

T E X A S S T A T E S E N A T O R

CHARLES PERRY

CAPITOL REPORT 2025

Dear Friends and New Constituents,

While the door may have closed on the 89th Texas Legislative Session June 2nd, it was followed by a Special Session that began on July 21st.

This session was dominated by property tax initiatives, public education reforms, significant public education funding, increased access to rural healthcare, and historic water infrastructure. The legislature passed a budget that appropriated \$338 billion for the 2026-2027 biennium, while the supplemental funding bill, House Bill 500, appropriated an additional \$13.2 billion for the current biennium.

The legislature continues to review the agency that oversees electric generation, the Public Utility Commission, and has approved several changes to strengthen the grid this session. In addition, the state added \$5 billion for dispatchable and reliable energy; and established a Nuclear Energy Fund to support research and deploy nuclear reactors. The state is leading the way with one of the first nuclear reactors being developed in Abilene, Texas, in the heart of Senate District 28.

As Chairman of the Water, Agriculture, and Rural Affairs Committee, I authored and passed the state's first long-term commitment to funding water supply, subject to voter approval in November. If approved, the constitutionally dedicated \$1 billion a year (from existing revenue, no new taxes) will go towards addressing the state's water needs for the next 20 years.

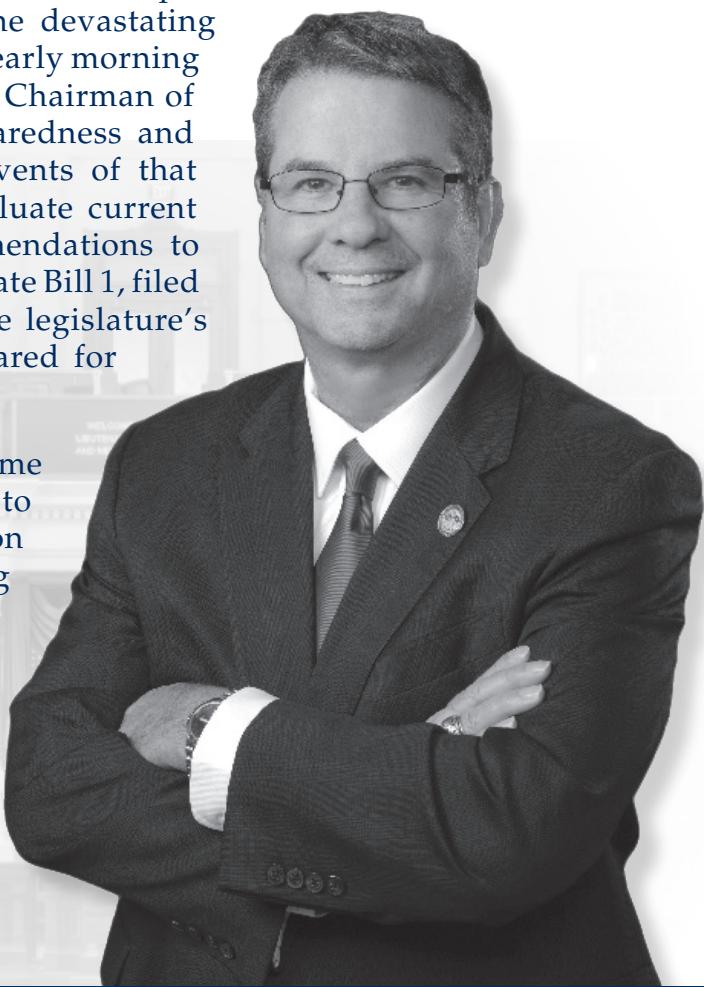
At the time of this publication, the 89th First Called Special Session has convened in response to the devastating floods that struck the Hill Country in the early morning hours of July 4th. I have been appointed Chairman of the Select Committee on Disaster Preparedness and Flooding, tasked with reviewing the events of that day. The committee's purpose is to evaluate current preparedness efforts and make recommendations to improve the state's disaster response. Senate Bill 1, filed during this special session, serves as the legislature's response to ensure Texas is better prepared for future disasters.

