



Lalani's Legislative Letter

Volume 2023 Issue 4

Greetings from your Texas Capitol!

It's been another intense week in the 88th Legislative Session. Legislative committees are really getting down to the nuts and bolts of our job, as we gather information and explore the challenges and opportunities confronting Texas. Next week, we will begin submitting hearing requests on specific legislation.

At the same time, it has been a week of many observances and celebrations that are important to my constituents. These include the beginning of Ramadan and the continuation of Lent, as well as the occasions of Nowruz and the Spring Equinox. This has been a powerful reminder how fortunate I am to serve a district as strong in its diversity as HD 76. It is because of that diversity that I was invited to Washington DC not once but twice this week: the first time to represent our district at the White House Nowruz celebration hosted by President and Mrs. Biden, and the second time to share the State of Texas proclamation recognizing Pakistan Day with Pakistan's Ambassador to the United States.

As I have traveled, I have shared this message several times, and I wanted to share it with you now. The fresh start for each of us on Nowruz and the personal growth that takes place over the month of Ramadan, have allowed me to reflect on the tenet of "service to others." There are two types of service one can perform – **service of CONVENIENCE** or **service of CONVICTION**. We all perform acts of service for others, but many of us fall under the category of service of convenience. We serve when we want to, how we want to and when it's convenient for us. I challenge each of you (and myself) to elevate those acts to service of conviction, meaning we serve whenever and wherever there is a need.

While fasting is a common practice across faith traditions around the world, the purposes of the fasts are similar - to sharpen our focus on personal contemplation and service to others activities which are already part of our daily lives. While these are activities are already part of so many of our lives, they assume special significance when performed during seasons of intentional fasting. I am inspired to know that at this moment, so many Texans of faith are on a spiritual journey focused on improving themselves and their communities.

There is still plenty of time for you to visit us in Austin to see your government at work. My office and I look forward to welcoming you.

Remember this is your Capitol. You are the most important part of what happens here. Come and see it, get involved, make your voice heard.

Ramadan Mubarak!

Blessings,

Representative Suleman Lalani, M.D.

Honorary Page Program

One of the great programs that the Texas Legislature has for young people to become involved in their state government is the Honorary Page Program. I recently had the privilege of having my son participate on the House floor with me. It is a great way for students ages 8-18 to see first hand how the Texas House of Representatives conducts business.



If you are interested in applying for this program, you must meet the following qualifications:

- be between the ages of 8-18
- live within the HD 76 boundaries (click [here](#) to see who represents you)

Other important information to note:

- Parents must provide a signed permission form
- Parents must provide transportation to and from Austin
- There is a dress code for the House floor - no jeans allowed.
 - Males: Coat and tie are **required**.
 - Females: Dresses or slack at an appropriate business length

If you are interested, please email my Chief of Staff, Jennifer Strobel at jennifer.strobel@house.texas.gov

Legislation Update

With committees about to begin scheduling hearings on specific legislation, I am focusing on the 53 bills and resolutions I have authored or co-authored. There are seven bills that I am working to

advance – legislation that either addresses critical issues confronting the state or that would make a significant difference in the lives of HD 76 residents.

- HB 12 extends Medicaid benefits to women for 12 months postpartum.
- HB 1144 creates a uniquely Texas approach to expanding healthcare access for Texans.
- HB 3124 would ban all forms of smoking and usage of tobacco products from Texas public higher education campuses.
- HB 3627 ensures Texas public higher education institutions post certain necessary information relating to sexual harassment and assault, and stalking.
- HB 3631 ensures Texas public higher education institutions familiarize incoming students not only with the mental health services offered by the institution but also the physical location at which those services are provided.
- HB 3633 conducts a study on the establishment of a Texas Workforce Commission training program related to artificial intelligence systems.
- HB 3986 supports the authority of a peace officer to apprehend an individual, and the authority of certain physicians and healthcare facilities to temporarily detain an individual, who is experiencing a mental health crisis in which they present a danger to themselves or others.
- HB 4682 ensures that the Texas Department of State Health Services prioritizes pregnant women and mothers who have given birth in the past year for their tobacco cessation program.
- HB 4762 provides legal protection for healthcare professionals engaging in necessary self-defense from a violent patient.

