



# LARRY TAYLOR



LEGISLATIVE REPORT

SENATE DISTRICT 11

FALL 2013

SENATE COMMITTEES  
 BUSINESS AND COMMERCE, VICE-CHAIR  
 EDUCATION  
 GOVERNMENT ORGANIZATION  
 HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES  
 INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS



CAPITOL OFFICE  
 P.O. Box 12068  
 AUSTIN, TEXAS 78711-2068  
 (512) 463-0111  
 FAX: (512) 475-3727

## SENATOR LARRY TAYLOR DISTRICT 11



*Dear Friends,*

*Thank you for the privilege and opportunity to represent you in the Texas Senate. My tenure serving Senate District 11 has gotten off to a successful start and I look forward to continuing the challenge. In this newsletter you'll find information about what the Texas Legislature accomplished during the 83rd Regular Session.*

*Public education was a top priority this session and the Senate Education Committee worked diligently to reform end-of-course exam requirements and graduation plans for Texas high school students and accomplished this through the passage of House Bill*

*5. We were also successful in helping to move public education into the 21st Century with expanded online learning opportunities. Tackling another difficult task, the Legislature developed a strategy to begin funding the state's water plan in an effort to secure an adequate water supply for Texas' future.*

*Since Hurricane Ike devastated the Texas Coast, reforming the Texas Windstorm Insurance Association (TWIA) has been key to my legislative agenda. I am proud to have passed Senate Bill 1702, which extends the WPI-8 Waiver Program and does away with the cumbersome Alternative Certification Program. I look forward to the opportunity, through either a special called session or during the 84th Regular Session, to continue my work to reform the management and funding of TWIA.*

*I hope you'll find this newsletter informative. If you have any thoughts or concerns you'd like to share, I encourage you to contact me. I depend on feedback from you to best represent the interests of Senate District 11.*

*Sincerely,*

*Larry Taylor*  
 Larry Taylor

PEARLAND DISTRICT OFFICE  
 6117 BROADWAY, SUITE 122  
 PEARLAND, TEXAS 77581  
 (281) 485-9800  
 FAX: (281) 485-9804

LEAGUE CITY DISTRICT OFFICE  
 174 CALDER RD., SUITE 151  
 LEAGUE CITY, TEXAS 77573  
 (281) 332-0003  
 FAX: (281) 332-0036



# BUDGET OVERVIEW



Due to the positive effects of robust oil and natural gas activity over the last several years, Texas' revenue collections exceeded the state's financial expectations. The 83rd Legislature was able to successfully replenish education cuts from the previous biennium, fund Medicaid caseload growth as required by federal law, and provide much needed emergency relief to the communities of Bastrop and the City of West due to wildfires and a tragic fertilizer plant explosion.

Most importantly, the Legislature exhibited fiscal restraint by meeting all required constitutional spending limitations. Overall, the 83rd Legislature approved a total of \$197 billion in all funds, including state and federal dollars combined for the 2014-2015 biennium, a \$7.1 billion or 3.7 percent increase over the previous biennial level of funding (\$189.9 billion). Of that total amount, \$101.4 billion is considered state general revenue and state dedicated funds, increasing \$7.6 billion, or 8.1 percent over the 2012-2013 biennial level of funding (\$93.8 billion).

