



STATE REPRESENTATIVE
DAVID L. COOK

District 96 Newsletter

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Committees

- Calendars
- Criminal Jurisprudence,
Vice Chair
- Juvenile Justice &
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STATE OF TEXAS
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES



Dear Friends and Neighbors,

The Texas Legislature has officially adjourned Sine Die following the 88th Regular Session and Governor Abbott has called several Special Sessions in 2023! I am proud to share this newsletter with you, which details many of our important victories that we accomplished for you.

When the Legislature convened in January, the state had a record-breaking amount of general revenue available - \$188.23 Billion, to be exact. This can be attributed to several factors such as the strength of the Texas economy, inflation due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and volatility in severance (oil and gas) tax collections due to the current global geopolitical climate and the war in Ukraine. However, at the end of the day, this budget surplus is YOUR taxpayer money. That's why I was proud to support **SB 2 & 3** during the Second Special Session, which returns **\$17.6 Billion in Property Tax Relief to Taxpayers** (the **LARGEST** Tax Cut in Texas History)!

We passed a fiscally conservative budget totaling \$144.13 Billion for the 2024-2025 biennium, which remains under the Constitutional spending limit of population and inflation. The budget addressed many important items including:

- ★ \$5.1 Billion for Border Security (our largest investment in state history);
- ★ \$9.3 Billion to address infrastructure needs;
- ★ \$42.9 Billion for Public Health Funding; and
- ★ \$50.4 Billion to fully-fund Public Education.

This session, I was appointed by Speaker Phelan to serve on the **House Criminal Jurisprudence Committee** as *Vice Chairman* and appointed to serve as a member of the **House Juvenile Justice & Family Issues** and **House Calendars Committees**. The House Criminal Jurisprudence Committee considered legislation related to criminal law, probation, parole, and criminal procedures in our state's criminal courts. The House Juvenile Justice & Family Issues Committee considered legislation related to gang violence, youth correctional and rehabilitation facilities, criminal procedure related to juveniles in our criminal courts, and civil procedure in our family courts. The House Calendars Committee, a powerful procedural committee, sets the agenda for the legislative body by taking into account the priorities of the House as a whole and individual members.

Just a Bill, Sitting on Capitol Hill! This session, 8,046 bills were filed in the House and Senate. As you may remember from the Schoolhouse Rock episode, a bill must jump through many hurdles to become a law. A bill must be filed in either the House or Senate, be approved by a specific committee within its originating chamber, be adopted by the full membership of that chamber, and then repeat it all over again in the other Chamber! With 1,169 bills signed by Governor Abbott, the 88th Legislative Session had a bill passage rate of only 14.5%.

I am proud to share that I introduced 76 bills, passed 41 bills successfully out of the Texas House, and sent 25 total bills to the Governor's desk for signature... a bill passage rate of 33%!

While it's nice to be back home in our Community, the Legislature has been busy in Special Sessions this year to address many important issues for our State. If you would like to share your thoughts on legislation, always please feel free to send an email to the address above or give us a call. Constituent input in the legislation process is critical to making informed decisions for our Community.

It is the honor of a lifetime to represent you in the Texas House. Please feel free to contact me if you are ever in need of assistance. Best regards.

Sincerely,

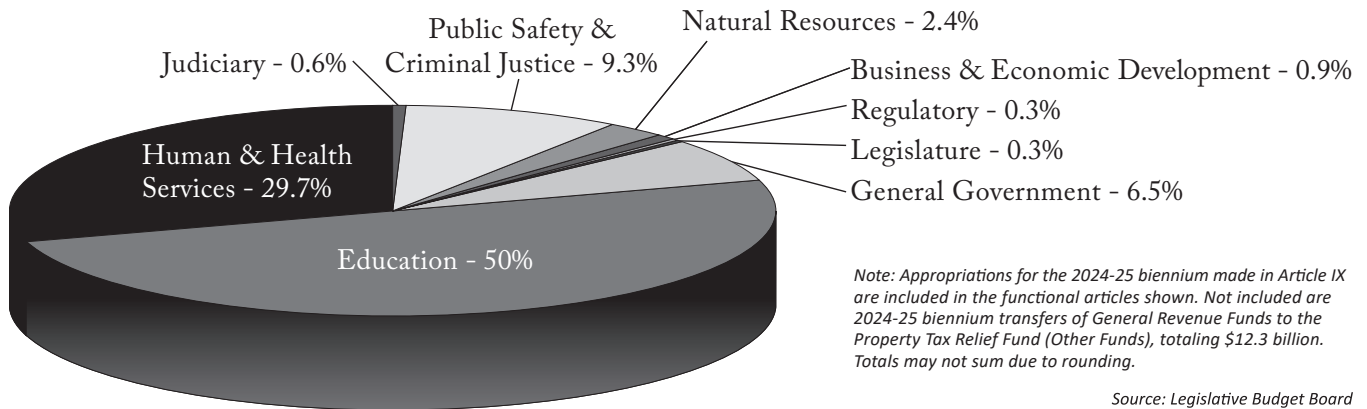
Representative David L. Cook
State Representative
House District 96



