

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

KEVIN SPARKS

CAPITOL REPORT



An Open Letter to the Constituents of Senate District 31

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COMMITTEES:

Committee on Health and Human Services
Committee on Natural Resources and
Economic Development
Committee on Nominations, *Vice Chair*
Committee on Veteran Affairs
Committee on Water, Agriculture &
Rural Affairs

The Senate of Texas
KEVIN D. SPARKS
DISTRICT 31

Dear Fellow Texans,

On January 10th of this year, the Texas Senate hit the ground running to tackle critical issues facing our state. I am happy to report that at the close of the Regular Session of the 88th Texas Legislature, we have successfully addressed numerous concerns of our state. Much of this was achieved through legislation for the following:

District Specific

- Permian Basin Health Services District in Midland/Odessa
- Producer Owned Beef Processing Facility in Amarillo
- Nacero Natural Gas to Jet Fuel Conversion Facility in Penwell
- Property Exchange for West Texas Centers in Big Spring
- State Mental Health Hospital in Amarillo

Statewide

- Property Tax Relief
- Third-Party Assessment of Foster Care

I am proud of what my staff and I accomplished, and I look forward to continuing the work left unfinished.

West Texas boasts an abundance of resources, the greatest being our people—the constituents of District 31. Across the High Plains and the Permian Basin, I truly believe I represent the best people in our state. As a freshman senator, I was amazed at the number of individuals and organizations that made the trek to Austin during the session. Those meetings have informed and motivated the ongoing efforts of my office.

On behalf of my wife, Jill, and our family, I thank you for granting me the opportunity to serve as your state senator. I salute you for your sincere faith, hard work, and support of community. The preservation of these principles will enable the people of Texas to continue self-governance.

God Bless Texas,

Kevin D. Sparks
Texas State Senator
District 31

“Our constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other.”

—John Adams

ESCANEE EL CÓDIGO
QR PARA LEER EN
ESPAÑOL



Legislation and Funding

House Bill 492 Permian Basin Health Services District

House Bill 492 codifies the Mental Health Services District needed to fund and operate the Permian Basin Behavioral Health Center located between Midland and Odessa. The new hospital will be operated jointly by both Midland County and Ector County Hospital Districts.

Mental Health Care Funding

To address growing statewide mental health issues, the Legislature allocated nearly \$12 billion. This funding encompasses: various mental health programs, initiatives to enhance the mental health workforce, and the construction of facilities to increase the number of available beds for patients. In Senate Bill 30, an additional \$86.7 million was secured to double the number of the hospital beds for the Permian Basin Behavioral Health Center; now at 200 total. After local leadership in Amarillo expressed the need, \$159 million was designated for a 75-bed mental health hospital in Amarillo.

House Bill 5355 Producer Owned Beef Processing Facility in Amarillo

House Bill 5355 creates the Prairie View Municipal Management District No. 1 which will allow for the financing of public infrastructure improvements needed for the Producer Owned Beef processing plant. This facility will increase the processing capacity, shore up the supply chain, protect food security, and increase competition against the four major beef harvesting companies (which are making processing expensive for producers). As owners of Producer Owned Beef, cattle producers will receive both a percentage of wholesale beef prices for the cattle they supply and a share of the profits from the facility.

House Bill 3837 Nacero Natural Gas to Jet Fuel Conversion Facility in Penwell

House Bill 3837 incentivizes the innovative use of natural gas. Local Permian natural gas can be used as feedstock to produce zero sulfur jet fuel. The bill amends a portion of statute to support the opportunity of up to \$15 billion in private investment, create 2,500 ongoing construction jobs, and 500+ permanent jobs in the Permian Basin in the creation of efficient aviation fuel. This facility—which will be located in Penwell, southwest of Odessa—will provide a reliable and constant demand source for West Texas natural gas.

Senate Bill 565 West Texas Centers Property Exchange in Big Spring

Senate Bill 565 extends a deadline already in statute regarding a property in Big Spring that is being prepared to be used by West Texas Centers, a local mental health authority. The deadline on the 2021 bill had since passed. It is important that West Texas Centers have the proper facilities to meet the needs of surrounding communities.

Senate Bill 593 Reforming Department of Family and Protective Services

For many years, the regulatory oversight processes for agencies in Texas responsible for foster care services have been in need of necessary review. Because of my longstanding concern for foster care issues, I am determined to improve the current situation. Senate Bill 593 establishes an independent review of these agencies to increase efficiency and safety for Texas foster children.