If you want to follow any of my legislation, please go to my House [website](#).

Committee Corner

Higher Education Committee. On Tuesday, I joined the other members of the House Higher Education Committee for dinner and a discussion of Texas higher education in 2023 with James Milliken, Chancellor of the University of Texas System. The UT System is the largest in Texas, it serves almost a quarter of a million students through 13 institutions in every region of Texas, including three in the greater Houston area. It was very helpful for us to get Chancellor Milliken’s insights into the state of the UT System and Texas higher education more broadly.



I look forward to updating you on developments from my other committees–Natural Resources and Resolutions Calendars.

Capitol Happenings

The Speaker's Chair. This week, I had the opportunity to run the gavel from the House Chamber's front microphone when the Speaker had to step away. While enjoyable, this opportunity also serves an important function. As legislators, we are just one of 150 representatives, each with a handful of committee assignments. That means we are typically focused on our small part of the overall process. Running the gavel on the floor gives us each firsthand experience with how all those parts fit together, helping us become stronger legislators.



HR 532: Ramadan Resolution. On Wednesday, I had the great honor of offering, on the House floor, House Resolution 532 (HR 532) recognizing the importance of the Month of Ramadan and its meaning to Texas Muslims. It was exciting to have the opportunity to share this moment with the many Texas Muslims who came for the event as well as to explain Ramadan's meaning and importance to others in attendance. Over the next month, I will be joining nearly half a million other Texans in observing this time for fasting, prayer, contemplation, and service to others.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
 March 22, 2023
 Contact: Jennifer Strobel
 (737) 333-8645

****MEDIA ADVISORY****

**Representative Lalani's Statement on the
 Passage of House Resolution 532**

AUSTIN, TX – Representative Suleman Lalani, M.D. (D-Sugar Land) offered House Resolution 532, marking the beginning of the month of Ramadan this morning in the Texas House of Representatives. The resolution passed unanimously and a motion was made to add all members names in support, which also passed.

The ninth month of the Islamic calendar year, Ramadan is a time when Muslims reinforce their spiritual beliefs by fasting, worshipping, reading the Quran, practicing self-discipline, and helping the less fortunate; in 2023, Ramadan is beginning on March 22 with the expected appearance of the crescent moon and lasts for the remainder of the lunar month;

"In the coming days and weeks, nearly half a million Texas Muslims will observe the Holy Month of Ramadan. Today after sunset when we sight the new moon the month of Ramadan will begin, and tomorrow will be the first fasting. It is a physical reminder that we will not only be abstaining from food and conducting rituals and prayers, but we are also elevating our selves spiritually"

The month of Ramadan has much in common with the Jewish observance of Yom Kippur and the Christian season of Lent. This year, Ramadan overlaps with Lent, which observes very similar rituals for a very similar purpose. It is inspiring to know that, at this moment, so many Texans of faith are on a spiritual journey focused on improving themselves and their communities."

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Representative Suleman Lalani, M.D. is currently serving his first term in the Texas Legislature. He has been practicing medicine in Fort Bend and surrounding counties for over 18 years. Representative Lalani and his wife are raising their family in Sugar Land. He is the only primary care physician currently serving in the Texas Legislature and is one of the first two Muslims to ever take the oath of office in the Texas Legislature. Representative Lalani is a founding member of the AAPI Caucus and serves on the House Committee on Higher Education, Natural Resources and Revolutions Calendar.