Serving the rural communities that I call home is an honor and a blessing. I look forward to meeting each of you after the special session while traveling around West Texas hosting town hall meetings.

God Bless Texas,



Senator Charles Perry
Senate District 28



ABOUT CHARLES PERRY

State Senator Charles Perry is a lifelong West Texan and a CPA from Lubbock. He was elected to the Texas Senate in 2014 after serving two terms in the Texas House of Representatives.

Outside his work in the legislature, Senator Perry has served his community as past president of the Lubbock Boys and Girls Club, American Business Clubs, and Community Partners, and previously served on the board of the National Council on Family Violence and the Women's Protective Services of Lubbock. He also serves as a deacon at his church, Southcrest Baptist, in Lubbock.

Senator Perry grew up in the district he currently represents, graduating from Sweetwater High School. He earned his Bachelor of Business Administration in accounting and management information systems from Texas Tech University.

He has been married to his wife, Jacklyn, for over 43 years, and together they have a daughter, Jordan, and a son, Matthew, and four grandchildren. His entire family are all graduates of Texas Tech University.

LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEES

Water, Agriculture, and Rural Affairs, Chair

Health & Human Services, Vice-Chair

Finance

State Affairs

Transportation

Select Committee on Disaster Preparedness and Flooding, Chair

State Water Implementation Fund for Texas (SWIFT), Co-Chair

Texas Infrastructure Resiliency Fund (TIRF), Co-Chair

GUBERNATORIAL APPOINTMENTS

Southwestern States Water Commission and the Western States Water Council

PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

The 1876 Constitution established the election of a Senate President Pro Tempore at the beginning and close of each session. If the governor and lieutenant governor are both out of the state, the president pro tempore is acting governor in their absence. I am honored to be elected the President Pro Tempore for the Interim of the 89th Legislative Session.



TEXAS' HISTORIC WATER INVESTMENT

Senate Bill 7 and House Joint Resolution 7, priority legislation for Lt. Governor Dan Patrick and House Speaker Dustin Burrows, were introduced at the request of Governor Greg Abbott to address Texas water needs. These measures set the stage for major, long-term improvements to the state's water supply, treatment, distribution, wastewater, and flood mitigation infrastructure. As a result, over **\$2.6 billion** in state funding was secured for water projects in the next two-years, including about **\$700 million** in matching federal funds. If approved by voters in November, an additional \$1 billion per year (from existing revenue, no new taxes) will be constitutionally dedicated to the Texas Water Fund for at least 20 years starting in 2027.

Additionally, the legislature appropriated:

\$181.6 million for flood planning and flood infrastructure projects.

\$120 million for the prototype molten salt nuclear reactor currently under construction at Abilene Christian University in partnership with Texas Tech University, which is specifically intended to power critically important desalination and produced water treatment infrastructure.

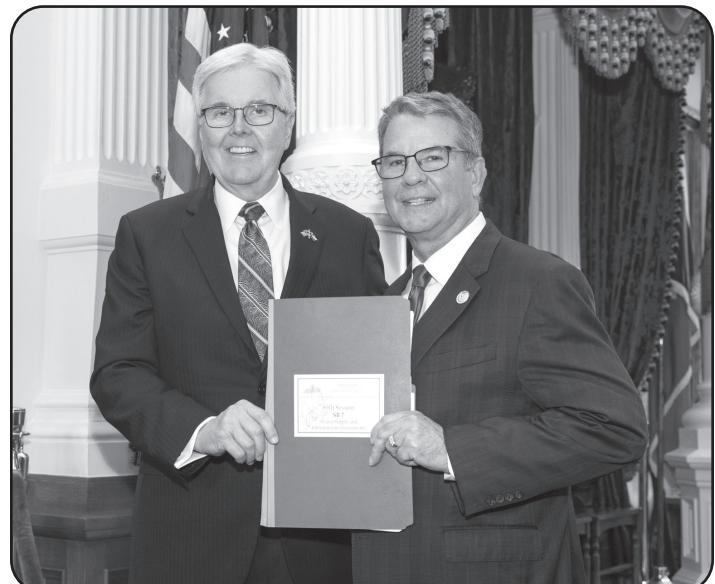
\$7.5 million for groundwater-related research.

