

SERGIO MUÑOZ, JR.

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • DISTRICT 36

PROPOSED CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS

SEPTEMBER 2011



State of Texas
House of Representatives

SERGIO MUÑOZ, JR.
STATE REPRESENTATIVE

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Fall 2011

Dear Friends and Neighbors:

Thank you for the privilege and the honor to serve you in the Texas House of Representatives. Included in this newsletter is a summary of proposed amendments to the Texas Constitution, legislative accomplishments of the 82nd Texas Legislature, as well as other valuable information for your reading pleasure. It is my sincere hope to meet with many of you during the interim to discuss the gains we are making as a State as well as ways to promote better government and more effective policies for all Texans.

As you know, each Legislative Session your elected representatives consider amendments to the Texas Constitution. Amendments to the Texas Constitution first require approval of at least two-thirds of the Legislature, and if approved, then are passed onto the voters of Texas in a ratification process. This Constitutional ratification process offers Texans the unique and extremely important opportunity to shape and clarify laws that directly impact how we live, work and educate our children in Texas. This year the legislature has passed ten proposed amendments that will appear on the November 2011 ballot for Texans to vote on. It is our privilege to make available at your doorstep, information that will keep you informed about these very important proposed changes and the process by which they may be enacted.

I am particularly pleased to see Prop. 1 on the list of amendments to be considered. This change would allow the spouse of a deceased veteran who was 100 percent disabled, to keep the property tax exemption that was afforded to them as a family.

It is our hope that you find this newsletter helpful and that it provides valuable information regarding our South Texas region. Please know that you are encouraged to contact our office to share your concerns and priorities at any time. I look forward to our collective effort for the benefit of our Deep South Texas district. We have made a commitment to address issues affecting you and Texas; so please feel free to contact us at 956-584-8999 or by e-mail at: Sergio.Munoz@house.state.tx.us at any time.

Sincerely,

Sergio Muñoz, Jr.
Texas State Representative, District 36



State Representative Muñoz and Senator Juan "Chuy" Hinojosa confer in the House Chamber about SB 975, the "Dropout Recovery" legislation authored by the two lawmakers.

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Legislative Accomplishments



Rep. Muñoz in front of the Texas House of Representatives on passage of his first bill.

Through the duration of the 82nd Legislative Session Representative Muñoz was able to work closely with members of the Texas House and Senate, including members of the Valley Delegation and with many of his District 36 constituents to pass several significant pieces of legislation among them:

- ★ A budget amendment that restored \$630,000 for the **bachelor's degree program** at South Texas College; STC is an important part of the entire region's economic engine, providing a ready workforce and jobs for the Rio Grande Valley;
- ★ Rep. Muñoz was also part of the effort that recently garnished approval for STC's third BAT program degree; this one will be in Medical and Health Services Management and will increase the earning potential of its graduates, leading to a better way of life and a more productive community;
- ★ Rep. Muñoz sponsored SB 975 for Senator Hinojosa in the Texas House. This bill creates partnerships for Dropout Recovery Programs between Community Colleges and high schools. It is modeled after the extraordinarily successful program run by Dr. Dan King of PSJA, and establishes the nationally-recognized program first here in Hidalgo County, then will be implemented statewide in the Fall of 2013. The programs will save state and local governments millions of dollars as would-be dropouts will now join the educated workforce and in many cases will join their friends and classmates in college;
- ★ Co-Authored a bill that will generate more funding for law enforcement programs that investigate sexual predators who use the Internet to prey on young people and children;
- ★ Sponsored SB 773 which provides an extension of the telecommunications discount that will save a combined \$100 million for public schools and colleges, nonprofit hospitals, and public libraries throughout Texas so they can afford to provide high-speed Internet services for their students, medical professionals, patients, and patrons. Without SB 773, the discount would have expired on August 31, 2011;
- ★ Co-Authored a new law that will increase criminal penalties against human traffickers, especially those who exploit and endanger women;
- ★ Rep. Muñoz also co-authored a bill that will improve the delivery of state food assistance programs for working families while reducing waste and fraud; and...
- ★ To Honor our South Texas Vietnam veterans for their bravery and sacrifice, Senator Hinojosa and Representative Muñoz passed HCR 56. This Concurrent Resolution welcomes home our veterans and honors their service. The efforts culminated in the event held at the McAllen Convention Center in April.