STATE BUDGET

2024-25 General Revenue Funds

Total: \$144.13 billion



The 2024-2025 Budget totaled **\$144.13 Billion** for the 2024-2025 biennium, which remains under the Constitutional spending limit of population and inflation. Highlights of the state budget include:

- ★ \$17.6 Billion to **Property Tax Relief** (the highest in state history), including \$12.3 Billion in transfers to the Property Tax Relief Fund.
- ★ An additional \$5 Billion to fully-fund **Public Education** and an increase of \$3.2 Billion to the Foundation School Program (which is the primary source of state funding for public education).
- ★ An increase of \$1.4 Billion for **School Safety**, including grants to school districts and charter schools.
- ★ \$1.6 Billion for a **13th Check** and \$3.4 Billion for a **Cost-of-Living Adjustment (COLA)** for Retired Teachers. Additionally, \$588.5 Million was appropriated to keep TRS health insurance premiums below 10% each year for TRS Active-Care participants.
- ★ \$5.1 Billion for **Border Security** and \$330 Million for grant programs to provide financial assistance to qualified sheriff, constable, and prosecutor’s offices in rural counties.
- ★ \$5 Billion for the **Texas Energy Fund** to secure our electrical grid and construct, maintain, and modernize dispatchable (meaning, able to be deployed during severe weather emergencies) electric generating facilities.
- ★ \$1.5 Billion for **Broadband Development** to provide access to high-speed internet for all Texans.
- ★ \$1 Billion for the **Texas Water Fund** to shore up our state’s water resources.
- ★ A \$5 Billion increase to **Transportation** for highway planning and design, right-of-way acquisition, and construction/maintenance of roads.
- ★ \$1 Billion for the **Centennial Parks Conservation Fund** to establish and maintain state parks.
- ★ \$625 Million for the **Flood Infrastructure Fund** at the Texas Water Development Board (TWDB).

PROPERTY TAX RELIEF

The government doesn’t own your home – you do! Unfortunately, the most frequent concern I hear from constituents is that they are being taxed out of their homes. To me, that’s just not right. During the second called special session, I was proud to support the **LARGEST** property tax cut in Texas history – totaling a record \$17.6 Billion! Additionally, our property tax relief bills, **SB 2** and **3**, raised the homestead exemption on school property taxes from \$40,000 to \$100,000, created a 3-year 20% appraisal cap pilot program for non-homesteaded property, and provided for savings on franchise taxes for approximately 67,000 small to medium-sized businesses.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

You don’t become the ninth (soon to be eighth) largest economy in the world without strong economic policies. **HB 5**, the “*Texas Jobs, Energy, Technology, & Innovation (JETI) Act*,” overhauled the previous “Chapter 313” program and creates an innovative, transparent economic development program to attract jobs, businesses, and economic development to our state through property tax abatements. **HB 5012** created the Mansfield Qualified Hotel Project (QHP), which will allow the City of Mansfield to build a Convention Center, Hotel, & Entertainment District and use sales and hotel taxes to fund construction. To address current workforce shortages, **HB 8** improved community college and workforce development funding formulas, **HB 1859** created more paid apprenticeship opportunities through an alternative path to state licensure, and **HB 3287** expanded funding to Texas State Technical College to fund job creation technical education (mechanics, plumbers, electricians, etc.) programs.

