

Senator Judith Zaffirini



Reports to the Families of District 21

Dear Friends:

This government was established for the safety and happiness of the people, and the object of all laws should be to accomplish such ends. These words by the late Texas Governor James S. Hogg, the namesake of Jim Hogg County in Senate District 21, reflect my mission in the Texas Senate: I work every day to help ensure a happy, healthy and secure future for our families and communities.

Our district is defined not only by its size—it stretches from the Rio Grande to the Colorado River—but also by its diversity: It includes high-tech businesses and family farms, small towns and fast-growing cities and the majority of the Eagle Ford Shale.

Most important, it is home to more than 800,000 constituents living in 18 counties, namely, Bee, Caldwell, Duval, Jim Hogg, Karnes, La Salle, Live Oak, McMullen, San Patricio, Starr, Webb, Wilson and Zapata; and parts of Atascosa, Bexar, Guadalupe, Hays and Travis.

Our communities are separated by distance, but united by our shared priorities. These include educational opportunities for all persons at all levels; jobs and economic development; public safety; transportation; wise stewardship of our natural resources; and health and human services, especially for the very young, the very old and persons with disabilities.

Because of my Senate committee assignments, I am uniquely positioned to make a positive difference for the families of our district. I serve as Vice Chair of the Agriculture, Water & Rural Affairs Committee and on the Natural Resources, State Affairs, and Health and Human Services committees. What's more, I am delighted to serve as Senate Chair of the Eagle Ford Shale Legislative Caucus.



I work every day to help ensure a happy, healthy and secure future for the families of Senate District 21.

— Senator Judith Zaffirini

I am incredibly grateful for the countless constituents, advocates, and local leaders who wrote letters, sent emails, made telephone calls, provided testimony or visited the Texas Capitol during the 84th Legislative Session to share important perspectives. With your help, I was proud to author and champion legislation that promotes early childhood education, reforms the guardianship system, increases government and higher education transparency, and improves access to justice and mental health services.

We made meaningful progress, but there is still much more to do. Accordingly, my staff and I already are working with constituents, colleagues and stakeholders to develop new legislation that addresses our shared priorities. As always, you can count on me not simply to prepare, but, rather, to over-prepare.

When the next legislative session convenes in January, 2017, we will be ready.

Your feedback remains critical to our success, and we will continue to maintain our open door policy and respond to every letter, email and telephone call. This newsletter not only is a progress report, but also a call for participation and collaboration, especially because some of my best legislation was suggested by constituents.

My prayer is that the Lord will continue to guide our work to bless us all with family and friendship, love and joy and health and happiness.

Judith Zaffirini

Judith Zaffirini
State Senator, District 21
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SENATOR JUDITH ZAFFIRINI is a champion for educational opportunities for all persons at all levels, especially in Senate District 21. She is shown in 1. at the bill signing ceremony for Gov. Abbott's priority pre-K legislation at the Uphaus Early Childhood Center in Southeast Austin with the governor and (L-R) Rep. Jimmie Don Aycock, R-Killeen; Rep. Joe Deshotel, D-Beaumont; Senator Donna Campbell, R-New Braunfels; and Texas Education Commissioner Michael Williams and in 2. with former Texas Workforce Commissioner Hope Andrade and Coastal Bend College officials in Bee County, celebrating the debut of new educational technology for students interested in pursuing careers in the oil and gas industry.

Zaffirini: State Needs Educational Options for All

A champion of lifelong learning, Senator Judith Zaffirini believes all Texans should be able to access affordable opportunities to pursue their educational goals and improve their quality of life.

"In the Texas Senate I prioritize legislation strengthening every part of the education pipeline, from early childhood education to graduate and post-graduate education," she said.

In 2015 she played a key role in the passage of Governor Greg Abbott's priority pre-K legislation, filing Senate Bill 801 at his request and later amending and co-authoring the final legislation by Rep. Dan Huberty, R-Humble, and Senator Donna Campbell, R-New Braunfels.