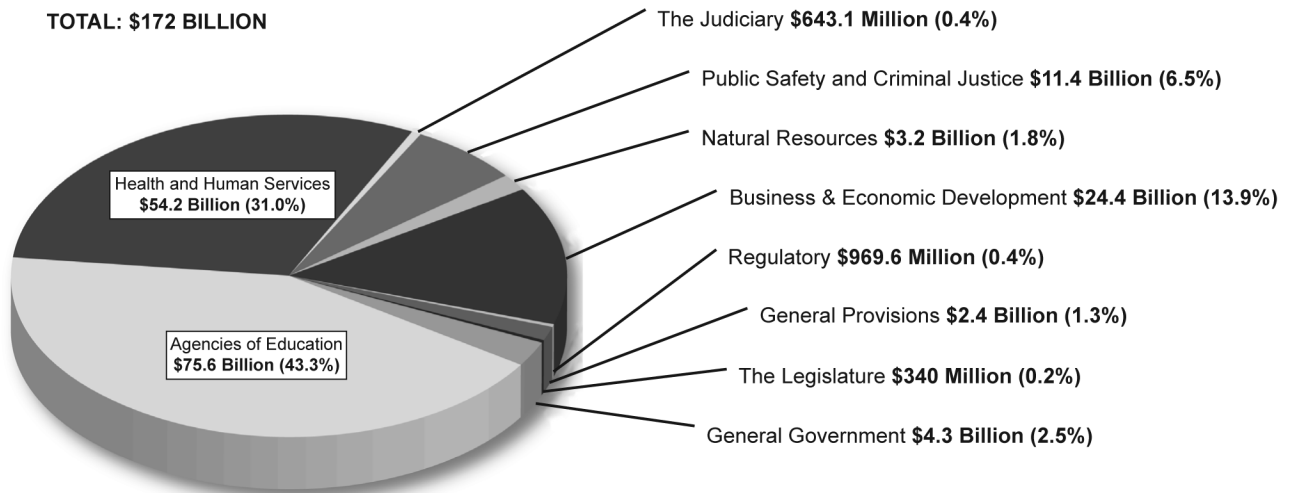
Once again, Rep. Muñoz is quick to share credit for these achievements with his South Texas constituents, and of course – with his fellow Valley legislative colleagues.



Texas State Government Budget



TOTAL: \$172 BILLION



2012-2013 State Budget

As the Legislature began crafting the biennial budget, the state faced a deficit of up to \$27 billion. In spite of this deficit, the Legislature passed a budget for 2012-2013 that is balanced and did not raise taxes; however, significant cuts were made to virtually all state programs. Among significant pressure to do otherwise, the legislature did not tap into the Rainy Day Fund. Many difficult decisions were made to pass this budget and the effects of the resulting reduced state budget will be realized by many Texans as a reduction in services. Representative Muñoz believes that we need to invest considerable time and effort into a plan that will provide additional resources to the programs that provide critical services to deserving Texans

The major economic considerations in the budget are limited resources and increasing costs. The deficit limited our resources due to decreased tax revenues, while our increasing costs are associated with enrollment increases in health and human services and population growth in our public education system with steadily increasing enrollment. (Figure 1 above shows that these are the two largest sectors of the budget.)

The 2012-13 biennial budget totals \$172.3 billion, and reflects an 8.1% decrease from the 2010-2011 budget. Representative Muñoz is committed to an effort to restore much of the reduced services during the next legislative session. Please see Figure 1 above, which details how state funds will be appropriated during the two-year period that began September 1, 2011.

Border Security

One bright spot in the budget is state funding for public safety, as the budget for border security increased by \$108.5 million. A total of \$219.5 million is provided for border security through funding to the Department of Public Safety and to programs within the Office of the Governor and the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department.

The increased border security budget will allow our law enforcement personnel to more vigorously defend our border:

- Money is provided for river patrol boats;
- A high surveillance aircraft;
- Special scopes;
- An array of new Information Technology and more.

The Valley Legislative delegation is very pleased with this part of the budget... because we know that a safe border means that business will continue to be conducted at a pace which will keep our cities thriving and will provide peace of mind to all of our constituencies.

Public Education

The 2012-2013 budget provides for \$75.6 billion for education. Of this, \$50.5 billion is for K-12 public education. State funding for K-12 public education accounts for less than half of public education funding, as the majority of public education funding is from local property tax revenue. This level of funding represents a \$4 billion cut to public education compared to the 2010-2011 budget. Representative Muñoz is committed to restoring and improving the school finance system for the betterment of our school children.

