

# The Capitol Ledger

March 19, 2021

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### Want to schedule a meeting?

Send an email request to  
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## Committee Hearings are in Full Swing

Although the session got off to a slow start, things are picking up. Last Friday, March 12, was the last day to file legislation, and this week committees are currently scheduling hearings for legislation.

I will be in Ways and Means Committee Hearings at 10 am on Mondays, and Business and Industry Committee Hearings at 8 am on Tuesdays.

To watch committees or the house floor live, go to <https://house.texas.gov/video-audio>

## Coauthored Legislation

Our team has been hard at work this session. Besides filing 41 pieces of legislation this session, we worked to coauthor additional bills over the past weeks. As mentioned previously, we coauthored House Bill 1246 regarding public school finance and broadband expansion with House Bill 5. House Bill 5 would create a broadband development plan to expand broadband for rural Texas.

House Bill 1246 would change the way schools are funded using student enrollment instead of student attendance. Schools' annual budgets are based on enrollment and schools must seek additional resources if some students do not attend regularly.

On Wednesday, March 10, we coauthored a pro-life bill, House Bill 1280, along with 32 other Representatives. House Bill 1280, known as the Human Life Protection Act, is intended to enact a complete ban on abortion upon a Supreme Court Decision that reverses existing precedent, *Roe v. Wade* and *Planned Parenthood v. Casey*, that prevents states from banning abortion. Ten states have passed similar legislation.

## Thomas Nipper Memorial Highway Ceremony

On Wednesday, the family of the late Texas Department of Public Safety Senior Trooper Thomas Nipper, friends, neighbors and DPS officers honored his service with the official dedication of a portion of IH-35 between mile markers 294-297 as the Trooper Tom Nipper Memorial Highway.

Trooper Nipper was struck and killed by a truck traveling on IH-35 on November 4, 2018, while conducting a traffic stop. He was a 43 year law enforcement veteran. He and his family lived in Morgan's Point Resort, Texas.

The Trooper Tom Nipper Memorial Highway was created by the 86th Texas Legislature commemorating his service. The family was recognized in the House chambers when House Resolution 1468 was passed in 2019.

Funds were raised locally to pay for the signage erected by TXDOT. Wednesday's ceremony was the unveiling of the Southbound and Northbound signs.



## Our Bills Receiving Hearings

The first of our bills to receive hearings are two of our property tax bills, House Bill 535 and House Bill 988.

House Bill 535 helps elderly, disabled, or disabled veterans regarding the collection of ad valorem taxes on their homestead. This bill would lower their interest rate on deferred or abated tax.

House Bill 988 equips property owners with recourse in the event of a procedural violation while protesting their property value.

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## Belton Chamber Meeting



Earlier this month, we held our monthly meeting with the Belton Chamber. We discussed one of our joint authored bills, House Bill 1246, along with property tax issues. Representative Gina Hinojosa (D-Austin) joined us to discuss public education and Tax Consultant Ray Head spoke about property taxes.

We hold monthly forums on the first Monday each month in Temple, and the second Monday of each month in Belton.

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## Next Steps on ERCOT & The Storm

Seven bills came out of the joint committee for State Affairs and Energy Resources. Proposals included;

- weatherizing our infrastructure for extreme weather,
- creating a 'statewide alert system' for impending extreme events
- improving communication between state agencies to better coordinate during disasters.

Reforms were also proposed to change how the Electric Reliability Council of Texas (ERCOT) is governed. Other proposals included banning variable-rate electricity pricing plans.