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## **SENATOR BRIAN BIRDWELL PLEASD TO ANNOUNCE CAPITOL STAFF**

AUSTIN—State Senator Brian Birdwell (R-Granbury) announced Wednesday the finalized list of his Capitol staff members going into the 83rd Legislative Session. Matthew Cope, Barbara Erickson, Spencer Harris, Stephen Leland, Anna Paulson, Liz Sanchez, Jason Steele and Ben Stratmann will represent the senator in the Austin office.

"I am excited to officially introduce my Capitol staff," said Sen. Birdwell. "The 83rd Legislative Session will be a rigorous one, so I am pleased to have such a talented team to help me serve the citizens of Senate District 22."

Chief of Staff Ben Stratmann came to the senator's staff from the office of Lieutenant Governor David Dewhurst in January of 2011. In the past two years he has worked in several roles, including Policy Analyst, Communications Director and Campaign Manager. Ben will also advise the senator on transportation, water and budget issues.

Legislative Director Anna Paulson began as a campaign aide to Sen. Birdwell in early 2010. Before being promoted to spearhead the senator's legislative efforts, Anna previously served as Senior Policy Analyst for committees such as Veterans Affairs & Military Installations (VAMI), Business & Commerce and will continue on the Sunset Advisory Commission.

Director of Constituent Services Barbara Erickson is a veteran Capitol staffer, working in the Texas House and Senate since 1994. A former resident of Senate District 22, Barbara has been Sen. Birdwell's lead advisor on constituent casework and local affairs since late 2010.

Senior Policy Analyst Spencer Harris joined the staff in July of 2012. Spencer previously worked as a senior advisor at the Texas Public Policy Foundation, where his studies in state health care and welfare policy were printed in numerous national and state publications.

Policy Analyst Jason Steele, a longtime resident of Senate District 22, is the former Special Assistant to Comptroller Susan Combs and Senior Legislative Aide to State Representative Jim Pitts of Waxahachie. Jason will serve as the senator's advisor on the Criminal Justice, State Affairs and VAMI committees.

Policy Analyst Matt Cope is a recent graduate of Texas A&M University, and has previously served as Legislative Aide to State Representative Kelly Hancock and in the office of Congressman Jeb Hensarling. Matt will serve as the senator's advisor on the Natural Resources, Economic Development and Agricultural, Rural Affairs & Homeland Security Committees.

Administrative Aide Liz Sanchez is a native of San Antonio and a graduate of the University of the Incarnate Word. Liz served previously as a Senate Messenger and State Preservation Board Capitol Guide, and will play a key role in all staff affairs and office operations.

Also joining the staff through the Bob Bullock Scholars Program is Stephen Leland, a Baylor University Army ROTC candidate and political science major.

Senator Birdwell also welcomes his District Managers, both of whom joined the staff in early 2012 to manage constituent casework and serve as local liaisons on his behalf. Shelly Verlander (Waco) is a certified paralegal and has worked with major companies such as Motorola USA and Broadwing Communications. Taylor Blackburn (Granbury) worked in management of a private contracting business and is a graduate of the Travis Academy of Fine Arts in Fort Worth.

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*State Senator Brian Birdwell is a native Texan, decorated military veteran, survivor of the 9/11 terrorist attack on the Pentagon, and a proud husband and father. Brian proudly represents Senate District 22, which includes Bosque, Ellis, Falls, Hill, Hood, Johnson, McLennan, Navarro, Somervell and Tarrant [partial] Counties.*