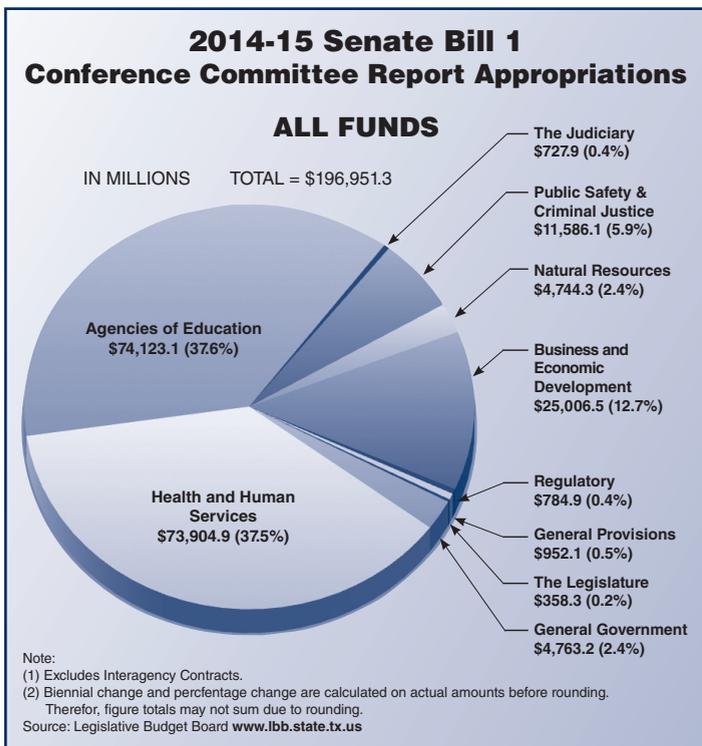


Senator Taylor takes the oath of office with his Senate colleagues on January 8, 2013, opening day of the 83rd Legislative Session.

As one of the state's top funding priorities, public education received \$74.1 billion or 37.6 percent for the upcoming biennium. Student enrollment growth was fully funded, the basic allotment for each student increased, and the state is on track to equalize funding for all school districts statewide by 2018.

Equaling nearly the same level of funding, health and human service programs represent 37.5 percent or \$73.9 billion for the 2014-2015 biennium. While federal demands to expand Texas' Medicaid program and create a state-based federal health exchange were thwarted this session, the state was still able to meet its obligation to fund Medicaid caseload growth and increase funding for preventative mental health programs.

Saving for Texas' future, the 83rd Legislature preserved a healthy level of funding in the state Economic Stabilization Fund (ESF), also known as the state's "Rainy Day Fund." Approximately \$3.9 billion was appropriated from the ESF during the 2013 Legislative Session, including \$2 billion to fund the statewide water plan, which first requires voter approval during the 2013 November Constitutional Amendment Election. Other appropriations from the ESF include \$1.75 billion to replenish education cuts necessary to balance the previous biennium's budget and \$185 million for unexpected emergency costs associated with wildfires and natural disasters. The ESF is estimated to equal \$8.4 billion by the end of fiscal year 2015.



## UTMB Funding

Overall funding for the University of Texas Medical Branch (UTMB) for the 2014-2015 fiscal year was increased by \$34.5 million in general revenue over 2012-2013 levels, for a total annual appropriation of approximately \$248.4 million. The increases went toward education, research, health system operations, and debt service. In addition, appropriations to the University of Texas System for UTMB employee benefits were increased by \$11.5 million for the biennium. These appropriations met UTMB's funding goals for the session, the only exception being tuition revenue bond (TRB) funding for a new education building. No TRB authorization bill passed during the regular legislative session. Although several TRB bills giving authorization to UTMB and all other higher education institutions for needed construction were filed during all three special sessions, the issue was never officially added as an item that could be addressed.



Senator Taylor confers with Finance Committee Chairman Tommy Williams (R - The Woodlands) in the Senate Chamber.