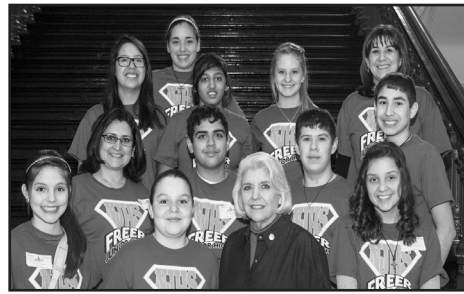
"By collecting meaningful data and providing funding for districts to establish high-quality pre-K programs, House Bill (HB) 4 is an important step in ensuring all Texas families have meaningful access to early childhood education," Senator Zaffirini said.

In the secondary education arena, she authored and passed Senate Bill (SB) 1867, clarifying that data recorded for students 18-22 years old who receive special education services are not counted against a school's performance measures. Her intent is to encourage more schools to offer these important services.

Higher education access, affordability and excellence will be enhanced by 12 bills passed by Senator Judith Zaffirini in 2015. Three of them improve transparency and accountability for the governing boards of Texas' higher education institutions, including by enhancing the training required of regents before they can vote on budget or personnel matters (SB 24), making board meetings more accessible to the public (SB 27) and ensuring that students can participate in selecting student regents (SB 42).

"The State of Texas should empower students to access affordable, high-quality higher education opportunities that will allow them to complete their degrees timely," Senator Zaffirini said.

To help them achieve that goal, SB 1714 by Zaffirini and Rep. Donna Howard, D-Austin, promotes reverse-transfer degree awards, and HB 1583



NATIONAL HONOR SOCIETY students from Duval County's Freer Junior High School and their teachers, Veronica Carrales and Barbara Uribe, enjoy visiting the Texas Capitol with Senator Judith Zaffirini.

by Rep. Travis Clardy, R-Nacogdoches, and Zaffirini, requires community colleges to offer at least five programs in block scheduling format.

The cost of college is a significant obstacle for many students, which is why Senator Zaffirini supports opportunities for them to access financial aid and work-study programs. SB 947, also by Zaffirini and Howard, calls for the state to explore the potential for greater work-study employment in the private-sector.

"Students should have more opportunities to receive credit for relevant experience, whether it's in the university setting or in a private sector position related to their field of study," she said.

The senator also authored and passed SB 1066 with Rep. Clardy. Their bill helps institutions continue participating in the Texas T-STEM Challenge Scholarship Program, which provides scholarships to gifted students in science, technology, engineering and mathematics who also work part-time in these fields.

An ardent advocate for university research at all levels, Senator Zaffirini also authored and passed SB 44, clarifying that private gifts made to higher education institutions to support undergraduate research are eligible for matching grants under the Texas Research Incentive Program.

New Guardianship Laws Protect Vulnerable Texans

Court-appointed guardians and advocates are entrusted with the profound responsibility of making serious personal, financial and legal decisions for more than 67,000 Texas children, seniors and persons with disabilities who cannot do so for themselves.

"For many vulnerable Texans, having another person intervene is a blessing, but, unfortunately, some court-appointed attorneys and guardians have abused the system and the public trust," said Senator Judith Zaffirini, a leading advocate for guardianship reform. "As a result, Texas has seen more than two decades of controversy regarding the transparency and quality of court appointments."

During the 2015 legislative session she passed 11 bills to address these issues, working closely with judges, advocates and other stakeholders, including the Texas Judicial Council.

"We must ensure court appointments are transparent, effective and fair, and we must protect the rights of seniors and persons with disabilities to make fundamental decisions about their lives," Senator Zaffirini said. "I am delighted that we were able to make real progress on both of these fronts in 2015."

The Problems

The problems with the Texas guardianship system are well documented, ranging from judges rewarding campaign supporters with lucrative and often repetitive appointments to guardians taking unfair advantage of those in their care.

For example, a federal corruption probe in the Valley revealed allegations of guardianship appointments in exchange for kickbacks, and a *Houston Chronicle* investigation documented outrageous cases in which judges allowed appointees to charge more than \$200 per hour for non-legal work such as selling cars and lawn-mowing. In another egregious case, a judge approved more than \$375,000 in attorney's fees to a former law school classmate who specialized in an unrelated legal field.