\$7.2 million for agricultural water conservation efforts.

\$5 million for the Texas Produced Water Consortium administered by Texas Tech University.

\$3 million in financial, technical, and managerial assistance provided by the Texas Water Development Board to our state's small water utilities.

These appropriations total **\$23.6 billion**—the largest investment in water projects and programs the State of Texas has ever made. In February, Governor Abbott requested a “Texas-size investment in water” and made it an emergency priority for the session. The 89th Texas Legislature delivered that investment.



WATER POLICY

In addition to Senate Bill 7 and House Joint Resolution 7, I authored or sponsored 15 other water-related pieces of legislation. The highlights include:

House Bill 29, which requires large water utilities (i.e., with 150,000 or more service connections) to validate the results of their annual water loss audits, submit annual water loss mitigation plans to the Texas Water Development Board, and undergo enhanced water loss audit validations every ten years.

Senate Bills 565 and 740, employ various means to incentivize improvements to water infrastructure operated and maintained by small water systems.

House Bills 2078 and 2080, enhance accountability measures for groundwater conservation districts.

Senate Bill 480, authorizing joint efforts among local governments for water-related research and planning.



STATE BUDGET

The members of the legislature worked diligently to establish a budget that meets the needs of all Texans. The House and Senate passed Senate Bill 1 (SB 1), which appropriates **\$338 billion** for fiscal years 2026-2027. Along with House Bill 500, the supplemental budget, which appropriated an additional **\$13.2 billion** for the current biennium.

SENATE BILL 1 HIGHLIGHTS

- Includes the largest increase in funding for the Foundation School Program in Texas history to support pay raises for our teachers and support staff, provides better support for our special education students, and enhances school safety.
- SB 1 prioritizes keeping Texas communities safe through public safety initiatives such as hiring additional DPS Troopers, bolstering law enforcement funds for rural communities, improving initiatives to retain and recruit Department of Criminal Justice correctional and parole officer positions, and equipping cities and counties to combat organized crime.
- The budget makes targeted investments toward our most vulnerable populations by raising the base wage for attendants who serve individuals with disabilities in the community, additional funding to operate newly constructed or expanded inpatient mental health facilities to reduce burdens on local jails, and doubles the number of new Youth Crisis Outreach Teams to increase access to crisis mental health services for youth.
- SB 1 provides the second round of funding for the Texas Energy Fund to ensure long-term reliability and resilience of the state's electrical grid; allocates funding for specific projects across the state to address water infrastructure, flood, wastewater, and supply needs; and addresses our state's transportation needs for highway project development, construction, and maintenance.

HOUSE BILL 500 SUPPLEMENTAL BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS

- \$1.3 billion** to three agencies; Department of State Health Services, Health and Human Services Commission, and Department of Family Protective Services to expand laboratory capacity, facilities, and services. This amount also includes a \$750 million increase for Medicaid.
- \$1.3 billion** to the Texas University Fund, an endowment that provides research funding for Texas's higher education institutions.
- \$369 million** to the Teacher Retirement System for TRS ActiveCare health insurance.
- \$382 million** to the Forest Service for aircrafts to fight wildfires and \$44 million for rural volunteer fire departments.

Overall, House Bill 500 makes strong investments in education, state facilities, medical science and research, information technology, and our natural resources and disaster mitigation.

SENATE DISTRICT 28 BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS

\$264 million for Texas Tech University.

