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For Immediate Release
November 29, 2017

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Senator Bettencourt Responds to Judge Emmett's Call for Higher Taxes

Harris County Revenue has grown 36.4% in just three years - how much revenue is enough?

Houston, TX - Senator Bettencourt (R-Houston) is setting the record straight in response to Harris County Judge Ed Emmett's call for additional tax revenue during his "State of the County" speech on November 28, 2017. In press reports, Judge Emmett stated that the point of his speech was to argue that *"enough is enough"* and that the County needs more money to provide services to residents.

"Enough is enough, indeed," stated Lt. Governor Patrick. **"...Judge Emmett is clearly not listening to the people. Let be absolutely clear - the property tax reforms we proposed this session didn't cap local spending but they would have prohibited local budgets from increasing more than 4% without voter approval. If Judge Emmett needs more than 4%, he simply has to convince the people to support it."**

According to its County Certified Annual Financial Record, Harris County has seen a 36.4% increase in property tax revenue over just three years (2013-2016). Since there has been no overall property tax rate cut during this same time period, the average home in Harris County has seen a 36.4% increase on just the county portion of their property tax bill! In comparison, Travis County Commissioners Court cut their tax rate from approximately forty-nine cents to thirty-eights cents over the same period a time, which is a 22% eleven penny reduction in the property tax rate.

"It seems that even a 36.4% property tax bill increase on the average county homeowner is not enough," said Senator Bettencourt. **"With Harris County homeowners literally receiving their property tax bills in the mail, in some cases on homes that have been damaged by Hurricane Harvey, Judge Emmett's comments cannot hide the fact that these astonishing percentage property tax bill increases are printed on the front and back of the actual property tax bill."**

In addition to collecting 36.4% more revenue over just three years, Harris County has so far chosen not to trigger disaster reappraisal for homeowners who had their property damaged or destroyed in Hurricane Harvey. This means that a homeowner will be forced to pay property taxes on the January 1, 2017 value of their home, even if their home was completely destroyed during Hurricane Harvey. While some taxing jurisdictions, such as Spring Branch ISD, Katy ISD, Fort Bend County, Montgomery County, and others have triggered disaster reappraisal, Harris County has, so far, decided not to help flooded out homeowners get back on their feet.

"Judge Emmett should not fear putting public policy before the voters," continued Senator Bettencourt. **"Voters approved the Houston pension plan idea by a heavy supermajority, but in another election rejected a county bond proposal for the Astrodome that would have raised taxes. Voters are capable of recognizing a good plan when they see one, and elected officials should trust their decision!"**

In addition to higher taxes, Judge Emmett has called for Texas to accept the expansion of Medicaid, as part of the Affordable Care Act. However, in 2013, Harris County registered against SJR 61 which would have required any cost savings to be returned to Texas taxpayers via a property tax rate cut.

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