It is anticipated that the Legislature will restructure our public school finance system during the next regular session which convenes in January 2013.

Redistricting

Texas population is more than 25 million based on the 2010 U.S. Census. Since the 2000 census, Texas population grew at a rate of 20.6% while the nation's population grew at a rate of 9.7%. Because of this population increase, Texas gained 4 new Congressional seats.

The Legislature passed a Congressional redistricting map during the special session which ended on June 30th. During the regular legislative session, the Legislature passed new district maps for state house districts, state senate districts, and state board of education districts. (These maps can be viewed online at: www.tlc.state.us/redist/redist.html) Lawsuits concerning these new district boundaries are currently working their way through our court system.



Rep. Muñoz swings the gavel as he presides over the Texas House in the absence of Speaker Straus.



Welcome to the Capitol



Rep. Muñoz pictured with family, friends and staff on Inauguration Day... January 11, 2011.



Rep. Muñoz welcomes the award-winning Palmview High School Mariachi Band to the Texas Capitol.

During the 82nd Legislative Session, Rep. Muñoz was able to welcome hundreds of his supporters and constituents at the Texas Capitol. Rep. Muñoz was proud to recognize several constituents with House Resolutions, including Constable Larry Gallardo for his outstanding achievements and his national recognition, Dr. Alda T. Benavides, superintendent of La Joya Independent School District, for being named Distinguished Bilingual Educator of the Year, Ms. Anna Villanueva for overcoming many challenges in life to become a leader in her field, and the 2011 Leadership Mission delegation.

Rep. Muñoz also helped to welcome District 36 cities to the Capitol on the occasion of their Capitol Days visits, whereby the cities embark on the Capitol to advocate for important issues impacting the people they represent. He welcomed leaders and citizens from every region of House District 36 in an effort to carry their vital messages to the entire Legislature at the State Capitol.

Most significantly, Rep. Muñoz received hundreds of young visitors in his Capitol office. These school children touched our hearts as they advocated for continued funding and resources for public schools and higher education, health and human services, Autism, and a host of other issues.

Rep. Muñoz is grateful for the support and insight that these visitors brought with them and welcomes any of his constituents to visit our Capitol or District Offices at any time. Please see our contact information and addresses on the back of this newsletter.

CAN YOU MATCH THE STATE SYMBOLS?

- | | |
|------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 1. The State Bird? | a. Mexican Free-Tailed Bat |
| 2. The State Dinosaur? | b. Chili con Carne |
| 3. The State Flower? | c. Armadillo |
| 4. The State Fruit? | d. Jalapeño |
| 5. The State Insect? | e. Chuck Wagon |
| 6. The State Motto? | f. Brachiosaur Sauropod, Pleurocoelus |
| 7. The State Pepper? | g. Bolo |
| 8. The State Reptile? | h. Guadalupe Bass |
| 9. The State Tie? | i. The Lone Star State |
| 10. The State Tree? | j. Tortilla Chips and Salsa |
| 11. The State Vehicle? | k. Texas Blue Topaz |
| 12. The State Song? | l. Mockingbird |
| 13. The State Amphibian? | m. Prickly Pear Cactus |
| 14. The State Snack? | n. Texas, Our Texas |
| 15. The State Plant? | o. Texas Toad |
| 16. The State Dish? | p. Horned Lizard |
| 17. The State Gem? | q. Friendship |
| 18. The State Mammal? | r. Bluebonnet |
| 19. The State Flying Mammal? | s. Pecan Tree |
| 20. The State Nickname? | t. Texas Red Grapefruit |
| 21. The State Fish? | u. Monarch Butterfly |

Answers: (1-1) (2-f) (3-r) (4-t) (5-u) (6-g) (7-d) (8-p) (9-g) (10-s) (11-e) (12-n) (13-o) (14-f) (15-m) (16-b) (17-k) (18-c) (19-a) (20-i) (21-h)



in this issue

**Constitutional
Amendment
Voter's Guide**

cut out and take with you to the
polls

**Early Voting:
Monday, October 24
through Friday, November 4**

Election Day: Tuesday, November 8TH

Constitutional Amendments Election Day Aid

Election Day, November 8, 2011 Early Voting October 24 to November 4

More detailed arguments for and against the constitutional amendments on the November 8, 2011 ballot are available online at www.hro.house.state.tx.us, view the report entitled, Constitutional Amendments Proposed for 2011 Ballot.