\$25 million for the Rural Cancer Collaborative at Texas Tech University Health Science Center.

\$5 million for the Centers of Excellence in Artificial Intelligence at Angelo State University.

\$3 million for Student Success and Military Education Support Center at Midwestern State University.

\$40 million for Lubbock Reese Redevelopment Authority airport upgrades.

\$5 million for the Rural Veterinary Incentive Program.

\$100 million for healthcare services for rural counties.

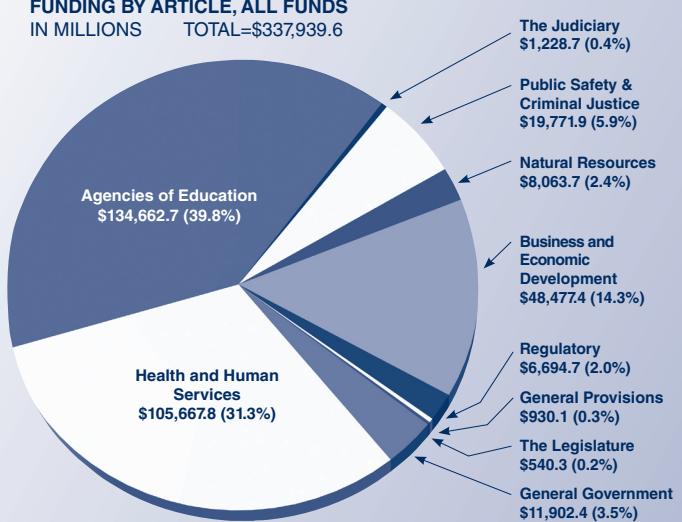
\$90 million for a rural county grant program to purchase ambulances.

\$120 million for the prototype molten salt nuclear reactor currently under construction at Abilene Christian University in partnership with Texas Tech University.

\$375,000 to enhance safety to the entrance of the State Veterans Cemetery in Lubbock.

GENERAL APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2026-27 BIENNIAL LEGISLATIVE BUDGET BOARD

FUNDING BY ARTICLE, ALL FUNDS IN MILLIONS TOTAL=\$337,939.6



NOTES:
(1) Substantive items funded in the Conference Committee Report for Senate Bill 1, Article IX, for the 2026-27 biennium are allocated to the prospective articles and agencies.
(2) Excludes Interagency Contracts.
(3) Biennial change and percentage change are calculated on actual amounts before rounding. Therefore, totals may not sum due to rounding.

LEGISLATIVE BUDGET BOARD ID: 9306

PROPERTY TAX RELIEF

Senate Bill 4 (SB 4), Senate Bill 23 (SB 23), and House Bill 9 (HB 9), key parts of the 89th Legislature's \$10 billion property tax relief package, were signed into law by Governor Abbott. These property tax cuts will deliver meaningful tax relief statewide to homeowners, seniors, and small business owners and will take effect pending voter approval in November.

SB 4 and SB 23 build on the momentum of the largest property tax cut in U.S. history, a record-breaking **\$22.7 billion** in 2023, with **\$10 billion** more in targeted school exemptions to help millions of Texans, from first-time homebuyers to seniors on fixed incomes.

- SB 4 & SJR 2** - Raises the ISD homestead exemption from \$100,000 to \$140,000, a 40% increase in homestead exemption in conjunction with SB 1, delivering an average annual savings of \$484 for 5.7 million homeowners, with fully state-funded hold-harmless guaranteed for school districts.
- SB 23 & SJR 85** - Raises the exemption for Texans over 65 and those with disabilities from \$10,000 to \$60,000, with SB 4's base exemption, bringing the total exemption to \$200,000, saving 2.08 million homeowners an average of \$907.87 annually. Creating a super majority of seniors paying zero ISD homestead taxes.
- HB 9 & HJR 1** - Raises the Business Personal Property (BPP) exemption to \$125,000, saving small business owners an average of \$2,500.