Meanwhile, court reporting of compensation has remained unacceptably low, and the lack of data available regarding appointments has hindered family law reform.

"The need for increased transparency in the appointment system is obvious," Senator Zaffirini said. "The occurrence, possibility, or even appearance of abuse simply is unacceptable because it undermines the public's confidence in the judicial system and jeopardizes the rights of vulnerable Texans."

The Solutions

To address the transparency issue, the Texas Legislature passed Senate Bill (SB) 1369 by Zaffirini and Rep. John Smithee, R-Amarillo, which requires the reporting of compensation paid to court-appointed attorneys, guardians and mediators, who sometimes are compensated with taxpayer money.

The bill, which was supported notably by Texas Supreme Court Chief Justice Nathan Hecht, will discourage judges from rewarding their campaign supporters with appointment pay and help ensure that the interests of vulnerable Texans are being protected.

What's more, the passage of SB 1876 by Zaffirini and Smithee, which requires judges to use a rotation system to appoint persons whose qualifications meet the needs of a particular case—instead of selecting their friends and cronies—will improve the fairness and efficiency of the appointment system.

Zaffirini and Smithee also passed SB 1882, establishing a bill of rights for persons placed under guardianship, and House Bill 39, implementing a comprehensive set of recommendations developed by the Texas Judicial Council.

These include ensuring the consideration of all alternatives to guardianship prior to appointing a guardian, allowing courts to review the continuation of a guardianship if a person's capacity improves, requiring attorneys and judges to consider a person's ability to make decisions about residency and ensuring attorneys who handle guardianship matters are well-trained.

"Given the projected increase in Texas' senior population by 2040 and the likely increase in need for guardianship, we also must improve the guardianship system promptly to ensure it truly protects Texans and respects their rights," Senator Zaffirini said.

Additionally, SB 1881 by Zaffirini and Rep. Bill Zedler, R-Arlington, promotes voluntary agreements that do not require court involvement, allowing persons with disabilities and seniors to receive support while maintaining a greater degree of independence.

"The decision to appoint a guardian never should be made lightly, and caution should be taken not to infringe upon the civil rights of older persons and persons with disabilities who are capable of making their own decisions, but who simply need some help," the senator said. "Guardianship should be a last resort, not a first option."

The Future

The effort to improve the system that serves thousands of vulnerable Texans is ongoing, and Senator Zaffirini already is working with stakeholders to develop additional legislation that will further improve oversight and protect the rights of persons under guardianship.

"Senator Judith Zaffirini is leading the charge to find solutions that do not burden the taxpayer and yet have humanity and common sense at their core," according to the Guardianship Reform Advocates of Texas, an important stakeholder group.



UNITED METHODIST WOMEN representatives (L-R) Mary Helen Frazier of Hays County and Judy Johnson of Guadalupe County meet with Senator Zaffirini at the Texas Capitol.

Senator Judith Zaffirini's Legislation Addresses Statewide Issues, District Priorities

Hard work and persistence are the keys to success in the Texas Legislature. Casting every vote by balancing the needs and interests of Senate District (SD) 21 with those of our great state, Senator Judith Zaffirini works relentlessly to pass legislation that creates a better future for Texas families.

Breaking Productivity Records

Often described as the hardest working state senator, Senator Zaffirini passed 102 bills during the 2015 legislative session, breaking her personal record and passing more bills than any other legislator.

As the Senate's top bill passer, she passed 44 Senate bills and 58 House bills (including only two that were vetoed), surpassing by 19 the next most productive senator and bringing her career total bills passed to 895—again, more than any other Texas lawmaker ever has (according to *Capitol Inside*).

Her previous record for a single legislative session was reached in 2011, when she passed 79 bills.

"We continue to enjoy many productive opportunities to make a positive difference for the families of SD 21 and our great state," she said. "In 2015 we achieved legislative success in a wide array of policy areas, including not only

education and health and human services, but also public safety, natural resources, justice and the judiciary, veterans and local issues."