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HR 596: Nowruz Resolution. Over the last two weeks, I have also filed House Resolution 596 (HR 596), recognizing March 21 as Nowruz, the Persian New Year. Nowruz, which marks the incoming year and coincides with the equinox and return of spring, has been celebrated for at least 2,500 years. It was a great pleasure to wish the more than 100,000 Texans of Persian origin, including thousands in Fort Bend County, a Happy Nowruz.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
 March 21, 2023
 Contact: Jennifer Strobel
 (737) 333-8645

****MEDIA ADVISORY****

Statement on Nowruz

AUSTIN, TX – Today, March 21, 2023 marks the observance of Nowruz – an ancient Persian festival which celebrates the first day of Spring. As nearly half a million Texans celebrate Nowruz, Representative Suleman Lalani, M.D. (D-Sugar Land) marked the occasion by offering a resolution on the House floor to commemorate the day.

On the resolution, he said, *"Today, as we celebrate the holiday of Nowruz, we join millions of people around the world in honoring this ancient and important tradition. Nowruz marks the start of the Persian New Year and the arrival of spring, a time for renewal, new beginnings, and hope. It is a time to reflect on the values of peace, harmony, and respect for nature, which are central to the holiday's traditions and practices. I am honored to recognize the diversity of Texas in the House with the House Resolution 596."*

In addition to the formal recognition in the Texas Legislature, Rep. Lalani was honored to be a guest at the first official White House observance of Nowruz. He joined President and First Lady Biden as well as others to gather at the Harb-Sin table to welcome the beginning of spring.

"I was honored to represent Texas House District 76 at the White House. There I was not only Representative Lalani, but also a proud resident of Sugar Land. I was there representing the goodness and diversity of our district, for Nowruz has its roots not only in the changing of the seasons, but in its celebration of diversity and unity and in bringing together people of different ethnicities, religions, and cultures to share in the joy and hope of the new year."

Representative Lalani extends this invitation to all Texans. *"As we celebrate Nowruz this year, let us renew our commitment to building a world that is more just, peaceful, and inclusive, where all people can live with dignity and respect. Let us remember that, even in challenging times, we can find hope and renewal by coming together and celebrating our shared humanity. Nowruz Mabarak, to all!"*

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HR 581: Pakistan Day Recognition: As a Texan of Pakistani origin, it was an honor to author House Resolution (HR 581) commemorating Pakistan Day on March 23, 2023. The day celebrates the adoption of the Lahore Resolution by the Muslim League at the Minar-e-Pakistan (lit. Pakistan Tower) which called for the creation of an independent sovereign state derived from the provinces with Muslim majorities located in the North-West and East of British India (excluding autonomous princely States) on 23 March 1940.

Later, I had the honor of presenting our Resolution to Pakistan's Ambassador to the United States, H.E. Masood Khan at the Pakistani Embassy in Washington D.C.

South Asians and Pakistanis are part of a fast-growing demographic that is increasingly important for Texas. It was an historic moment for over 80,000 thousand Texans of Pakistani descent living here and millions of Pakistanis across the globe that Pakistan Day was observed in the Texas Legislature.



Advocacy at the Capitol

AAPI/Desi Day of Action. This was the first year of AAPI/Desi Day of Action at the State Capitol. For the largest component of Texas' 1.9 million strong Asian American & Pacific Islander community (the fastest growing minority group in Texas), AAPI/Desi Day of Action is an event whose time has come. At the AAPI/Desi Day of Action press conference, I talked about the history of South Asians in Texas as well as our intention to create an Asian American & Pacific Islander legislative caucus. I also discussed HB 3092, which I've authored to require the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality to translate parts of their website into Texas' five most spoken languages other than English and Spanish. Those five languages are Arabic, Mandarin, Hindi, Tagalog, and Urdu.



Pakistani Day of Action. Our office took part in the first Pakistani Day of Action at the Capitol. We were joined by Pakistani Texans from all over Texas in advocating and celebrating the rich history, culture, and contributions we make.



Exchange Club Resolution. I have been involved with the Exchange Club in Fort Bend County for years. The mission of the National Exchange Club is to inspire communities to become better places to live through the core values of family, community, and country, as well as to build a strong America, safe communities, and unified people through advocacy and service. I was honored to present House Resolution 289 recognizing the community contributions of the National Exchange Club and the Texas Louisiana Gulf Coast District Club.





