

## **Senator Birdwell's 'Capitol Update'** ***1-15-15***

Greetings from your Texas Capitol! In order to make sure I'm providing topical and pertinent information to you, the citizens I serve, my staff and I typically compile this newsletter on a bi-weekly basis throughout the session. If you are receiving this Capitol Update secondhand and would like to subscribe, please visit <http://www.senate.state.tx.us/75r/Senate/members/dist22/Signup.htm>. Now, on to the Update!

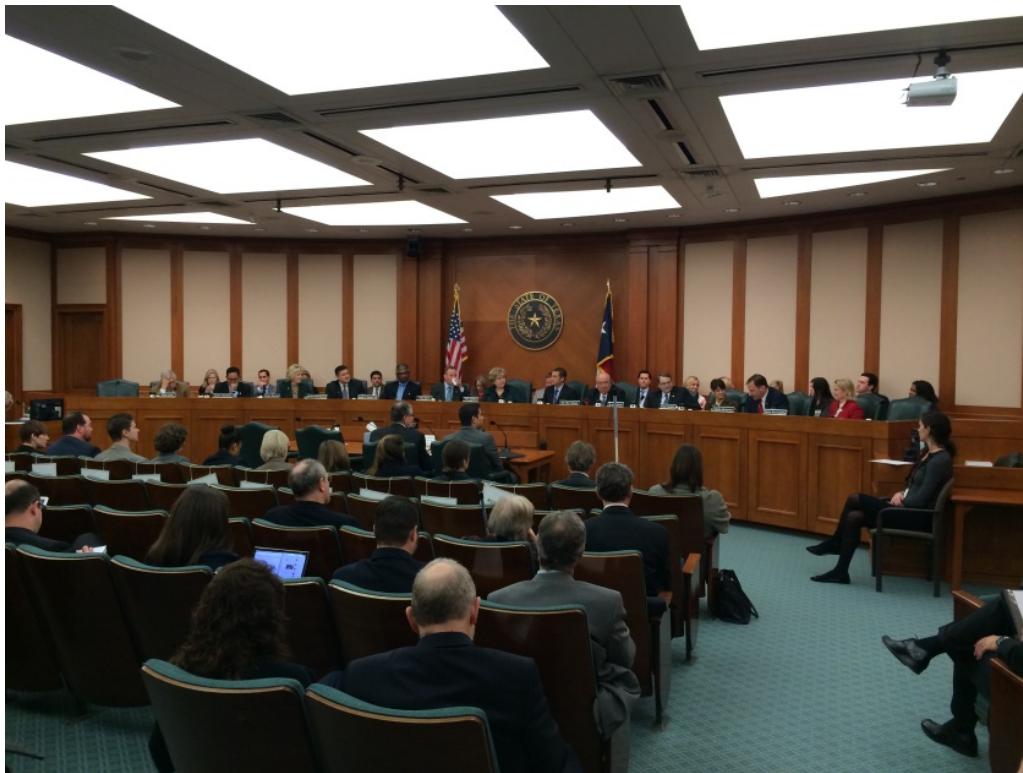


*Pictured in the Senate chamber with my wife Mel, son Matt, and future daughter-in-law Ann-Marie Craig*

### **Opening Day of the 84<sup>th</sup> Legislative Session**

At noon on Tuesday, gavels were struck in the Texas House and Senate chambers, thus signifying the start of the 84<sup>th</sup> legislative session. With 25 new State Representatives and eight new Senators on hand, the Capitol was abuzz with friends, family and constituents from all over Texas. I was delighted to see so many friends from SD-22 in the building! In the Senate, it was an exciting day focused on both those who were coming in and those who were departing. Nathan Hecht, Chief Justice of the Texas Supreme Court, kicked off the day by swearing in the newly-elected members of the Texas Senate, as well as the sitting senators who ran for and won their re-election bids. The next item of

