



The Senate of The State of Texas

Senator Pete Flores

District 24

Senate District 24 Capitol Update: Special Session and Bills to the Governor

The 88th Regular Session has come to an end, and the First Called Special Session began immediately to address unfinished business. Governor Abbott put property tax rate compression and border security on the call for this first special, issues that the Senate passed during the regular session with overwhelming support.

I am carrying Senate Bill 5, relating to border security, specifically increasing the penalty for smuggling of persons and operation of a stash house. SB 5 has the same intent that HB 800 during the regular session had, unfortunately, HB 800 ran out of time at the end of session, so I am eager to pass this impactful legislation. During the regular session, I was proud to pass SB 1248 that increased the penalty for smuggling of persons to a 10-year mandatory minimum. This bill passed the Senate early in session, but it was stalled and ultimately killed in the House. Increasing the penalties of these heinous crimes is crucial to deter criminals from these actions.

The Senate passed SB 1 and SJR 1 last week on Tuesday, the first day of the special session. These bills provided not only tax rate compression, but also increased the homestead exemption up to \$100,000 from the current \$70,000. The House passed their property tax bill, HB 1, but that bill only addresses the rate compression aspect of the Senate's plan, and doesn't expand the homestead exemption. Property tax relief is a must for Texans. People should own their property, and should not be taxed out of a home they've owned for decades. This issue has to be addressed in a meaningful way that puts dollars back into taxpayers pockets.

Bills to the Governor:

Since the adjournment of the 88th regular session, we have had a multitude of bills make their way to the Governor's desk. Of the 38 bills that we have sent to the Governor, already 13 have been signed, are, or will become, effective. So far, the bills passed deal with increasing compensation for law enforcement and requiring life saving training for all peace officers. We've also ensured that agencies and state boards have adequate tools and regulations to best provide for our state and our people.

The top priority bill of mine in the 88th regular session was SB 1788, the Texas Racketeering Act. The companion, HB 4635 passed and is waiting on the Governor's Desk as we speak. This bill will provide peace officers and prosecutors with substantial tools to gather and collect evidence against criminal organizations and target their financial assets. Hitting these criminals where it matters and is felt the most is the best way to protect our state and help secure our borders. We must send a strong message that Texas does not tolerate these heinous crimes, and I look forward to Governor Abbott's signature on this legislation.

There are about two more weeks in the veto period, so we will continue to see many more signed or take effect over the next several days.

As always, please do not hesitate to contact my office if we can ever be of service to you and your family. Whether it be needing help with a state agency, or making your thoughts on a bill heard, please contact your office either by phone at (512) 463-0124 or by email to pete.flores@senate.texas.gov or via my state website.

As my team and I transition into the interim, we will begin working on interim charges and travelling the district to hear from you. Be on the lookout for information relating to town halls and other events in your area soon!