a seller to notify a purchaser of land and/or home of a potential erosion risk along the Brazos River in Fort Bend County.

- **HB 1721** would have required TCEQ to complete an annual comprehensive air study to measure the air pollutants in residential areas in the unincorporated area of Fort Bend county within 500 feet of a concrete batch plant.
- **HB 1968** would have allowed a director of Municipal Management District to be paid a fee of office for their service, if the city that the MMD is located in, chose to do so.
- **HB 2690** Amended onto HB 4103 will allow Missouri City to collect and pledge revenue generated from hotel taxes to build a Convention Center Hotel and other qualified projects. EFFECTIVE 6/14/2021



Rep. Reynolds distributing food and PPE to constituents in need.

JOB CREATION, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND EMPOWERMENT

A robust economy gives Texans the freedom and opportunity to thrive and succeed. Texans need more money in their pockets, and that has been Rep. Reynolds focus and legislative priorities.

- **HB 60** would have raised the minimum wage in Texas to \$15.00 an hour. Raising the minimum wage in Texas will increase earnings for thousands of workers, and support the local economies where they live, work and spend their earnings.
- **HB 87** would have required employers to provide paid sick leave to their employees.
- **HB 2507** would have ensured equal pay for equal work.

PUBLIC AND HIGHER EDUCATION

Rep. Reynolds strongly believes that access to free and quality public education should be a right accorded to every child in this country, and that every student in a neighborhood has the same educational opportunities as the neighbors down the street, regardless of their current personal or financial situation. Through the budget process this session, the legislature fully funded it's commitment to public education investments made in HB 3 in the 86th Session. The Legislature also increased the state's contribution rates at the Teacher Retirement System to support our retired teachers.

- **HB 5** aims to make measurable progress toward closing the digital divide that was exposed during the COVID-19 pandemic. To make the internet more accessible and reliable to all Texans. EFFECTIVE 6/15/2021
- **HB 141** would have created the "Texas Promise Grant Program" to provide tuition for all eligible students at Texas community colleges. The grant money would go towards students who live in the state, have graduated from high school or received a high school equivalency certificate within the last 12 months, have already applied for financial aid and who maintains a 2.5 GPA.
- **HB 785** will require that behavior improvement plans (BIP's) and behavioral intervention plans for public school students be reviewed annually, and revised if they are not effective. It will also require notification and documentation regarding certain behavior management techniques. EFFECTIVE 6/4/2021
- **HB 1088** would have provided a pay raise for our public education teachers, school counselors and nurses.
- **SB 7** (2nd Special Session) "13th Check" provides for a one-time payment of up to \$2,400 for retired teachers, counselors and other school staff. EFFECTIVE 9/9/2021

ECONOMICALLY EMPOWERING AND IMPROVING LIVES OF AFRICAN AMERICANS

Rep. Reynolds strives daily to work to improve the lives of African Americans and provide opportunities for economic empowerment. Working with black chambers of commerce and other organizations to craft legislation to benefit African Americans is a task that Rep. Reynolds takes pride in every legislative session. For the 87th session the following bills were file:

- **HB 38** The Crown Act would have banned discrimination on the basis of hair texture and protective hairstyles associated with race.
- **HB 2207** would have created the Texas African American Heritage Commission
- **HB 2012** would have mandated reporting requirements for bank loans made to African American owned businesses.

The Historically Underutilized Business (HUB) Program began in 1991 to increase minority and women-owned business participation in state procurement and contracting from which such businesses had often experienced difficulty becoming involved;

- **HB 924** would give preferences to small businesses/ HUBs with state contracts under \$500,00.
- **HB 923** would provide more opportunities for HUB's to participate in the Texas procurement process and ensure they receive a fair share of state business.



Rep. Reynolds was honored to work with Texas high school student DeAndre Arnold on the "CROWN ACT". He was removed from his public school because of his natural hairstyle.



