



End-of-Session Capitol Update

Greetings from the Texas Capitol!

As the Regular and First Called Session—or "special session"—comes to a close, I wanted to reach out to the citizens of Senate District 22 to give an update on what has been happening down in Austin. For approximately 170 days, I have been working to help pass principled, conservative legislation to ensure that Texas continues to prosper.

Before and during the regular and special sessions, most members of the Texas Legislature knew the challenges our state was facing, such as public and higher education, immigration reform, health care policy and the usage of key resources like energy and water.

Chief among these legislative challenges was our state's 2012-2013 budget. As you are certainly aware, Texas faced a historic budget shortfall for the upcoming biennium and nearly a \$4 billion deficit for the current biennium, both of which required tough decisions to be made over the past six months. I am proud to say that we balanced the Texas budget without raising taxes on citizens or businesses. To cover the 2010-2011 deficit, the Legislature used \$3 billion from the Rainy Day Fund and made \$1 billion in essential cuts to government, all the while leaving more than \$6 billion of the Rainy Day fund untouched. With regard to the 2012-2013 budget, below are some more specific numbers on State spending:

- Total State spending decreased by \$1.6 billion (2%) compared to 2010-2011 spending levels
- Mental Health Services funding totaled \$1.5 billion, maintaining 2010-2011 service levels for community mental health programs and maintains 2011 bed capacity at State mental health hospital beds
- Public Education prioritized through a State spending increase of 9%, or \$1.6 billion.

- Higher Education spending decreased 9.3%
- Border Security increased nearly doubling to \$219.5 million (compared to \$111 million in 2010-2011)
- One of the few other areas see an increase (3.2%) was Health & Human Services—much of this money was spent on Medicaid, a federally-mandated entitlement program through which Texas has little to no flexibility and limited ability to contain costs

Beyond the budget, the Legislature worked on—and passed—important bills such as the voter photo identification requirement (Voter ID), reforms to further reduce frivolous lawsuits (Loser Pays), private property owner's rights reform (Eminent Domain), the expansion of the Woman's Right to Know Act/sanctity-of-life sonogram requirement (Sonogram Bill), and the affirmation of a citizen's right to store a firearm in their private vehicle in their employer's parking lot (Commuter Carry). These are just a handful of the important bills passed this session to ensure the essential protection of individual citizens, private businesses and taxpayer dollars.

While we were able to pass many key bills, not every important piece of legislation made it to the Governor's desk. Specific examples include SB 354 (Campus Carry - Regular session) extending Concealed Handgun License-holders' rights to college campuses, SB 29 (TSA Bill - Special session) preventing the intrusive touching or searching of persons contrary to their fourth amendment rights, and most recently, SB 9 (Sanctuary Cities - Special session) prohibiting cities from ignoring immigration laws and allowing peace officers to inquire as to the legal status of arrested persons—just one of several immigration reform bills that did not become law.

Throughout the interim, I will be traveling to all 10 counties in the district, where I look forward to hearing from constituents and sharing some of my thoughts on the regular and special sessions.

During this time, communicating with constituents will remain one of my top priorities, so I welcome and invite you to contact the Waco, Granbury or Austin office with your questions, comments or concerns.

Each day I am honored to serve the residents of Senate District 22, and I thank you for your continued support and prayer. I look forward to seeing you in the district soon!

God Bless,



Brian Birdwell
State Senator, District 22

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