

CHARLES SCHWERTNER, M.D.

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

Dear Friends,

First, I'd like to thank you for the great privilege of representing you and your family in the Texas State Senate. With the 2013 Legislative Session (and subsequent special sessions) now behind us, I'm proud of what we were able to accomplish for Texas families.

The tone of the 83rd Texas Legislature would probably be best characterized as purposeful and focused on providing solutions to the challenges facing our state. With you, the hard-working taxpayer in mind, we passed a balanced state budget without raising taxes and provided nearly \$1.4 billion in tax relief for our citizens and small businesses. Texas' robust economic growth also allowed the legislature to address some of our state's most pressing long-term needs, such as securing a reliable supply of clean water and making improvements to our public school system.

As our nation continues to recover from the Great Recession, it's more important than ever that we keep the "Texas Economic Miracle" alive by continuing to support the fundamental governing principles which have made Texas so successful: live within your means, balance your budgets, keep taxes low and under control, and promote a legal and regulatory environment which encourages businesses to grow and thrive.

It's been the honor of my lifetime to serve the people of Senate District 5, and I work every day to live up to the faith and trust you've shown in me as your Senator. That's why I'm proud and humbled to have been named a "Courageous Conservative" by the Texas Conservative Coalition, a "Lone Star Conservative Leader" by the Texas Conservative Roundtable, and "Senate Freshman of the Year" by *Texas Monthly* magazine.

Included on the back page of this newsletter is the contact information for both my Capitol office in Austin, as well as my local offices in Bryan and Georgetown. As I have said many times, I hope to serve the people of Senate District 5 as a true citizen-representative, not a politician. I always appreciate hearing the input and concerns of those I serve, and I hope you will continue to share both in the future.



Your Friend and Senator,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "C. Schwertner". The signature is stylized and written in a cursive-like font.

Charles Schwertner, MD



IMPROVING PUBLIC SCHOOLS

This session, the legislature made a commitment to improving our public education system and supporting our state’s dedicated teachers, adding roughly \$4 billion to public education. We also passed landmark public education reform (HB 5) to give students and parents greater flexibility in tailoring a curriculum plan that supports a student’s individual interests as they prepare to go to college or enter the workforce. Students will now be free to select from one of five different educational focuses: Business and Industry; Arts and Humanities; Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM); Public Services; and Multi-Disciplinary Studies. HB 5 also reduces the number of high-stakes, standardized tests from 15 to 5, so teachers are free to focus on instruction and education rather than simply “teaching to the test.”

In another key step, school districts will now be rated on an easy-to-understand A-F scale, while individual campuses will maintain the current ratings of exemplary, recognized, acceptable and unacceptable. This new rating system will make schools and districts more accountable to their respective communities, and make it easier for parents to make the best possible choices for their children’s education.

The Texas Legislature also took great strides to promote school choice, allowing for the development of new charter schools and improving charter school oversight. SB 2 gradually raises the state-imposed “cap” on the



Senator Schwertner hearing testimony at the Senate Committee on Criminal Justice.

number of Texas charter schools from 215 to 309 by the year 2019. These new charter school programs will serve to improve innovation in our schools and increase educational options for parents.

In addition, I sponsored legislation (HB 773) which will ensure that Texas charter school students are asked to recite the pledge of allegiance to the United States and Texas flags each morning, holding them to the same standard as traditional public schools.

DEVELOPING WATER INFRASTRUCTURE

In 2011, the U.S. Drought Monitor indicated that the severe drought conditions experienced by the state of Texas had resulted in over \$11 billion in economic losses (\$7.6 billion agriculture and \$3.4 billion timber) in that year alone. Many years ago, the state of Texas established a Statewide Water Plan to deal with our state’s growing water infrastructure needs, though the funding to implement the plan has not been forthcoming.

However, this session the Texas Legislature approved several historic measures to address the state’s long-term water needs without raising taxes. Three separate pieces of legislation (HB 4, SJR 1, and HB 1025) will work together to fund a number of new water infrastructure projects that the state will need to keep pace with our growing population over the next 50 years. These measures will require voter approval in November 2013 (Proposition 6), and will help ensure that Texans continue to have ready and reliable access to clean water in the decades to come.



Senator Schwertner, Representative Raney, and Representative Kacal meeting with the Bryan-College Station Chamber of Commerce.