business was to elect the President Pro-tem of the Senate; traditionally, the most senior member of the body who has never served in the President Pro-tem capacity is selected. This session, 2014 President Pro-tem Craig Estes (R-Wichita Falls) relinquished the gavel to Senator Juan “Chuy” Hinojosa (D-McAllen). In the 2015 interim, the President Pro-tem will be Senator Kevin Eltife (R-Tyler). After some additional administrative business, the Senate passed a resolution and spoke in honor of Lieutenant Governor David Dewhurst’s 12 years of service as presiding officer of the Texas Senate. Next week, on January 20, Senator Dan Patrick will be inaugurated as the new Lieutenant Governor of Texas at the same time that Greg Abbott is inaugurated as Governor. I am honored to have been asked to serve as Chair of Lieutenant Governor-elect Patrick’s Inaugural Committee, and Mel and I look forward to joining he and his wife, Jan, at the dais on Inauguration Day.



*The final meeting of the Sunset Advisory Commission before the 2014-15 committee findings are addressed in the Texas House and Senate*

### **Final Hearing of the Sunset Advisory Commission**

On Wednesday I participated in my last official hearing as a member of the Sunset Advisory Commission. As an appointee for the 2011-2015 term, however, my duties are not yet complete. Having spent several months of the legislative interim in hearings and planning meetings for the 20 agencies before Sunset, it is now the duty of the committee members, their staffs and the Texas Legislative Council to draft our recommendations into bills. At that point, each bill will go through the standard legislative procedures—requiring passage through both the House and Senate, and ultimately requiring the signature of Governor Abbott. With 20 agencies and entities having been reviewed during the interim, the five House members and five Senate members on the commission will now take a certain number of the aforementioned bills and file them for passage. In a later Capitol Update, I will share with you the outcome of this rigorous and important process. For now, however, I want to reiterate how fortunate I have been to be a part of this process for nearly four years. Longtime readers of my Capitol Updates have more than once seen my comments about the importance of the Sunset Advisory Commission, and my opinion has not changed. It has been a blessing to serve on a legislative committee that has allowed me to live up to my campaign promises of curbing the growth of government, cutting bureaucratic excess and controlling state spending.

## **Two Staff Updates**

In a previous Capitol Update, I addressed the maternity leave of my northern District Manager Taylor Blackburn. I am pleased to officially report that Taylor will be returning to her duties serving the constituents of five of our 10 counties—Ellis, Hood, Johnson, Somervell and Tarrant—on Monday, February 2nd. Though my team and I made sure that no services or attention was denied to constituents during her departure, we will certainly be glad to have her back as part of ‘Team Birdwell.’ Additionally, I am delighted to share that my longtime Legislative Director, Anna Paulson, was married to her fiancé, Clay, this past Saturday, and can now be reached via her married name—Anna Barnett ([anna.barnett@senate.state.tx.us](mailto:anna.barnett@senate.state.tx.us)).

## **Governor Perry’s Farewell Address**

This afternoon before a joint session of the Texas House and Senate, Governor Rick Perry will deliver his farewell address to the legislature. Governor Perry has served the State of Texas for 30 years; he began his career as a member of the Texas House and served as the state’s Agriculture Commissioner and Lieutenant Governor. In 2000, he became the 47<sup>th</sup> Governor of Texas and was subsequently reelected three times, ultimately making him the longest serving governor in Texas history. Mel and I honor the work Governor Perry has done for the State of Texas, and we wish him Godspeed in all future endeavors.

As always, I hope you will take advantage of the opportunity to keep up with the happenings at your Texas Capitol. Please visit my official website at [www.senate.state.tx.us](http://www.senate.state.tx.us), and for all other needs, please visit the Texas Legislature Online at [www.capitol.state.tx.us](http://www.capitol.state.tx.us).

God bless you and God bless Texas!



Brian Birdwell  
State Senator, District 22

Austin: (512) 463-0122 // Waco: (254) 776-6225 // Granbury: (817) 573-9622  
[Brian.Birdwell@senate.state.tx.us](mailto:Brian.Birdwell@senate.state.tx.us) // [www.senate.state.tx.us](http://www.senate.state.tx.us) //