Please carefully study the pros and cons of each proposed Amendment before you vote. State law allows you to take this information into the polls. Please feel free to cut out this practice ballot and take it with you to vote.

<input type="checkbox"/> For	<input type="checkbox"/> Against	#1 Authorizing the legislature to provide for an exemption from ad valorem taxation of all or part of the market value of the residence homestead of the surviving spouse of a 100 percent or totally disabled veteran.
<input type="checkbox"/> For	<input type="checkbox"/> Against	#2 Providing for the issuance of additional general obligation bonds by the Texas Water Development Board in an amount not to exceed \$6 billion at any time outstanding.
<input type="checkbox"/> For	<input type="checkbox"/> Against	#3 Providing for the issuance of general obligation bonds of the State of Texas to finance educational loans to students.
<input type="checkbox"/> For	<input type="checkbox"/> Against	#4 Authorizing the legislature to permit a county to issue bonds or notes to finance the development or redevelopment of an unproductive, underdeveloped, or blighted area and to pledge for repayment of the bonds or notes increases in ad valorem taxes imposed by the county on property in the area. The amendment does not provide authority for increasing ad valorem tax rates.
<input type="checkbox"/> For	<input type="checkbox"/> Against	#5 Authorizing the legislature to allow cities or counties to enter into interlocal contracts with other cities or counties without the imposition of a tax or the provision of a sinking fund.
<input type="checkbox"/> For	<input type="checkbox"/> Against	#6 Clarifying references to the permanent school fund, allowing the General Land Office to distribute revenue from permanent school fund land or other properties to the available school fund to provide additional funding for public education, and providing for an increase in the market value of the permanent school fund for the purpose of allowing increased distributions from the available school fund.
<input type="checkbox"/> For	<input type="checkbox"/> Against	#7 Authorizing the legislature to permit conservation and reclamation districts in El Paso County to issue bonds supported by ad valorem taxes to fund the development and maintenance of parks and recreational facilities.
<input type="checkbox"/> For	<input type="checkbox"/> Against	#8 Providing for the appraisal for ad valorem tax purposes of open-space land devoted to water-stewardship purposes on the basis of its productive capacity.
<input type="checkbox"/> For	<input type="checkbox"/> Against	#9 Authorizing the governor to grant a pardon to a person who successfully completes a term of deferred adjudication community supervision.
<input type="checkbox"/> For	<input type="checkbox"/> Against	#10 To change the length of the unexpired term that causes the automatic resignation of certain elected county or district officeholders if they become candidates for another office.

Please Cut Out & Take with You To Vote



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Important Texas State Agency Contact Numbers



Clip & Save

Aging and Disability Services, Tx. Dept. of	800-458-9858	State Bar of Texas	800-204-2222
Agriculture, Tx. Dept of	800-835-5832	Lawyer Referral Service	800-252-9690
Attorney General, Office of	800-252-8011	Texas Equal Access to Justice	800-252-3401
Child Support	800-252-8014	Texas Lawyer's Assistance Program	800-343-8527
Consumer Protection	800-621-0508	State Health Services, Tx. Dept. of	888-963-7111
Crime Victims	800-848-4284	Tx. Commission Environmental Quality	800-687-4040
Comptroller of Public Accounts	800-531-5441	Tx Education Agency	512-463-9734
Criminal Justice, Dept. of	512-463-9988	Tx Secretary of State	512-463-5555
Family and Protective Services, Dept. of	512-438-4800	Tx Water Development Board	800-973-7252
Texas Abuse/Neglect Hotline	800-252-5400	Tx Workforce Commission	512-463-2222
Texas Youth Hotline,	800-989-6884	Transportation, Tx. Dept of	800-558-9368
Governors Citizens Assistance Hotline,	800-843-5789	Senator John Cornyn	956-423-0162
Housing & Community Affairs, Tx. Dept. of	800-525-0657	Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison	956-425-2253
Insurance, Tx. Dept. of	800-578-4677	Congressman Ruben Hinojosa	956-682-5545
Licensing and Regulation, Dept. of	800-803-9202	Congressman Henry Cuellar	956-424-3942
Motor Vehicles, Tx. Dept. of	888-368-4689	State Senator Juan "Chuy" Hinojosa	956-972-1841
Public Safety, Tx. Dept. of	512-424-2000	State Senator Eddie Lucio Jr.	956-968-9927
Public Utility Commission of Texas	888-782-8477		