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DISTRICT 29

PRESS RELEASE



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Texas Legislature interim committee hearings preview anti-immigrant focus for next session

Austin - Today and tomorrow, members of the Texas legislature will take part in committee hearings regarding the state's expensive and unnecessary expansion of the state police to pursue federal immigration enforcement, and proposals to limit local law enforcement's ability to implement community safety policies.

"The Legislature has tough fiscal issues to tackle and promoting the idea that Texas is under siege by immigrants is untrue and bad for Texas," said state Sen. José Rodríguez, Chairman of the Senate Democratic Caucus. "Further, by spending so much time and money on these incorrect notions, the leadership is limiting our ability to work on the real issues facing our state like properly funding our schools and improving access to affordable health care. At a minimum, I hope these hearings result in better fiscal accountability and defined metrics for the \$800 million appropriated under the guise of border security."

In 2015, after years of increasing appropriations to the Department of Public Safety to engage in border patrol activities, the Legislature increased General Fund obligations to DPS by about \$800 million. Numerous reports call into question the transparency, efficiency, and oversight of the huge expenditures, as well as the impact on the civil and constitutional rights of Texans in border communities. Yet the Legislature refused even to consider proposals to at least require ongoing evaluation of these matters. Meanwhile, although anti-immigrant proposals to reduce local control over crime-fighting strategy have been defeated, as have proposals to raise college tuition on Texas children who were born elsewhere but grew up here, the Legislature appears poised to again consider these harsh measures in 2017.

José Rodríguez represents Texas Senate District 29, which includes the counties of El Paso, Hudspeth, Culberson, Jeff Davis, and Presidio. He represents both urban and rural constituencies, and more than 350 miles of the Texas-Mexico border. Senator Rodríguez currently serves as the Chairman of the Senate Democratic Caucus, and is a member of the Senate Committees on Education; Health and Human Services; Veteran Affairs and Military Installations; Nominations; and Agriculture, Water, and Rural Affairs.