KEEPING TEXAS MOVING

Since a viable transportation system is key to any state's economic success, the Texas Legislature took the first serious steps in over 25 years to provide additional funding to our congested highway system without raising taxes or burdening future generations with additional debt. SJR 1 would direct half of the state's future oil and gas severance tax revenue to the state highway fund (nearly \$1.2 billion annually) and restricts those funds to the construction and maintenance of non-tolled public roadways. As a constitutional amendment, this measure will be put to the voters for final approval in November 2014.

CONTROLLING HEALTH CARE COSTS

The rising cost of health care continues to represent a major challenge for the future prosperity of Texas. In the 2014-2015 biennium, Medicaid expenditures will account for \$58.2 billion or nearly 30% of the entire state budget. This represents an 8.79% growth in Medicaid from the previous biennium, and as Medicaid costs continue to rise, they will put an ever-increasing strain on other state budget priorities like education and transportation.

Legislation which I co-authored (SB 8), attempts to address this runaway Medicaid spending by reducing waste, fraud and abuse, and ensuring that Medicaid services are being properly utilized. This important legislation will help protect taxpayer dollars and ensure state funds are only expended to provide



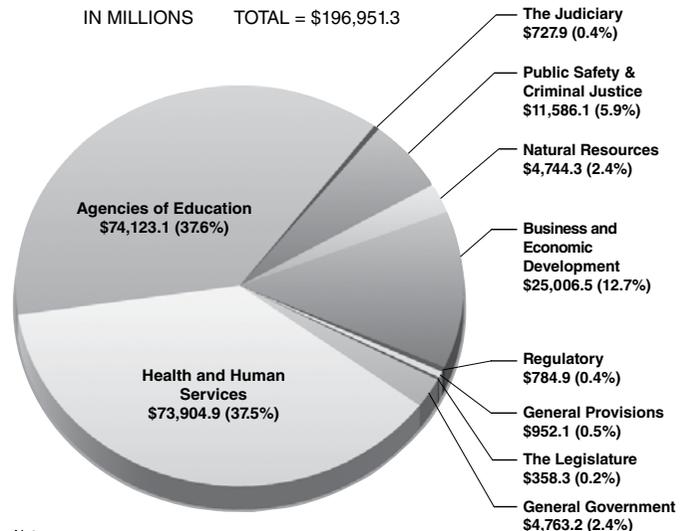
Senator Schwertner with Texas Attorney General Greg Abbott at an event in Walker County.

Medicaid services to those who truly need them. SB 8 is expected to save the state over \$14 million during the upcoming biennium.

SUPPORTING MENTAL HEALTH

Following several recent acts of school violence, including the unspeakable tragedy at Sandy Hook Elementary, it's critical that we do all we can to increase awareness about mental health issues and explore additional ways to help our teachers maintain a safe school environment. That's why I filed Senate Bill 955, legislation to provide voluntary Mental Health First Aid training for our Texas teachers.

2014-2015 ALL FUNDS BUDGET



Note:
 (1) Excludes Interagency Contracts.
 (2) Biennial change and percentage change are calculated on actual amounts before rounding.
 Therefore, figure totals may not sum due to rounding.
 Source: Legislative Budget Board www.lbb.state.tx.us



Senator Schwertner discussing legislation with Senator Troy Fraser on the floor of the Texas Senate.



Administered through the state’s network of Local Mental Health Authorities (LMHAs), the Mental Health First Aid training program will provide Texas educators with the strategies and resources to respond to a variety of serious mental illnesses such as depression, trauma, bipolar disorder, psychosis, and severe anxiety. Participants of the training will learn how to assess risk and identify potential resources and support systems for the child experiencing a mental health crisis. The training is entirely voluntary and satisfies 12 hours of continuing professional education required by the Texas Education Agency (TEA).

In addition to enhancing school safety, this bill will help Texas teachers recognize the warning signs for a variety of serious mental illnesses and teach them how to work with parents to coordinate the help and care these children need in order to live better, more fulfilling lives. The bill ultimately passed as an amendment to HB 3793 and was signed into law by Governor Perry.

Additionally, my colleagues and I made a renewed commitment to relieving our state’s overburdened mental health system, adding \$260 million in new funding for the upcoming biennium. This additional funding will serve to reduce waitlists, provide for prevention and early identification measures, and increase public access to mental health services.



Senator Schwertner with his family on the opening day of the 83rd Legislative Session.