NO CAPITAL GAINS TAX

Senate Joint Resolution 18 proposes a constitutional amendment that prohibits the legislature from imposing a future tax on capital gains, both realized and unrealized, on individuals, families, estates, or trusts. The amendment seeks to permanently prevent the state from creating any form of personal capital gains tax.

RURAL HEALTHCARE AND CHILD WELFARE

One of the most pressing challenges facing our state is the ongoing crisis of rural hospital closures. To address this, I sponsored House Bill 18 (HB 18), the Rural Health Stabilization and Innovation Act, which lays the groundwork for long-term rural hospital viability through targeted planning and investment. HB 18 creates a State Office of Rural Hospital Finance at HHSC to serve as a central resource to help rural providers draw down Medicaid and federal dollars. The legislation also requires the state to assess and track which hospitals are most at risk through a new vulnerability index, ensuring support is directed where it is needed most. Additionally, the bill establishes four separate grant programs including emergency, workforce, and innovation grants and launches the Texas Rural Hospital Officer Academy, which will offer more than 100 hours of free annual training to rural hospital leaders. This legislation reflects our ongoing commitment to strengthening healthcare infrastructure in the regions that need it most.

On the child welfare front, I authored Senate Bill 1558 (SB 1558), which helps nonprofit foster care providers and single-source continuum contractors afford liability insurance while continuing to care for children in safe, stable environments. Under this reform, providers that meet rigorous state contract requirements such as background checks, staff training, and child safety protocols will receive protection under the Charitable Immunity and Liability Act. This change addresses the growing cost of liability coverage that has made it difficult for mission-driven organizations to remain in the foster care system. By reducing legal uncertainty and helping providers stay in operation, SB 1558 strengthens the long-term capacity of the foster care system and ensures vulnerable children continue to receive the support they need.



EDUCATION

This session, I supported House Bill 2, a transformative **\$8.5 billion** investment in Texas public education that puts students and teachers first. This legislation represents one of the most significant funding packages our schools have seen in years and reflects our deep commitment to strengthening classrooms, supporting educators, and creating safe, thriving learning environments for every child in Texas.

This legislation created several measures that will positively impact our public school districts and staff:

- Over **\$4 billion** for teacher and school staff compensation, including:
 - Raises of up to \$8,000 for experienced teachers with emphasis on rural districts.
 - Minimum \$2,500 raises for early-career teachers.
- Approximately **\$2 billion** for:
 - Expanding full-day pre-K programs.
 - Enhancing special education services.
- **\$1.3 billion** to support:
 - Early literacy and math screening in grades K–3.
 - Career and technical education readiness programs.
- **\$430 million** for school safety, including increased per-student and per-campus funding for security improvements.
- A new fixed cost allotment to help schools cover transportation, utilities, and benefits.

SCHOOL NUTRITION

This session, landmark legislation was passed to take a comprehensive approach to improving health and nutrition standards across Texas. Senate Bill 25 (SB 25) ensures that students in grades pre-K through 8 participate in daily physical activity, promoting healthier school environments by prohibiting the use of recess or PE as punishment, and introduces a high school elective on nutrition and wellness. The bill also strengthens nutrition education in higher education by requiring public universities and health-related institutions to integrate coursework based on guidelines from the newly created Texas Nutrition Advisory Committee. This committee, composed of independent experts, will develop science-based nutritional guidelines for use in schools, medical training programs, and professional education. Additionally, SB 25 empowers consumers by requiring clear warning labels on foods sold in Texas that contain certain additives banned in other countries. Through these reforms, Texas is leading the way in building a healthier future starting in our classrooms, campuses, and communities.

BANNING VAPE PENS DISGUISED AS SCHOOL SUPPLIES

In recent years vape pen companies have continued to deliberately target minors. The legislature has previously banned marketing and selling vape pens to minors, but some of these companies continue to pursue customers under the age of 21. Bad actors disguise vape pens as other products, like school supplies and office supplies, in a deliberate attempt to help minors hide that they are using a vape pen.