Enhancing Justice and Security

Senator Zaffirini strongly believes that all Texans should have equal access to justice and the legal system.

To advance this principle, in 2015 she authored and passed Senate Bill (SB) 478 and SB 512 to create simple, standardized forms for landlord-tenant disputes, wills and other basic legal matters.

"These changes will benefit low-income Texans who cannot afford to hire attorneys and will enhance the efficiency of courts," she said. "All Texans, regardless of income, should be able to defend the dignity of their living conditions and create wills to pass property to their loved ones."

She also sponsored and passed House Bill (HB) 388 by Rep. Richard Raymond, D-Laredo, closing a loophole to ensure that family violence victims receive needed protections after a perpetrator is released from prison.

What's more, with cyber-attacks on the rise, Senator Zaffirini expanded her leadership role on cybersecurity policy by authoring and passing a package of bills to enhance the security of data in the state's information technology system.

Despite record levels of support, her legislation allowing Texas to join the 46 other states that prohibit texting while driving fell one vote short of passing.

Many bills don't pass until the second or third try," she said. "This was the fourth consecutive session I've filed a texting ban bill, and the 2017 session will be my fifth."

Honoring Veterans

Since 2009 Texas' Fund for Veterans' Assistance has provided more than \$51 million in grant funding to organizations throughout Texas to assist more than 190,000 veterans and their families.

In 2015 Senator Zaffirini authored and passed SB 1879, ensuring that donations to the fund are used where they are needed most. She also sponsored and passed HB 1584 by Rep. Joe Farias, D-San Antonio, which expands opportunities for Texans to make voluntary donations to the fund.

"Texas is home to more than 1.5 million veterans from all walks of life," Senator Zaffirini said. "These brave Americans risk their lives and spend long periods away from their families to protect the freedoms we cherish. The best way we can honor them is to ensure they have the services and support they need."

She also supported legislation by Senator Juan "Chuy" Hinojosa, D-McAllen, enhancing the ability of veterans to access gainful employment and obtain medical services through a new medical school at The University of Texas-Rio Grande Valley.

What's more, she worked with San Marcos City Council Member Jude Prather and Land Commissioner George P. Bush to help veterans in counties affected by the 2015 Memorial Day floods rebuild by securing them lower interest rates on housing loans.

Promoting Government Reform & Transparency

Continuing her decade-long effort to reform government contracting procedures, Senator Zaffirini authored four bills to improve management, efficiency and transparency at every stage of the contracting process, including planning, procurement, contract formation and oversight.

While several of her bills died in the last days of the 2015 legislative session, she sponsored and passed HB 2634, eliminating a loophole that reduced competitive bidding for construction projects.

"Count on me to continue my quest to save millions of Texas tax dollars by improving state contracting procedures," she said.

She also authored and passed SB 1844, which lays the groundwork for improving how state agencies share data online with the public.

Stopping Oil and Gas Theft

SD 21 is home to the majority of rigs, the majority of production and the highest-producing counties in the Eagle Ford Shale. Accordingly, Senator Zaffirini, a member of the Senate Natural Resources Committee, prioritizes addressing the opportunities and challenges associated with oil and gas development.

In 2015 she sponsored and passed HB 3291 by Rep. Raymond, which would have increased the penalty for oil and gas theft to a second-degree felony.

"Oil and gas theft is a serious problem in Texas that results in millions of dollars' worth of losses each year," the senator said.

While Governor Greg Abbott vetoed the bill, Senator Zaffirini will work to address his concerns and pass it in 2017.

As Senate Chair of the Eagle Ford Shale Legislative Caucus, Senator Zaffirini worked closely with House Chair Rep. John Cyrier, R-Lockhart, to promote the caucus' goals. Since 2012 its membership has grown by 70 percent—from 20 members to 34, including 9 senators.

In 2015 the caucus continued to make itself an effective force by connecting lawmakers, hosting educational seminars and information sessions, researching and discussing pressing regional issues and creating a watch-list of key legislation that impacts Texas' shale regions.