WINTER STORM URI AND ELECTRICITY RELIABILITY IN TEXAS

Winter Storm Uri last February exposed serious problems in our state's ability to provide reliable electricity during times of extreme weather patterns. Texas is long over due in winterizing the utility infrastructure, expanding and protecting the power grid, diversifying energy resources and protecting consumers. The legislature made some improvements during the 87th session, but had major missed opportunities to fully address and rectify the problems.

- **SB 2** provides for that increased oversight and to make additional changes with respect to the membership of the ERCOT governing body, including by changing term lengths and requiring that all members be Texas residents. EFFECTIVE 6/8/2021
- **SB 3** requires the weatherization of certain gas supply chain facilities, certain entities that sell electric energy at wholesale or provide transmission service in the ERCOT power region, and certain gas pipeline facilities. The bill aims addressing issues with the goals of ensuring the State of Texas has a reliable electricity grid and strengthening the state's prevention of and preparation for energy emergencies. Created a power outage consumer alert system. EFFECTIVE 6/8/2021
- **HB 13** would have established the Texas Energy Disaster Reliability Council to help prevent interruptions in electric service lasting more than 24 hours caused by a disaster.
- **HB 17** will prevent cities and counties in Texas from banning different types of utility services. The bill prevents political subdivisions from discriminating against different utilities in issuing building permits and making zoning decisions. This will help to preserve the rights of Texans to have access to all energy choices. EFFECTIVE 5/18/2021
- **HB 2015** would have required the PUC to conduct a feasibility study on renewable energy goals.
- **HB 2480** would have required the PUC to ensure that ERCOT has adequate reserve power to prevent blackout conditions from occurring.
- **HB 2481** to require PUC to have regulations in place that require winterization of our various power generation systems. These include outside power plants, wind turbines and fortifying natural gas pipelines. (some of the language in SB 3)
- **HB 2686** would have made the PUC require ERCOT to interconnect our electric grid with the Western and Eastern Interconnects which is part of the national power grid system to prevent blackouts during extreme weather.
- **HB 2687** required the PUC to ensure electric generators participating in the ERCOT market are winterized to compete in our market. In addition, to require that ERCOT has adequate ancillary services, emergency response services and demand response capabilities to avoid rolling outages and prevent blackout conditions.
- **HB 3246** would have required certain state agencies to consider information on projected changes in weather, water availability, and climate variability in strategic plans.



Rep. Reynolds collaborates with Chair Senfronia Thompson on legislation to improve reliability of the electricity grid, and winterization of gas and electric infrastructure.



Rep. Reynolds stands with colleagues and the NAACP in fighting to protect voting rights in Texas.

STATE REPRESENTATIVE
Ron Reynolds
Citizen Update



District 27 ★ Fort Bend (part)

COMMITTEES: ENERGY RESOURCES;
ENVIRONMENTAL REGULATION

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**87TH SPECIAL SESSION LEGISLATION PASSED -
NOT SUPPORTED BY REP. REYNOLDS**

- **SB 1** Election/Voter bill that bans 24 hour voting, drive-through voting, temporary early voting locations that are not located in a building and limits early voting will hours. Strictly limits voter assistance, even by a family member and enacts criminal penalties. Implements new cumbersome Mail Ballot requirements. Grants poll watchers near unlimited access within polling locations.
- **SB 3** Classroom Censorship bill will limit learning, diversity, and inclusion efforts already underway in schools across Texas. Prohibits a teacher from being compelled to discuss a particular current event or controversial issue. Educators will not be able to effectively teach their students or encourage student participation and learning.
- **SB 6** Governor Abbott's Bail Reform bill will limit a judges' ability to release people on PR bonds. This bill will cause already overcrowded jails, with over 70% of Texas' county jail population being held on pretrial. This bill exacerbates socio economic and racial disparities. Low income and people of color will continue to be detained pretrial under our cash bail system. This leads to innocent people often sitting in jail that cannot afford cash bail and others pleading guilty, even if innocent, so they can get released.