RURAL AMBULANCE SERVICE

Recognizing the vital role rural EMS services play in keeping Texas communities safe, I sponsored House Bill 3000, which creates the Rural Ambulance Service Grant Program under the Office of the Comptroller. This legislation ensures that counties with 68,750 residents or fewer can apply for funding to purchase new ambulances and bolster emergency medical services. Counties with fewer than 10,000 people may receive up to \$500,000, while those between 10,000 and 68,750 can access up to \$350,000 helping rural first responders bridge the gap in critical care funding and ensuring Texans across the state are not left waiting in a medical emergency.



Senate Bill 2024 is intended to enhance protections for minors in Texas by prohibiting the sale of vape pens that are intentionally disguised as other everyday items. This includes products shaped to resemble school supplies, such as highlighters, pens, and markers, as well as items like smartwatches, phone cases, earbuds, cosmetics, backpacks, and toys. By banning these deceptive designs, the legislation seeks to limit the ability of minors to conceal vaping devices, particularly in school settings.

To further prevent youth access to dangerous vape pen products, the bill prohibits the sale of vape pen liquids that are manufactured in China or a country that has been designated as a foreign adversary by the United States Secretary of Commerce. Many of the vape pen liquids that are being manufactured in China are untested, unregulated, and contain toxic chemicals that are dangerous to both children and adults.

SCHOOL DISCIPLINE AND ACCESS TO MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

There has been a steady increase in assaults on school employees and school-related threats. As a result, parents, teachers, and school administrators have raised concerns that violent and threatening students are regularly placing public schools at risk of harm. Additionally, the current discipline processes are often insufficient to address these dangerous student behaviors. Furthermore, there has also been a steady rise in the number of students who are engaging in classroom disruptions and inappropriate behaviors. These disruptions are impeding both the ability of teachers to teach and students to learn.

House Bill 6 (HB 6) has been in the making for three sessions. It has finally passed and makes significant changes to school discipline policies and expands access to mental health services for students. The legislation aims to provide school administrators with greater flexibility in handling classroom disruptions while addressing the growing demand for behavioral and mental health support across the state.

The bill revises the rules governing a teacher's ability to remove a student from the classroom. HB 6 provides clear and consistent consequences for students who assault a teacher. The bill offers an array of options for school administrators to place disruptive students in alternative learning environments depending on the severity of the classroom disruption.

In response to the mental health needs of students, HB 6 ensures students have access to appropriate mental health services through the Texas Child Mental Health Care Consortium. This program enables schools to virtually connect students with mental health services, including assessments and therapy, with parental consent.



Another big win was Senate Bill 1948 (SB 1948), which addresses local governments that impose expensive building codes on agricultural structures like barns, grain bins, and equipment sheds. These structures are not homes or commercial buildings and they should not be treated as such. SB 1948 prevents cities and counties from requiring burdensome regulations like fire sprinkler systems in ag-specific buildings, saving farmers and ranchers thousands of dollars in unnecessary retrofits.

I also proudly cosponsored House Bill 43, which strengthens the Texas Agricultural Finance Authority and makes it more accessible. The bill expands who is eligible for agricultural loans and grants by removing age restrictions and raising funding limits giving more farmers and agriculture businesses the tools they need to grow and thrive. It also creates a new program to help combat pests, diseases, and wildlife that threaten crops and livestock, with support from experts at Texas A&M AgriLife and the Texas Animal Health Commission.

At the end of the day, these bills are about listening to the people who know agriculture best and making sure state policies are helping them, not standing in their way. Whether it is cutting red tape, reducing costs, or expanding access to resources, I am committed to making sure Texas agriculture stays strong for generations to come.