The caucus includes lawmakers not only from the Eagle Ford Shale, but also from major oil and gas business centers such as Houston and San Antonio and from other shale regions throughout the state, a diversity that enhances its effectiveness.

"With the departure of several key energy legislators this year and next, the

Caucus is preparing to play an even greater role during the 2017 session," Senator Zaffirini said.

Solving Local Problems

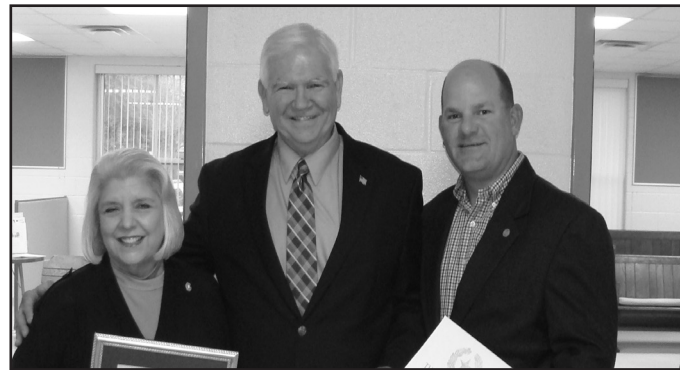
Senator Zaffirini prioritizes working with constituents and local leaders to address the needs of communities throughout SD 21.

"No issue is too big or too small, and any issue that is important to a constituent is important to me," she said. "Local legislation is an opportunity to develop solutions that meet specific community needs."

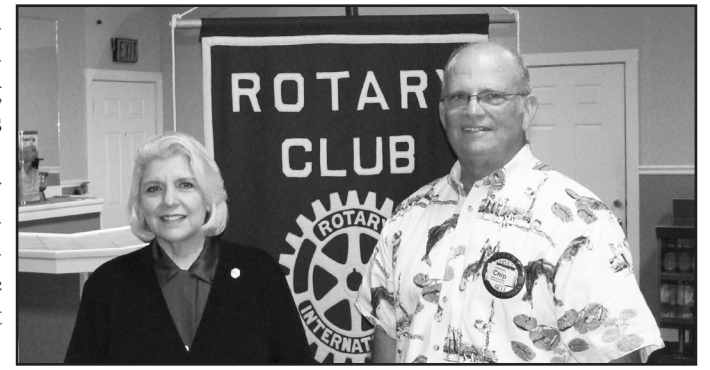
In 2015, for example, she sponsored and passed HB 3615 by Rep. Jason Isaac, R-Dripping Springs, which will allow San Marcos to use some of its municipal hotel occupancy tax to support the city's wonderful sports facilities and fields, defraying the cost of hosting events and boosting the local tourism industry.

She also sponsored and passed HB 716 by Rep. J.M. Lozano, R-Kingsville, helping law enforcement officers enforce commercial vehicle regulations in San Patricio County, which has seen a recent surge in truck traffic.

Working with a diverse group of stakeholders, she also championed bipartisan legislation to keep the San Marcos River in Caldwell and Guadalupe counties clean, safe and enjoyable for all while protecting private property rights.



FORMER WILSON COUNTY JUDGE Marvin Quinney (center) receives proclamations celebrating his retirement from Senator Judith Zaffirini, D-Laredo, and Rep. John Kuempel, R-Seguin.



SERVICE ABOVE SELF is the motto for Rotarians, including business owner J. Carroll "Chip" Weaver, who is shown welcoming Senator Judith Zaffirini to a Sinton Rotary Club meeting.



COLLABORATING WITH LOCAL LEADERS, Senator Judith Zaffirini addresses the issues that matter to Senate District 21. She is shown in photograph 1. with McMullen County Groundwater Conservation District Director David Longan; 2. with former George West Mayor Sylvia Steele; 3. discussing South Bexar County issues with former Southside ISD Board Member Frank Cannon, Emergency Services District 8 Board Member Raymond Lopez and Sylvia Mendelsohn; 4. welcoming Linda Jo Soliz, Jim Hogg County's first female commissioner, to the Texas Capitol; and 5. visiting with Darwin Avant, the former La Salle County Sheriff and founder of the Los Cazadores Deer Contest.

