



# The Capitol Ledger

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**Want to schedule a meeting?**

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## A Strong Close to Session

The legislative session will end at midnight, May 31. This has been a very productive session with the passing of a balanced budget, property tax payer friendly initiatives, the Texas Heartbeat Act, Election Integrity Protection Act, and the Bail Reform Act, to name a few. Schools will have alternatives to STAAR testing, protestors who block emergency vehicles may now be prosecuted, Texas has implemented a statewide homeless camping ban and increased penalties for cities that defund law enforcement. Locally, Bell County will add a district court next year, Baylor Scott and White may join Managed Care Organizations to offer expanded Medicaid options in Central Texas and, Bell County may expand the jail and offer referendums on the ballot.

## Major Pro-Life & Election Legislation

Supporting Pro-Life initiatives is a priority of my legislative service. I returned to the Texas Legislature in 2017, becoming one of many Republican Pro-Life advocates co-authoring the legislature's pro-life agenda each legislative session. Senate Bill 8, the most important pro-life bill of this session, was signed by the Governor Thursday, known as the Heartbeat Bill. House Bill 1280, known as the Time for the Human Life protection act, creates a complete ban on abortion that will go into effect when the Supreme Court reverses or modifies Roe V. Wade.

Senate Bill 7 makes it easier to vote and harder to commit fraud. In addition, Senate Bill 7:

- Secures Voter Registration
- Secures voting by mail
- Prevents fraud
- Bolsters transparency
- Helps Account for Accurate and Fast Counting

## Baylor Scott & White Plans for Medicaid Recipients

Supported by Baylor Scott and White, House Bill 3662 is a local bill that extends current protections in Central Texas by ensuring that the Scott and White Health Plan is offered to more Medicaid recipients by allowing the Texas Health and Human Services Commission to contract with Managed Care Organizations, like Baylor Scott and White, to provide services. House Bill 3662 is a landmark piece of legislation for Central Texas because the area is predominately rural and lacks a tax base large enough to create a public healthcare system as seen in major Cities around Texas. Central Texas does, however, have Baylor Scott and White as an anchor for the region's healthcare infrastructure. I was a Joint Author of this legislation.



This bill only effects the Central Texas Medicaid region, and does not exclude other plans from participating with the program. This protection will promote competition and choice for Medicaid patients by ensuring more access to high quality healthcare for those in the region. If passed by the Senate, and signed into law by the Governor, it will take effect on September 1, 2021

## Police Week in Temple and the Governor's Mansion

I want to extend a thank you to the Temple Police Department who hosted the 2021 Bell County Peace Officer Memorial this past week. We honor the men and women LEOs who lost their lives serving our community.



On Wednesday, Governor Greg Abbott announced that the Texas Governor's Mansion will be lit blue on May 12 through Saturday, May 15 in honor of National Police Week. Governor Abbott has also declared the week of May 9-15 as Peace Officers Memorial Week in Texas.

## New MUD Formed & Other Local Shine Bills

The River Farm Municipal Utility District No. 1 in Belton was created last Friday. It provides for the creation of a new development west of Interstate 35 and along the Lampasas River.

House Bill 532 was also finally passed on Saturday, March 8 designating the Deputy Sherriff John Rhoden Memorial Highway along State Highway Loop 121 in Belton.

Other local bills for Bell County included House Bill 3114, regarding rules and procedures for jail expansion. House Bill 3690 was also passed effecting Morgan's Point Resort municipal elections for their City Council members.

The Texas House also passed House Bill 692, which I authored. House Bill 692 establishes fair standards for the practice of withholding and payment of retainage for public works construction contracts. Currently, it is not uncommon to have situations where retainage on construction projects are held in excessive amounts, or for an excessive period of time resulting in situations where contractors must enter into prolonged negotiations to be paid for work that has been completed

## Creation of the 478th Judicial District in Bell County

House Bill 3774 creates various judicial districts around the State of Texas. For Bell County residents, HB 3774 creates the 478th Judicial District, adding a new Judicial District to Bell County. Currently, Bell County is served by the 27th, 146th, 169th, 264th and 426th judicial districts. House Bill 3774 will add a concurrent jurisdiction with the creation of the 478th district.

We were glad to have the support of Local Administrative Judge Gordon G. Adams who recently stated. "Despite a growing population and increasing caseloads, we have not had a new district court since 2007. This new district court will allow us to better serve the citizens of Bell County" - District Judge, Gordon G. Adams.

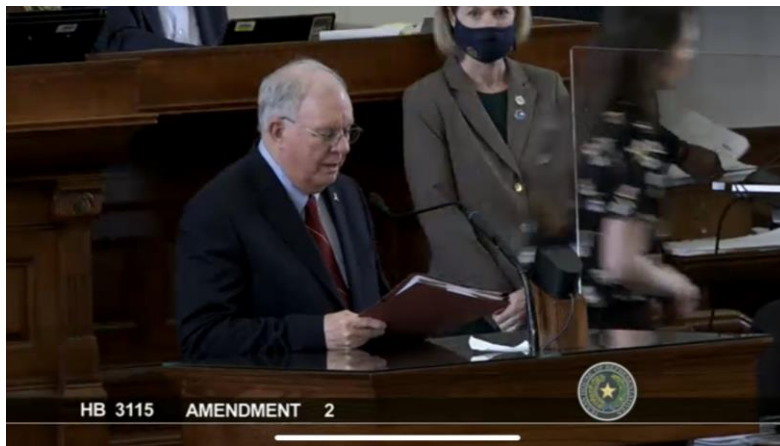


House Bill 3774 will take effect on September 1, 2021. The next steps for House Bill 3774 is to be signed into law by Governor Abbott.

## Property Tax, Ad Valorem Taxes & Other Property Related Shine Legislation

Every session, our office works on various property tax related issues. Many of these issues are complex and important. Below is a brief summary of what the legislation does. Our office is always happy to explain bills in more detail.

House Bill 3115, our 'Homestead Certainty' bill was passed on May 10, relating to the system for appraising property for ad valorem tax purposes. The Texas Constitution protects a person's homestead from being foreclosed on by a judgement lien. However, there can be difficulty in identifying what land is a person's homestead and whether a judgement lien attaches against the property. House Bill 3115 creates a limited period of time in which parties with an interest in the transaction can rely on the affidavit with certainty.



House Bill 1241 is a clean up bill from last session's House Bill 347, and was passed on May 10. It simply allows a city to bring in property to be annexed at the request of a landowner through various processes involving a right-of-way. It would empower a landowner to seek annexation by a city on the landowners own terms, and does not in any way grant authority to annex private property without consent.

House Bill 2014 and HB 988 address procedural issues associated with taxpayers and the appraisal district regarding their rights and ability to participate in the protest process. These initiatives address ongoing issues and problems with the state's property tax system such as inefficiencies, a lack of accountability and inaccessible information. Giving taxpayers more tools in the tool box to assist them in securing a property valuation that best reflects an equal and uniform appraisal valuation.

HB 3833 would limit additional taxes imposed on land appraised as recreational, park, or scenic land; public access airport property; or restricted-use timber for which the use of land changed or that was no longer subject to a deed restriction. Additional taxes could be imposed only on the preceding three tax years, plus interest at an annual rate of 5 percent. As the joint author I successfully amended the bill to eliminate the interest rate entirely. Property owners should not have to pay interest or a penalty on money they have not received.