PUBLIC SAFETY & BORDER SECURITY

If we can learn anything from cities like San Francisco and Portland, it's that the rule of law *must* be respected in Texas. I was proud to author **HB 17**, which allows Texas residents to remove district attorneys who adopt or implement policies of refusing to prosecute crimes under current law. *This bill was a top priority for Governor Abbott, Lt. Governor Patrick, & Speaker Phelan and I was honored to carry this critical public safety legislation.* Fentanyl is wreaking havoc in our community, especially amongst our young people. **HB 6** increases the criminal penalty for manufacturing or delivering the lethal drug, fentanyl, and allows for fentanyl poisonings to be prosecuted as murder. We must address the crisis at Texas' southern border. In addition to \$5.1 Billion appropriated for border security (our largest investment in state history), **SB 1403** authorizes the Governor to execute an interstate border security compact, **SB 1133** compensates landowners up to \$75,000 for property damage caused by illegal immigration, and **SB 1900** designates drug cartels as foreign terrorist organizations.

PUBLIC EDUCATION & SCHOOL SAFETY

The Legislature maintained its commitment to retired teachers, to promote transparency for parents in relation to their child's education, to ensure our schools are safe, and to fully-fund public education. In addition to \$5 Billion new dollars appropriated to public education in our state's budget, **SB 10** provided for a cost-of-living adjustment for retired teacher pensions. **HB 1605** improved access to curriculum for parents, creates an opt-in program for school districts to use standardized materials, and establishes a mechanism for parents to trigger an audit of curriculum rigor. No child, teacher, or staff member should feel unsafe in our public schools – **HB 3** required an armed security guard during school hours, required mental health first aid training for teachers, and appropriated \$15,000 to each campus to shore up safety and security measures. Additionally, **HB 669** required installation of silent panic buttons in every Texas classroom.



Rep. Cook deliberating legislation on the House floor.



Rep. Cook laying out HB 17 on the House Floor.

FAMILY VALUES

Parents should be empowered to protect their children from materials which go against their values. **HB 18**, the "Securing Children Online through Parental Empowerment (SCOPE) Act" required parental consent and control over social media usage, **HB 900**, the "READER Act," kept sexually explicit books out of our public schools, and **SB 12** restricted drag shows to adults-only. Additionally, **SB 14** prohibited gender transitioning, reassignment, or dysphoria procedures or treatments on minors and **SB 15** required collegiate athletes to compete in intercollegiate athletic competitions based on their biological sex.

PUBLIC HEALTH

Maintaining a healthy population is vital to our economy. The 88th Legislature made critical investment in our state's healthcare and insurance. **HB 12** extended Medicaid eligibility to economically disadvantaged new mothers for the first twelve months postpartum and **SB 379** exempts baby and feminine hygiene products from state sales tax. **HB 1337** eliminated the use of "step therapy" by insurance companies, which requires patients to undergo a series of failed treatments before accessing healthcare recommended by their physician. **HB 25** increased access and affordability to common prescription drugs and **SB 490** required medical providers to send an itemized bill to patients before attempting to collect payment.

INFRASTRUCTURE

The future of our State depends on infrastructure developments made now. **SB 2627** created the Texas Energy Fund to secure our electrical grid, **HB 9** created the Broadband Infrastructure Fund to provide affordable and universal access to high-speed internet for all Texans, **SB 28** created the Texas Water Fund to shore up our state's water resources, and **Propositions 1 & 7** funding for the State Highway Fund were continued to provide for highway construction and maintenance. Finally, **HB 718** banned the use of temporary (often fraudulent) paper tags, **HB 3297** removed the arduous state requirement for yearly safety inspections for non-commercial vehicles, and **SB 505** required electric vehicle owners to replace lost gas tax revenue through a flat registration fee to fund lost road construction and repair dollars.