Transportation Needs Great Throughout Texas, SD 21

Transportation is a pressing issue for Texas in general and for Senate District (SD) 21 in particular. Urban areas along the fast-growing I-35 corridor are facing increased traffic and are exploring a range of solutions including roads, rail and ride-sharing services. In the rural parts of the district, however, maintaining a network of highways and farm-to-market roads remains critical to commerce and everyday life.

Budget Makes Key Investments

The 84th Texas Legislature passed a \$209.4 billion two-year budget, an increase of 3.6 percent from the previous biennium. In spite of this increase, spending remained fiscally conservative, leaving \$6.4 billion unspent and coming in \$2.9 billion below the state's constitutional spending cap.

"Although the economy remained strong entering the legislative session in January, 2015, and the state was projected to start the next budget year with a surplus of \$7.5 billion," Senator Judith Zaffirini explained, "we always ensure that we spend within our means and are prepared for unexpected changes or disasters."

Leaving a budget surplus was responsible because the price of oil, which impacts greatly oil and gas industry activity and thus our state economy, has decreased from more than \$100 per barrel of West Texas Intermediate crude oil in July, 2014, to less than \$50 per barrel one year later. Nevertheless, the Legislature's budget included some important investments to start the effort to meet our critical infrastructure needs.

Transportation funding was boosted when \$1.3 billion of state highway funding that had been used for other purposes was appropriated to be used only to build and maintain highways. The Legislature also passed a constitutional amendment placed on the November, 2015, ballot. If adopted, it will dedicate \$5 billion in state sales taxes and, starting in 2020, 35 percent of vehicle sales taxes, to the construction and maintenance of state roads.

The Legislature invested an additional \$130 million in high quality pre-K programs and authorized a long-overdue \$3.1 billion for tuition revenue bonds (TRBs) for 64 construction proj-

To address Texas' transportation needs, in 2015 Senator Judith Zaffirini co-authored Senate Joint Resolution (SJR) 5 by Senator Robert Nichols, R-Jacksonville, which, with voter approval, will dedicate revenues derived from the State's sales taxes to the State Highway Fund.

"This measure would add \$5 billion to the fund every two years for construction and maintenance of the state's transportation system beginning in 2018," she

ects at 59 higher education institutions. These include much-needed classrooms, labs, engineering facilities, and other buildings at our fast-growing colleges and universities. In addition to supporting our higher education system, these projects create jobs and have a dramatic economic multiplier effect on our state.

What's more, the Legislature made these investments while cutting taxes. The businesses we rely on to provide jobs and incomes for our population received a 25 percent reduction in their business taxes. Property owners also received relief through a \$10,000 increase to their homestead exemption, a tax cut that should provide the average homeowner with a savings of \$200 annually.

In the end, the budget included at least some small steps toward addressing each of the state's primary goals. It grew modestly along with Texas' population and expanding needs, reserved a healthy surplus for future and unforeseen needs, invested partially in key infrastructure including transportation and education, and provided some taxpayer relief.

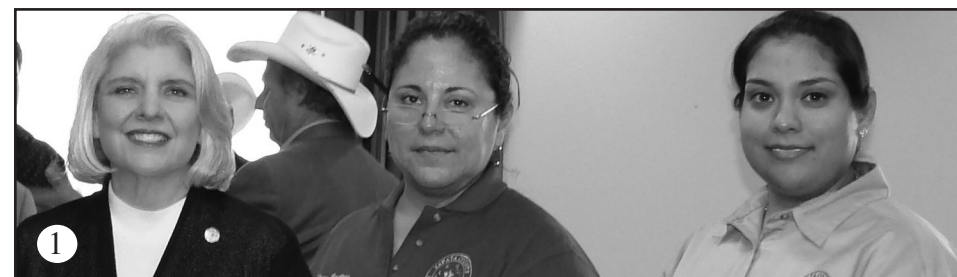
said. "It won't solve all of our transportation challenges, but it is a good start."

