



June 10, 2021

Dear Friends,

The 87th legislative session has officially concluded. Over the course of the last few months the Texas Legislature discussed, debated, and ultimately passed significant reforms that will positively impact the future for all Texans. I am proud of the progress that we made in the Texas Senate and I am especially grateful to my entire staff for their commitment to working hard on behalf of the constituents of Senate District 8.

This week's newsletter is a recap of some of the major bills that I passed - including many bills that focus on promoting human dignity, education, and concerns brought to me from constituents including bills on technology and innovation.

As always, I am committed to "**Listen, Learn, and Lead**" and the goal of this newsletter is to keep you informed while also providing an opportunity for you to share your thoughts with me. As always, contact me if I can assist you in any way.

Sincerely,

Senator Angela Paxton
Senate District 8

Human Dignity

The Human Life Protection Act

- The Human Life Protection Act (House Bill 1280) will abolish the practice of abortion in Texas in the event, and to the extent that the Supreme Court reverses its rulings under *Roe v. Wade* or *Planned Parenthood v. Casey*. If overturned, abortion law-making authority would return to the state and the Human Life Protection Act will abolish abortion in Texas. Currently, ten states (Arkansas, Idaho, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Dakota, Missouri, Tennessee, South Dakota and Utah) have enacted similar pieces of legislation.

The Heartbeat Bill

- The Heartbeat Bill (Senate Bill 8) prohibits a physician from knowingly performing or inducing an abortion if the unborn baby's fetal heartbeat is detected. The physician would be required to use a test to determine a fetal heartbeat.

Protect the Freedom to Worship

- House Bill 1239 protects the freedom of assembly and religious activities by preventing the future closure of places of worship through the use of emergency powers. Many pastors contacted me last year during the COVID-19 pandemic and I asked the Governor to lift the restrictions on church closures and limitations. House Bill 1239 places in statute that places of worship are protected under the Religious Freedom Restoration Act. The legislature also passed a constitutional amendment to allow voters in November to vote on a proposition to prohibit the government from taking action to close places of worship.

Ellie's Law

- Ellie's Law (Senate Bill 225) will protect Texas children by equipping parents with the facts needed to determine the best child-care options. This bill ensures past violations and deficiencies remain associated with the individual caregiver and not just the address the license was issued to, increases the number of years from 2 to 5 in evaluating past violations before a license is issued; adds HHSC shall require, by rule, a licensed and registered family home to provide visual and auditory supervision of an infant engaged in tummy time.

Education

Educator Training in Virtual Education

- This bill was developed by our office to improve the online education experience and the results of online education for both teachers and students who have been forced to rely on remote learning. Specifically, it adds training in "virtual learning" and "virtual instruction" to the existing requirements for teaching certificates for our teachers. This is reinforced by language describing that that training must cover the "best practices" in assessing students receiving virtual instruction based on academic progress as well as developing a virtual learning curriculum.

Cybersecurity Tools for the Texas Education Agency and School Districts

- Senate Bill 1696 builds upon the ideas adopted by the Legislature last session to give the Texas Education Agency (TEA) additional tools to help school districts mitigate and prevent cyber-attacks from happening by authorizing the creation of a system by which TEA can anonymously share threat intelligence information across school districts.

Technology and Innovation

Blockchain Working Group

- Establishes a work group to study blockchain technology. The work group is to develop a master plan with recommended policies and state investments to promote the expansion of blockchain technology in this state and submit a report by October 31, 2022.

Virtual Currency

- This bill was filed after work with representatives from the Uniform Law Commission and the Texas Blockchain Council. This bill defines "virtual currency" in state statute and allows individuals to know their rights regarding the control of virtual assets and helps resolve disputes involving the ownership and transfer of virtual currency.