# SENATOR TAYLOR'S VOTING SNAPSHOT



| ISSUE   | TAYLOR VOTE | EXPLANATION   |
|---|-------------|---|
| Water<br>(SJR 1/HB 4)   | YES         | Provides \$2 billion in financing for local and regional water projects statewide via a constitutionally dedicated account requiring voter approval during the upcoming 2013 November Constitutional Amendment Election. <i>(Passed)</i>                                  |
| Tuition Revenue Bonds<br>(SB 16)                                  | YES         | Would authorize the issuance of revenue bonds to fund capital projects at public institutions of higher education, including the University of Texas Medical Branch, the University of Houston-Clear Lake, and Texas A&M University at Galveston. <i>(Failed to Pass)</i> |
| Drug Testing for<br>Unemployment Benefits<br>(SB 21)              | YES         | Amends the Texas Unemployment Compensation Act by adding a drug-testing requirement for applicants to receive unemployment compensation benefits. <i>(Passed)</i>   |
| Fetal Pain<br>(SB 25)   | YES         | Would ban abortions after 20 weeks gestation. <i>(Failed to Pass. However, a 20-week ban was successfully passed during the Second Called Session of the 83rd Legislature)</i>  |
| System Benefit Fund Refund<br>(SJR 55)                            | YES         | Would have refunded over \$730 million to retail electric customers. <i>(Failed to Pass)</i>  |
| System Benefit Fund<br>Fee Elimination<br>(HB 7)                  | YES         | Eliminates the fee on retail electric consumers that was not being used for its intended purpose and utilizes \$500 million in existing funds for the Low Income Discount Program. <i>(Passed)</i>  |
| Property Tax Exemption for<br>Military Spouses<br>(SB 163/HJR 62) | YES         | Grants a total property tax exemption to the surviving spouse of a member of the military killed in action. <i>(Passed and takes effect January 1, 2014, only if voters approve HJR 62)</i>   |
| Campus Carry<br>(SB 182)  | YES         | Would allow Concealed Handgun License holders to carry their handgun on the campus of an institution of higher education. <i>(Failed to Pass)</i>   |
| State Sponsored Food Markets<br>(SB 403)                          | NO          | The bill would create a revolving loan fund to increase the number of food markets providing affordable foods in underserved areas. <i>(Failed to Pass)</i>   |
| Advanced Directives<br>(SB 675)                                   | YES         | Would prohibit a doctor from withdrawing life sustaining treatment from a patient based on the patient's status as disabled, elderly, or terminally ill. <i>(Failed to Pass)</i>  |
| Graduation Requirements/<br>End-of-Course Exams<br>(HB 5)         | YES         | Replaces current public high school graduation plans and reduces end-of-course exam requirements from 15 to five. <i>(Passed)</i>   |
| Franchise Tax Exemption<br>(HB 500)                               | YES         | Provides over \$700 million in business tax relief and makes the \$1 million small business tax exemption permanent. <i>(Passed)</i>  |
| Port of Houston Sunset<br>(HB 1642)                               | NO          | One provision ends two commissioners' terms early, rather than allowing them to finish the full length of their term. <i>(Passed)</i>   |

## Senator Taylor Announces...

**The upcoming launch of his new E-Newsletter!**

**Please visit <http://www.senate.state.tx.us/NL/taylor> to subscribe and receive regular updates on news important to Senate District 11.**



Senator Taylor questions a witness during a hearing of the Senate Business and Commerce Committee, of which he is Vice Chairman. Chairman John Carona (R-Dallas) is pictured with him.

### Senate Business & Commerce Committee

Senator Taylor serves as the Vice Chairman of the Senate Business and Commerce Committee. The committee has jurisdiction over matters relating to businesses, industries, and occupations regulated by the state. Specific industries under the committee's jurisdiction include: banking, finance, insurance, electricity, and telecommunications. The committee also oversees the regulation of the sale of alcoholic beverages and gaming matters. The committee successfully passed legislation that decreased telecommunication companies' reliance on the Universal Service Fund, reduced unnecessary regulations on numerous Texas businesses, and improved upon the management and operating structure of the Public Utility Commission.

### Senate Education Committee

The Senate Education Committee is charged with hearing all legislation pertaining to the education of Texas' school children. This session the committee passed new graduation plans and reduced the

number of standardized tests required for a high school diploma. Committee members also considered legislation covering a broad range of topics including: teacher incentive pay, UIL participation, school choice, student safety, and virtual schools.

### Senate Government Organization Committee

The Committee on Government Organization is tasked with ensuring that the state's operations, programming, information resources, infrastructure, and asset management are making the most efficient and effective use of taxpayer money. The Department of Information Resources and the State Comptroller's office are agencies frequently under the committee's jurisdiction. Legislation passed this session touched on many subjects but notably in the area of improving the protocol for various state commissions' operations, government contracts and procurement, and cyber security.