SD 21 is home to the Port of Laredo, which is one of the nation's busiest ports of entry and its single biggest inland port, as well as part of the Port of Corpus Christi, the nation's sixth largest port in total tonnage. Because of the amount of cargo moved by the transportation and shipping industries, Texas is especially vulnerable to the growing problem of cargo theft.

In 2015 Senator Zaffirini authored and passed Senate Bill 1828, which creates the offense of "cargo theft" to specifically address organized crime operations targeting goods transported in commerce. Texas leads the nation in cargo theft, which accounts for an estimated loss of from \$10 billion to \$25 billion per year in the United States.

"My legislation addresses this problem by facilitating the prosecution of cargo theft and stiffening penalties," the senator said. "Reducing cargo theft will save tens and perhaps hundreds of millions of dollars that might otherwise flow out of our economy and into the hands of criminals."

She also sponsored and passed House Bill (HB) 1422, facilitating the development of San Patricio County's rail infrastructure, and HB 2861 by Rep. Richard Raymond, D-Laredo, which will allow the City of Laredo to designate four corridors for trucks carrying overweight and oversize cargo, limiting the impact of the heavy truck traffic to certain roadways.



THROUGHOUT SD 21, Senator Judith Zaffirini prioritizes meeting with constituents and addressing their concerns. She is shown in 1. with Zapata County leaders (L-R) Rosa Elena Martinez and Bobbie Meza-Barrera, and in 2. with former Lockhart Mayor Ray Sanders.



ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE should be a right for Texans of all ages, incomes and abilities. Senator Judith Zaffirini is shown in 1. with Starr County family physician Dr. Jake Margo; in 2. with young constituent Miles Mitchell in Karnes County; and in 3. with A.J. Zunker at a meeting in Campbellton in Atascosa County.

Senator Zaffirini Champions Healthy Communities

A member of the Senate Health and Human Services Committee since 1987, Senator Judith Zaffirini believes that healthy families are the foundation of prosperous communities. Accordingly, she champions access to quality health and human services for all Texans, especially the very young, the very old, the very poor and persons with disabilities.

New laws resulting from her 2015 health care legislation include Senate Bill (SB) 1889, which gives new hope to parents who have had to relinquish their parental rights solely to secure mental health services for their child.

"My bill helps parents facing this heartbreaking situation preserve their rights and their ability to participate in their child's life," Senator Zaffirini said. "Specifically, it requires the Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS), if it is in the best interest of a child in this situation, to discuss the option of joint managing conservatorship with the child's parents."

The bill also requires the agency to collect data regarding the number of families impacted by this issue and prohibits inappropriately listing these parents on the state's abuse and neglect registry.

Research by Texas universities has shown a high rate of homelessness—as high as 41 percent—among youth who transition out of foster care. Another of Senator Zaffirini's bills, SB 1117, aims to lower the rate by requiring DFPS to address housing stability in each foster youth's transition plan.

"Our goal is to help ensure foster youth stay on the pathway to independent living and self-sufficiency," she said.

Thanks to House Bill (HB) 3283 by Rep. John Zerwas, R-Richmond, and

Senator Zaffirini, Texans soon will be able to make donations of more than one dollar to the state's organ donation registry during the vehicle registration and driver's license application processes.

The bill, the senator's sixth related to organ donation, also will enhance opportunities for commercial driver's license holders to register as organ donors and expand the use of mobile technology for registration.

"Every additional person who registers as a donor helps bring hope to Texans in need of life-saving organs or tissue," said Senator Zaffirini, a registered organ donor.

A longtime champion for enhanced educational opportunities for persons with disabilities, the senator collaborated with Rep. Elliott Naishtat, D-Austin, to pass SB 37 and HB 1807. They require the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board to collect data regarding persons with disabilities' participation in higher education and develop an inventory of post-secondary opportunities for this population.