REFORMING THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

The high-profile exoneration of former Williamson County resident Michael Morton highlighted the need for Texas to reform the way in which its criminal cases are prosecuted. SB 1611, also known as the “Michael Morton Act,” will prevent prosecutors from withholding any evidence that may serve to exonerate a defendant. The legislature also passed SB 1292, which will require DNA testing of all biological evidence in cases where the death penalty is being sought. Both bills passed with broad bipartisan support. These reforms will help serve to protect the innocent, prevent wrongful convictions, and restore the public trust in the Texas judicial system.

PROTECTING THE 2ND AMENDMENT

As a concealed handgun license holder and life-long defender of gun rights, the protection of our Second Amendment freedoms is always a top concern of mine. This session, the legislature worked to streamline the process of obtaining a concealed handgun license (CHL) by reducing the number of required classroom training hours and allowing for an online license renewal process. Additionally, we provided some commonsense legal protections for



Senator Schwertner working on the floor of the Texas State Senate.



SPOTLIGHT ON THE 83RD LEGISLATIVE SESSION

CHL holders who may unintentionally or inadvertently display their concealed firearm in a public place, ensuring that an accidental exposure won't result in an arrest.

In another victory for the rights of gun owners, SB 1907 will allow college students with a CHL to keep a gun in their locked, personal vehicle while parked on a university campus.

FIGHTING FOR FARMERS & RANCHERS

As someone with six generations of farming and ranching roots in Texas, it was a great honor to serve on the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Rural Affairs, and Homeland Security this session. There I filed SB 1233, legislation to protect our state's farmers and ranchers from burdensome overregulation by the Texas Animal Health Commission (TAHC), while maintaining the critical safety measures needed to protect the public from a dangerous animal disease outbreak. With the help and support of numerous agriculture groups, including the Texas Farm Bureau, the Texas and Southwestern Cattle Raisers Association, the Texas Poultry Federation, and the Independent Cattlemen of Texas, SB 1233 was passed and signed into law by Governor Perry.



Senator Schwertner meeting with a group of constituents from Senate District 5.

Our farmers and ranchers represent the backbone of Texas, and I am proud to represent such a vibrant agricultural community in Senate District 5.

A NEW STATE SYMBOL: THE PECAN PIE

In February, I received a stack of letters from the students in Mrs. Mikeska's 1st grade class at Ford Elementary in Georgetown. In their letters, these first graders pointed out that although many other states such as Florida and Massachusetts had official state pies, (the Key Lime Pie and Boston Cream Pie, respectively) Texas had none. They argued that since the Pecan is both the official state tree and official state nut of Texas, I should sponsor a resolution (SCR 12) to name the Pecan Pie the "Official Pie of Texas."

These students later visited the Capitol to provide some very well-prepared testimony in support of SCR 12 at the Senate Committee on Administration. After successfully passing the Senate, SCR 12 was passed without opposition in the Texas House of Representatives and signed by the Governor. I am very proud of these young Texans for their state pride, their knowledge of the legislative process, and their hard work to make Pecan Pie the official pie of Texas.



Senator Schwertner with the students from Mrs. Mikeska's 1st grade class.

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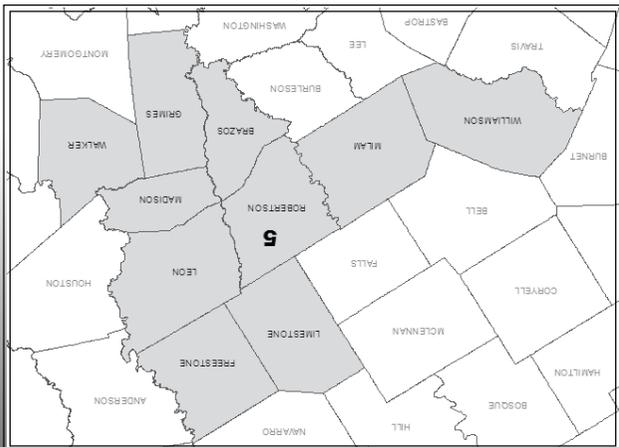


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STATE SENATOR
DISTRICT 5

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SENATE DISTRICT 5



Visit Your Capitol!

You can learn more about your state Capitol by attending a free guided tour, offered every Monday through Friday 8:30am-4:30pm, and Saturday through Sunday from 9:30 am-4:30 pm. For large groups of ten or more, please call 463-0063 to make a reservation...and please stop by my office while you're visiting!