### Senate Health & Human Services Committee

The Senate Health & Human Services Committee is responsible for considering policy pertaining to health care services provided by both state and federal supported programs such as Medicaid. Some of the most significant policies garnering priority consideration by the committee included: improvements related to the state's mental health, long-term and disability programs, regulations regarding advanced medical directives, and protections concerning women's health.

### Senate Intergovernmental Relations Committee

The Committee on Intergovernmental Relations addressed matters ranging from local issues to modification of municipal and county practices statewide. The committee passed the Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs Sunset bill and improved the operations of property owners associations and housing authorities.



As a member of the Senate Education Committee, Senator Taylor enjoyed meeting with constituents like Bobbie (left) and Melissa Cooney of Friendswood. The Cooneys testified in favor of bills limiting the number of high-stakes end-of-course exams for Texas high school students.



Senator Taylor authored and/or sponsored a number of important bills during the 83rd Legislative Session. Some of the most notable relate to Texas Windstorm Insurance Association (TWIA) reform and public education. Below you'll find information about these and other key bills championed by Senator Taylor.

## Texas Windstorm Insurance Association

**Texas Residual Insurance Plan (Omnibus TWIA Reform) - SB 1700:** Sought to reform the quasi-governmental entity known as the Texas Windstorm Insurance Association by securing a stable funding structure and replacing current administrative personnel with professional management. While the measure failed to pass, Senator Taylor will continue to work through the interim to monitor the Association and its functions and prepare legislative reforms to be introduced in the next session.

**TWIA Waiver Program - SB 1702:** Extends until December 31, 2015, the WPI-8 Waiver Program that was set to expire without legislative action. It also repeals cost prohibitive and unnecessary code compliance modifications, known as the Alternative Eligibility Program, and establishes common sense waiver program requirements for applicable new and renewed coverage. This bill passed and became effective on June 14, 2013. Senator Taylor intends to file legislation in the next session to again extend the WPI-8 Waiver Program.

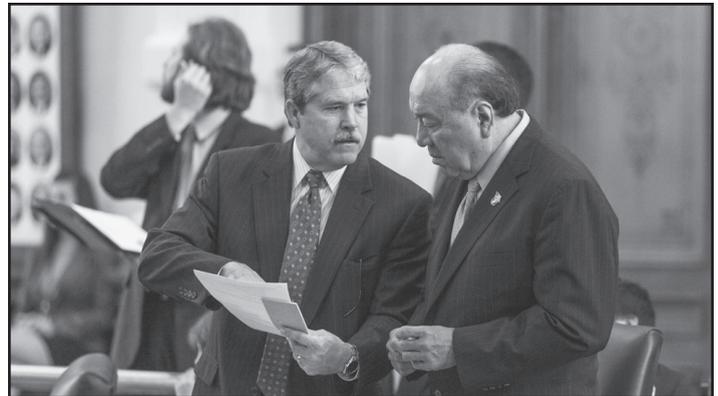
**ISD Windstorm Allotment - SB 1223:** Would have provided equity for school districts along the Texas Coast by allowing them to receive financial allotments from the Texas Education Agency for repayment of the high costs of wind and hail insurance premiums. Although the measure ultimately failed, Senator Taylor brought attention to the plight of coastal school districts and the high price they pay for windstorm insurance coverage. He plans to make this a top priority during future debate on school funding equity.

## Education

**Parent Trigger - SB 1263:** Would have shortened the timeframe from six years to two years that a majority of the parents of students at an unacceptable campus must wait to petition the Commissioner of Education to repurpose that campus, replace the management, or shut it down. The bill received bipartisan support in the Texas Senate but ultimately failed in the Texas House of Representatives.

**Charter School Tax Exemptions - SB 1455/SJR 52:** This bill would have corrected an unfair disparity in statute by exempting property taxes on properties leased by public charter schools. The joint resolution would place the issue on the ballot for voter approval. Unfortunately, both measures failed to pass.