"We must ensure persons with disabilities have access to higher education opportunities that will help them pursue careers and live productive, fulfilling lives," she said.

Other bills Senator Zaffirini passed in 2015 to safeguard the rights of persons with disabilities include SB 1880, which protects persons with disabilities served by managed care organizations from abuse, neglect and exploitation and HB 1428 by Rep. Richard Raymond, D-Laredo, which supports the ability of persons with disabilities to become homeowners.

Senator Zaffirini is pro-life and pro-women's health, which is why she authored and passed SB 1128, requiring syphilis testing of pregnant women in the third trimester.

"Rates of congenital syphilis are shockingly high in Texas, although it can be prevented through early detection and treatment," she said. "Testing for syphilis during the third trimester not only will reduce the risk of babies being born with serious complications, but also literally will save lives."

Continuing her decades long advocacy for persons with mental illness, she also authored and passed SB 1129, which prohibits hog-tying and other potentially dangerous methods of restraint from being used during the transportation of a person experiencing a psychiatric crisis.

How to Contact Senator Judith Zaffirini

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Senator Zaffirini Named *Best of the Legislature*

Senator Judith Zaffirini's dedication to public service and her constituents is as strong today as it was in 1987 when she became the first Mexican American woman elected to the Texas Senate. Since then, she has received more than 800 honors for her legislative, public service and professional work, including more than 240 in communication.

In 2015 Senator Zaffirini was named among the top ten "Best of the Legislature" by the acclaimed non-partisan online news service, *Capitol Inside*, which called her "one of the most effective, determined and hardest-working lawmakers in the history of the state."

The article also praised her productivity, work ethic and bipartisan approach to passing legislation: "Zaffirini couldn't have passed so many bills without solid working relationships with her GOP colleagues. The latest production rates are a testament as well to her tenacity, passion, an unrivaled work ethic and unfathomable devotion."

The senator has cast 55,666 consecutive votes and maintained 100 percent perfect attendance in the Senate since 1987, except for breaking quorum deliberately in 2003 to prevent a harmful and untimely redistricting that violated the Voting Rights Act.

Senator Zaffirini previously was named to *Capitol Inside's* "All Decades Teams," and Texas Monthly has named Senator Zaffirini one of Texas' "10 Best Legislators" four times.

In 2015 the Imaginarium of South Texas honored the senator with the Imagine Award for her longtime advocacy for science, technology, engineering, the arts and mathematics education.

What's more, she received 27 statewide and 7 national awards in 2015 from the Press Women of Texas (PWT) and the National Federation of Press Women. PWT also honored her with its 2015 Ann Faragher Sweepstakes Award and named her its 2015 Communicator of Achievement.

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Judith Zaffirini
2015-2016
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Perhaps most meaningful and memorable, her son, Carlos Zaffirini Jr., endowed \$100,000 scholarships in her name at The University of Texas at Austin, Baylor College of Medicine and Texas A&M International University. The Beaumont Foundation honored her and Carlos Sr. with an endowed scholarship at her hometown university. Buildings bearing her name are a library at Laredo Community College, the student success building at A&M International, an elementary school at United ISD in Laredo and a drug treatment facility in Edinburg.



FAITH AND FAMILY are the inspiration for Senator Judith Zaffirini's work in the Texas Senate, and what she wishes for her own family is what she champions for all SD 21 families. Hers includes her husband, Carlos Sr.; their son, Carlos Jr.; and Carlos Jr.'s wife, Audrey.

She holds B.S., M.A. and PhD degrees from UT-Austin, each with a 3.9 grade-point average, and was named a Distinguished Alumna by the Texas Exes.

Senator Zaffirini is featured in 24 books and referenced in 19. Her story is told in *If Judy Pappas Can Do It, Anybody Can*, her booklet for students at Senator Judith Zaffirini Elementary School in Laredo.

A lector at Blessed Sacrament Catholic Church, the senator has been married to Carlos Sr. for 50 years. Their son, Carlos Jr., an attorney and businessman, lives in Austin with his wife, Audrey.