First Tuesday with the Texas Medical Association. On March 7th, I had the privilege of speaking to physician advocates at the start of Texas Medical Association’s First Tuesday Advocacy Day. I met with a delegation of physicians from the Texas Medical Association. I discussed several bills I have authored, as a physician, to ensure Texas healthcare legislation remains focused on patient wellness and respects the physician-patient relationship, and I also discussed the importance of physician advocacy.



The 88th Legislature includes seven healthcare professionals (two physicians in the Senate, three physicians in the House, and two nurses in the House). Advocacy by physicians themselves is essential for amplifying our message of sound healthcare policy for Texas. As the only internist among those

seven elected healthcare professionals, I see myself as having a special responsibility to keep an eye on the big picture of Texas healthcare legislation, just as it is my responsibility to keep an eye on the big picture of the health of patients who come into my office.

In Our District

Houston Institute of Global Health Graduation. Texas needs more healthcare professionals. As a physician seeking to address this critical shortage and a member of the House Higher Education Committee, it was wonderful to speak with graduates of the Houston Institute of Global Health. HIGH, and schools like it all around Texas, are doing their part to ensure our state has the trained and motivated healthcare professionals it needs. I enjoyed the opportunity to speak with these bright, enthusiastic young people about my experiences in healthcare, the journey they are beginning, and encouraging them to take their service to the next level by becoming advocates for sound healthcare policy. I am excited these young people will soon be out there taking care of Texans.



Asia Society of Texas. I also had the opportunity to participate in “*The Journeys of Muslim Americans in Public Service,*” a program organized by the Asia Society of Texas. Recent years have seen an unprecedented number of Muslim Americans elected to public service, including my election as one

of the first two Muslims to serve in the Texas House of Representatives. Together with my friend, Rabeea Collier, Judge of the 113th District Court, we discussed what it means to be a Muslim elected official in 2023 and how faith shapes our public service as well as the personal and professional journeys that got us here.



Out and About

Gee Family Lunar New Year Celebration.



Nepalese Association of Houston Holi Celebration.



Hosting the Portuguese Ambassador. (pictured left to right Portugal Honorary Consul Jose Ivo, Portugal Secretary of State for International Trade and Foreign Investment Bernardo Ivo Cruz, and Ambassador of Portugal to the United States Francisco Duarte Lopes.



How to Reach Us

 <p>TEXAS HOUSE of REPRESENTATIVES</p> <p>Dr. Suleman Lalani State Representative, District 76</p> <h2>Office Contacts</h2> <p>Jennifer Strobel Chief of Staff jennifer.strobel@house.texas.gov</p> <p>Elliot Ross Legislative Director elliott.ross@house.texas.gov</p> <p>Capitol Office Room Number EL512</p> <p>Capitol Office Phone (512) 463-0596</p> <p>Capitol Office Email district76.lalani@house.texas.gov</p> <p><small>Capitol Office: P.O. Box 2910 • Austin, Texas 78768-2910 • phone (512) 463-0596 SULEMAN.LALANI@HOUSE.TEXAS.GOV</small></p>	<h3>This week at the Capitol</h3> <p>Saturday, 05/06/2023 House in Session at 9:00am</p> <p>Monday, 05/08/2023 Higher Education Committee at 8:00am House in Session at 10:00am</p> <p>Tuesday, 05/09/2023 Asian American Day at the Capitol Natural Resources Committee at 8:00am House in Session at 9:00am</p> <p>Wednesday, 05/10/2023 BAPS Celebration of Selfless Service at the Capitol House in Session at 10:00am</p> <p>Thursday, 05/11/2023 World War II Veterans Day at the Capitol House in Session at 10:00am</p> <p>Friday, 05/12/2023 House in Session at 9:00am</p>
<h3>Follow us!</h3> <p> @LalaniTX</p> <p> @DoctorLalani</p> <p>Tune in to watch the Committees or House Floor live this week.</p> <p>https://house.texas.gov/video-audio/</p>	

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