**Mental Health Prevention - SB 831:** Adds mental health promotion, positive youth development, and substance abuse prevention and intervention



Senator Taylor confers with fellow coastal member, Senator Juan "Chuy" Hinojosa (D-McAllen), about legislation reforming the Texas Windstorm Insurance Association.

programs to the list of best practices maintained by the Department of State Health Services in coordination with the Texas Education Agency. The list is available as a resource to educators for the benefit of their students. This bill passed and became effective September 1, 2013.

## Other Important Legislation

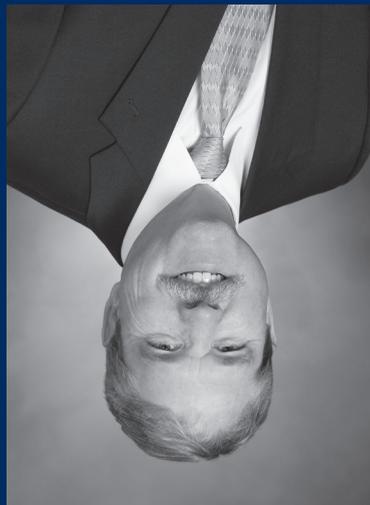
**Hospital Privileges for Abortion Doctors - SB 1198:** Required abortion doctors to have active admitting privileges at a hospital within 30 miles of the location where the abortion procedure occurs. If a physician violates this requirement, he or she could be subject to a Class A misdemeanor punishable with a \$4,000 fine. While Senate Bill 1198 failed to pass during the regular session, it was incorporated into the comprehensive House Bill 2 passed during the Second Called Session to address abortion safety.

**Official State Sea Turtle of Texas - HCR 31:** Designates the Kemp's Ridley Sea Turtle as the Official State Sea Turtle of Texas. A highly endangered species, the Kemp's Ridley is the smallest sea turtle in the world and nests along the Texas Coast. The designation of the Kemp's Ridley was generated at the request and hard work of the Oppe Elementary Green Team in Galveston. This concurrent resolution was signed by Governor Perry on May 10, 2013.

**Economic Development Exit Interviews - HB 2482:** Sponsored by Senator Taylor in the Senate, this bill establishes a study under the Comptroller to survey businesses that are offered economic incentives to relocate to Texas but opt to move their business to another state. It passed and became effective June 14, 2013.



Senator Taylor and Senator Dan Patrick, Chairman of the Senate Education Committee (R-Houston), discuss education policy during the 83rd Legislative Session.



- ✧ BUDGET OVERVIEW
- ✧ VOTING SNAPSHOT
- ✧ COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS
- ✧ LEGISLATIVE HIGHLIGHTS

# Legislative Update



TEXAS STATE SENATOR  
**LARRY TAYLOR**

P.O. Box 12068 • AUSTIN, TEXAS 78711

PRSR STD  
 U.S. POSTAGE  
 PAID  
 PERMIT NO. 2468  
 AUSTIN, TEXAS

THE TEXAS SENATE IS AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER AND DOES NOT DISCRIMINATE ON THE BASIS OF RACE, COLOR, NATIONAL ORIGIN, SEX, RELIGION, AGE OR DISABILITY IN EMPLOYMENT OR THE PROVISION OF SERVICES.

e-mail: [larry.taylor@senate.state.tx.us](mailto:larry.taylor@senate.state.tx.us)

LEAGUE CITY DISTRICT OFFICE  
 174 CALDER RD., SUITE 151  
 LEAGUE CITY, TEXAS 77573  
 (281) 332-0003  
 FAX: (281) 332-0036

CAPITOL OFFICE  
 AUSTIN, TEXAS 78711  
 (512) 463-0111  
 FAX (512) 475-3727

PEARLAND DISTRICT OFFICE  
 6117 BROADWAY, SUITE 122  
 PEARLAND, TEXAS 77581  
 (281) 485-9800  
 FAX: (281) 485-9804

# LARRY TAYLOR

T E X A S S E N A T O R