★ LEGISLATION PASSED INTO LAW IN THE 88TH SESSION ★

LEGISLATION AUTHORED OR SPONSORED BY REPRESENTATIVE COOK	
HB 17	Reins in district attorneys who adopt or implement policies of refusing to prosecute crimes under current law.
HB 659	Permits veterans who are awarded the Commendation Medal to receive specialty license plates.
HB 660	Protects family and domestic violence victims by strengthening protective order administrative requirements.
HB 969	Creates a \$500 penalty for violation of a court-ordered child custody order.
HB 1547	Clarifies language related to claims for reimbursement between marital estates.
HB 1589	Enhances the penalty for family violence assault if the defendant has prior bond or protective order violation.
HB 1730	Increases the penalty for individuals who commit repeat offenses of indecent exposure.
HB 1819	Repeals the ability to adopt or enforce juvenile curfew ordinances statewide.
HB 1989	Strengthens our criminal justice system by waiving fees for out-of-state criminal justice agencies.
HB 2070	Clarifies language related to continuation of a spousal maintenance order.
HB 2671	Prohibits courts from postponing a temporary order hearing for more than thirty days.
HB 2961	Provides for a definition of “conspiracy” in relation to “law of parties” criminal cases.
HB 2969	Prohibits DFPS or adoption agencies from adopting a maximum age policy for prospective adoptive parents.
HB 3474	Clarifies jurisdictional duties for the Tarrant County Criminal Courts and Tarrant County District Clerk.
HB 3929	Permits the adoption of the Uniform Interstate Depositions and Discovery Act by the Supreme Court of Texas.
HB 5012	Permits Mansfield to collect hotel and sales taxes to fund construction of a convention center and hotel project.
HB 5310	Creates Tarrant County Municipal Utility District #2 to provide utilities for residential development.
HCR 45	Redesignates the City of Mansfield as the Official Pickle Capital of Texas until 2033.
SB 718	Permits parents falsely accused of child neglect to receive additional periods of child possession back.
SB 1516	Clarifies court procedures related to an application for a writ of habeas corpus.
SB 1653	Strengthens law enforcement’s ability to prosecute bad actors for promotion of prostitution.
SB 2120	Permits indigent parents to be represented by legal counsel in lawsuits filed by DFPS.
SB 2144	Creates the Advanced Air Mobility Advisory Committee to study autonomous, unmanned aircraft.

LEGISLATION JOINT AUTHORED OR CO-SPONSORED BY REPRESENTATIVE COOK	
HB 6	Increases penalties for making or selling fentanyl and allows fentanyl poisonings to be prosecuted as murder.
HB 55	Increases penalties for physicians who commit repeat offenses of indecent assault when providing medical care.
HB 90	The “Bishop Evans” Act – Improves workers’ compensation and death benefits for service members’ families.
HB 198	Removes onerous inspection requirements for travel trailer owners who conduct self-inspections.
HB 219	Requires mortgage holders to release a lien when a loan is paid off by the mortgagor.
HB 456	Grants tax-exempt status to buildings, property, land, and buildings owned by charitable organizations.
HB 1163	Increases criminal penalties for boating while intoxicated with a child passenger.
HB 1696	Establishes transparency and patient choice for optometry in-network and out-of-network benefits.
HB 1825	Makes the Arlington ISD Center for Visual and Performing Arts more competitive for event contracts.
HB 1959	Requires school districts allow the children of peace officers to transfer schools if they are in harm’s way.
HB 2019	Removes the statute of limitations for burglary with intent to commit sexual assault if rape kit testing is delayed.
HB 2060	Establishes the Artificial Intelligence Advisory Council to study the use of AI systems by state agencies.
HB 2371	Permits the City of Arlington to sell open burial plots in abandoned portions of Arlington Cemetery.
HB 2468	Amends injured employee lifetime income benefits under the workers’ compensation system.
HB 2850	Amends current law related to discovery procedures for civil actions brought under the Family Code.
HB 3485	Amends current law related to a contractor’s or subcontractor’s right to elect not to proceed with a contract.
HB 3553	Enhances the criminal penalty for human trafficking on or near college campuses.
HB 3554	Enhances the criminal penalty for human trafficking on or near shelters, community center, or childcare facilities.
HB 3956	Allows for expunction of DNA records upon an individual’s acquittal, dismissal, or grant of relief.
HB 4077	Requires Chief Appraisers to automatically apply residence homestead exemptions for eligible individuals.
HB 4337	Classifies official foreign documents as eligible for the offense of tampering with a governmental record.
HB 4520	Permits a teacher to have their license revoked for the sale, distribution, or display of harmful materials to minors.
HB 4797	Requires toll entities to treat toll roads during inclement weather in response to the I-35W Pileup in Feb. 2021.