WILDFIRE PREVENTION, PREPAREDNESS & RESPONSE

In response to the wildfires that devastated the Texas panhandle in 2024, I coauthored Senate Bill 34 with my colleague, Senator Kevin Sparks, a fellow West Texas Senator. The highlights of the legislation include:

- The creation of a statewide database of firefighting equipment administered by the Texas A&M Forest Service that will be accessible to all the state's fire departments and updated annually.
- An increase in the annual, cumulative funding cap for the Rural Volunteer Fire Department Assistance Fund from \$30 million per year to \$40 million per year.
- The creation of an interoperability council to develop a strategic plan to improve emergency communications between local, state, and federal partners.
- Requires improvements in communications between relevant state regulatory authorities to identify potentially dangerous electrical conditions in the state's energy infrastructure so those conditions can be addressed before they spark a fire.



AGRICULTURE

This session, I continued working to ensure that Texas agriculture stays strong, resilient, and supported by state laws that work for the people. Farmers, ranchers, and rural landowners know better than anyone what challenges they are facing, and many of the bills I supported were shaped by their firsthand knowledge.

I authored and passed Senate Bill 503 (SB 503), which brings the livestock brand registration system into the modern era. Branding is a time-tested way to protect livestock, but until now, the process for registering and looking up brands was scattered and outdated. SB 503 creates a centralized, electronic statewide registry. This new legislation will save time, reduce paperwork, and make it easier for law enforcement and producers to quickly identify and recover stray or stolen animals.

USEFUL STATE GOVERNMENT TOLL-FREE NUMBERS

Office of Consumer Credit Commissioner

Consumer Credit Helpline(800) 538-1579
No Call List Registration.....(888) 382-1222
Social Security Administration(800) 772-1213

Office of the Attorney General

Child Support.....(800) 252-8014
Consumer Protection Hotline(800) 621-0508
Crime Victim's Compensation..... (800) 983-9933
Public Information & Assistance.....(800) 252-8011

Office of the Governor

Citizen's Assistance Hotline.....(800) 843-5789

Texas Department of Family and Protective Services

Texas Abuse/Neglect Hotline.....(800) 252-5400
Foster Care and Adoption
Inquiry Hotline(800) 233-3405

Texas Department of State Health Services

Substance Abuse Services.....(855) 937-2372
WIC.....(800) 942-3678
Family and Community Services211
Mental Health Consumer Rights.....(800) 252-8154

Texas Health & Human Services Commission

24-Hour Information and Referral Network211
Disaster Assistance(800) 582-5233
Medicaid Hotline(800) 252-8263
Area Agencies on Aging(800) 252-9240
Consumer Rights/Services(800) 458-9858
Complaint & Intake Management(800) 458-9858

Medicaid Eligibility for Elderly & Disabled

SSI-related Food Stamp Benefits.....211
Texas Department of Criminal Justice
Crime Victim Clearinghouse.....(800) 848-4284
Offender Status Line.....(800) 535-0283
Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs
Hotline.....(800) 792-1119
Citizen's Opinion Hotline.....(800) 252-9600
Public Utility Commission.....(512) 936-7000

State Bar of Texas

Grievance Information.....(800) 932-1900
Lawyer Referral Service.....(800) 252-9690
Texas Commission for Civil Rights(888) 452-4778

Texas Commission on Environmental Quality
Hotline(888) 777-3186

Texas Department of Insurance

Information and Assistance(800) 252-3439

Division of Workers' Compensation

Injured Worker Hotline(800) 252-7031
Safety Violations Hotline(800) 452-9595

Texas Department of Public Safety

Emergency Roadside Assistance(800) 525-5555
Missing Persons Clearinghouse.....(800) 346-3243
Texas Crime Stoppers Hotline(800) 252-TIPS
Texas Medical Board
Consumer Complaint Hotline(800) 201-9353

Texas Veterans Commission

Veterans Hotline(800) 252-VETS



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