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Senator Eckhardt Praises Passage of State Budget, Calls for Coalition to Create More Prosperity and Opportunity for Texans

AUSTIN – Yesterday, the Texas Senate approved the State Budget (Senate Bill 1), a roadmap for delivering on both the basic and most important priorities for Texans. “The budget is the only piece of legislation we are required to pass, and we used every day this Session (plus a bunch in the lead up) trying to get it right, achieving a fair share of the prosperity Texans have created,” said Senator Eckhardt. **“The Senate Finance Committee under Chair Joan Huffman has done tremendous work, making hard decisions that will yield largely positive outcomes for Texans.”**

For two biennium in a row, Texas has had a multi-billion dollar surplus, making possible overdue investments in water (\$22.5 billion investment, SB 7 and HJR 7), energy (\$5 billion investment, SB6), and public education (\$8.5 billion investment, HB 2). Texas homeowners will also feel relief as \$51 billion in state revenue is deployed for urgent property tax exemptions, up to \$200,000 for homeowners over 65. **“This budget gives me hope, but we must be cautious.** Thirty percent of our budget relies on federal funding, and state leaders did nothing to shield Texans from Trump’s illegal cuts to federal funding that go directly toward everything from our roads to essential services Texans rely on everyday,” said Eckhardt, adding:

“They also did nothing to check the excesses of their most radical allies in the Legislature who have simultaneously expanded the unfunded mandates on local governments while restricting the dollars they have to pay for them.

“The money you send to your county tax assessor pays for police, disaster response, affordable housing, childcare, public health, and the list is growing. The state relies heavily on federal funds, sales tax and local property tax funded services to meet its obligations to you. Drops in federal funding from Trump cuts, drops in sales tax revenue from Trump inflation and caps on local property taxes available to fund services would end the Texas Miracle for a huge portion of Texans. **This moment calls for a true fiscally conservative Affordability and Opportunity plan for all Texans.**”

“We need a nonpartisan coalition of those willing to do the right thing for the long term benefit of every Texan. We saw glimmers of that coalition in the successful inclusion of historic funding of our public schools, lowering property taxes, and opening pathways for Texans to earn a living while helping their community. **I pledge to strengthen that coalition, working through the interim and into the**



Texas State Senator

next Legislative Session, when we have our next opportunity to direct the state's investments for the benefit of every Texan now and into the future."

Senator Eckhardt also pointed to specific items that will be beneficial to Senate District 14:

- \$1.7M to support veterans mental health through the Texas Veterans Commission
- \$132.8M for Driver License Service Improvements at the Department of Public Safety
- \$2M for air quality planning at Texas Commission on Environmental Quality
- \$5.6M for capital construction and repaired for the Texas Parks & Wildlife Department
- \$2.8M for an oil and gas authorized pit registration system at Railroad Commission
- \$806K for surface water data collection and analysis at Texas Water Development Board
- \$3.7M to increase full-time employees at the Public Utility Commission

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Sarah Eckhardt is the third-term Democratic State Senator representing District 14, comprising Austin and surrounding areas. She serves on the Administration, Border Security, Nominations, and Veterans Affairs committees in the 89th Legislative Session, and has previously served on the Water, Agriculture, & Rural Affairs and Local Government committees. A proud UT Law and Public Affairs alum, Senator Eckhardt was the first woman to serve as Travis County Judge from 2014-2020.