★ LEGISLATION PASSED INTO LAW IN THE 88TH SESSION ★

LEGISLATION CO-AUTHORED BY REPRESENTATIVE COOK	
HB 3	Strengthens school safety through security guards, mental health training, & safety infrastructure improvements.
HB 4	Protects consumers by establishing guardrails for the collection, use, processing, & treatment of personal data.
HB 5	Creates an economic development program to attract jobs and investment to Texas.
HB 8	Realigns community college funding formulas to support addressing workforce and on-the-job training shortages.
HB 9	Creates the Broadband Infrastructure Fund to statewide broadband connectivity needs.
HB 12	Provides for twelve months of Medicaid coverage for economically disadvantaged new mothers.
HB 18	Protects children online by requiring parental consent and control over social media usage.
HB 19	Maintains Texas' commitment to pro-business policies by establishing a specialized business trial court.
HB 25	Allows state drug wholesalers to import safe, cost-effective prescription medications from Canada.
HB 44	Prevents provider discrimination against Medicaid or child health plan patients based on immunization status.
HB 63	Prevents frivolous and unfounded child abuse or neglect reports to CPS by individuals with malintent.
HB 584	Establishes an information technology credential program for state agencies to address workforce shortages.
HB 900	The "READER" Act – Prevents access to sexually-explicit materials in public schools.
HB 916	Allows women who already have a prescription for birth control to obtain up to a 12-month supply.
HB 968	Permits caregivers accused of child abuse to voluntarily remove themselves from the home instead of the child.
HB 1243	Restores the criminal penalty of the offense of illegal voting to a second-degree felony.
HB 1277	Permits pedestrians to utilize the left shoulder facing traffic if there is not a sidewalk or the sidewalk is not visible.
HB 1605	Increases access to high-quality instructional materials for students and promotes transparency for parents.
HB 1666	Regulates digital asset service providers' digital currency holdings to ensure consumer funds are protected.
HB 2127	Provides for consistency and predictability in relation to local regulations.
HB 3858	Authorizes law enforcement agencies to establish a mental health wellness program for peace officers.
SB 2 <i>(Special Session)</i>	Increases the property tax homestead exemption from \$40,000 to \$100,000 and provides for school district property tax rate compression totaling \$17.6 Billion in property tax relief.
SB 3 <i>(Special Session)</i>	Doubles the amount of total revenue exempt from the franchise tax from \$1.235 million to \$2.47 million, therefore removing 67,000 small to medium-sized businesses from paying the state franchise tax.
SB 12	Restricts sexually oriented performances to audiences 18 years or older.
SB 14	Prohibits gender transitioning, reassignment, or dysphoria procedures or treatments on minors.
SB 15	Requires collegiate athletes to compete in intercollegiate athletic competitions based on their biological sex.
SB 28	Creates the Texas Water Fund to shore up our state's water resources.
SB 379	Exempts baby products, feminine hygiene products, bandages, gauze pads, and medical tape from sales tax.
SB 490	Requires medical providers to send an itemized bill to patients before attempting to collect payment.
SB 833	Prohibits insurance companies from using environmental, social, or governance factors in coverage decisions.
SB 838	Strengthens school safety by requiring the purchase of silent panic buttons for every Texas classroom.
SB 840	Increases the penalty for assault of hospital personnel in response to the Dallas Methodist Hospital shooting.
SB 975	Requires individuals transitioning to a personal ID card to be provided a voter registration form.
HJR 2 <i>(Special Session)</i>	Amends the Texas Constitution to increase the property tax homestead exemption from \$40,000 to \$100,000, pending statewide voter approval.

DAVID L. COOK

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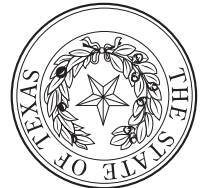
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DAVID L. COOK
STATE REPRESENTATIVE



HOW CAN WE HELP?

- ★ **State Agency Assistance** – Having trouble cutting through the bureaucratic red tape? Whether you are having issues renewing your driver's license, receiving unemployment insurance, applying for an occupation license, etc., please contact my office for assistance.
- ★ **Capitol Tour** – If you have plans to travel to Austin, my office can assist with setting up a tour of the Capitol. These tours cover the rich and extensive history behind the construction of our State's Capitol, including a tour of the Texas House and Senate chambers.
- ★ **Flag Requests** – Texas flags flown over the State Capitol make great gifts and are available for purchase. All flags are accompanied with a beautiful state certificate encompassing the seal of the Texas House of Representatives.
- ★ **Congratulatory Resolutions** – At no cost to you, my office is equipped to assist you in marking a special occasion by crafting an official proclamation issued by the Texas House of Representatives. Whether you are commemorating a birth, anniversary, retirement, or special occasion, please contact my office to learn more.
- ★ **Honorary Page Program** – During each legislative session, each House member may appoint up to 10 students to serve a half-day as a Page in the Texas House Chamber. The program is for students between the ages of 8-18. Page participants are tasked with various on the House floor and receive an official badge and commemorative photo. If you or someone you know is interested in serving as a Honorary Page, please contact my office to learn more.
- ★ **Meetings & Events** – If you would like to meet with face-to-face or have an event invitation, please contact me at david.cook@house.texas.gov.