House Bill 63 Reforming Child Protective Services

House Bill 63 addresses anonymous reporting of abuse or child neglect that can be weaponized against parents and children. This legislation will result in a reduction of fraudulent and frivolous anonymous reports, requiring those who report anonymously to provide their names. House Bill 63 prevents exploitation of the system while also providing additional protections to legitimate reporters.



Sen. Sparks in the Committee on Health and Human Services

Senate Bill 562 Parental Rights Regarding a Child Threat Assessment at School

Senate Bill 562 mandates that schools give parents the opportunity to be involved in the threat assessment process conducted by supportive school teams to create plans of intervention before a violent incident occurs. The bill does not mandate that parents be involved, but they will know that they can be if they wish. Specifically, the bill requires a parent to be notified that the school's threat assessment team has plans to assess their child, prior to conducting the assessment.

House Bill 2847 Hydrogen Energy Development

House Bill 2847 provides clarity to the developing hydrogen industry by reinforcing the Railroad Commission's existing authority over hydrogen pipelines and the underground storage of natural gas and authorizes the establishment of a Texas Hydrogen Policy Council.

House Bill 4932 Identifying Foreign Emissions in Nonattainment

The federal government is over-regulating Texas for bad air quality which comes from outside of the United States. The Environmental Protection Agency does this by labeling communities as being in "nonattainment". House Bill 4932 directs the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality to estimate the contribution of foreign emissions on nonattainment. This report will enable the state to account for the regulation as permissible by federal law. Texas cities should not be regulated for pollution they did not emit.



"Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms."

(1 Peter 4:10)

Statewide Conservative Victories



Sen. Sparks (left) on the Senate Floor with Sen. Flores (right)



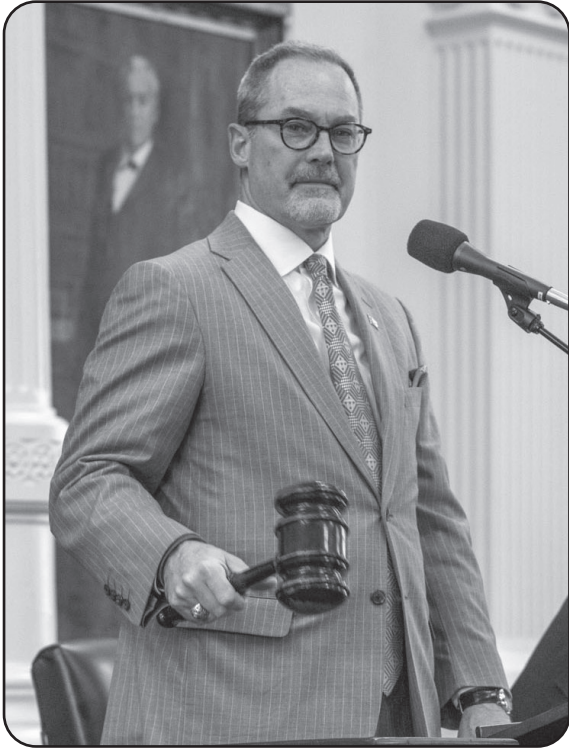
Sen. Sparks (middle) with Rep. Craddick (left) and Lt. Gov. Patrick (right)

ISSUE	VOTE	EXPLANATION	BILL	
Border Security	YES	<i>Voted to protect the southern Texas border both defensively and offensively</i>	SB 423 SB 602 SB 1133	SB 1403 SB 1484 SB 1900
Grid Reliability	YES	<i>Voted to hold the Public Utility Commission accountable and to incentivize constructing or upgrading dispatchable gas-fueled power plants</i>	HB 1500 SB 192	SB 262 SB 1076
Future Water Needs	YES	<i>Voted to create the Texas Water Fund</i>	SB 28	SJR 75
Ban on Gender Reassignment for Minors	YES	<i>Voted to protect children from gender reassignment surgery and chemical treatments</i>	SB 14	
Protecting Children	YES	<i>Voted to protect children from sexual obscenities</i>	HB 900	SB 12
Protecting Women's Sports	YES	<i>Voted to protect women's sports from being infiltrated by men</i>	SB 15	
Ending COVID-19 Mandates	YES	<i>Voted to ban COVID-19 mandates at the local level</i>	SB 29	
Right to Farm	YES	<i>Voted to protect agricultural operations by limiting tough regulations being enacted by encroaching cities</i>	HB 1750 HB 2308	HJR 126
Rural Broadband Funding	YES	<i>Voted to create the Texas Broadband Infrastructure Fund and to expand access to Universal Service Fund and high-speed internet for rural areas</i>	HB 9 HJR 125	SB 1425 SB 1710
Rural Law Enforcement Funding	YES	<i>Voted to increase pay and needed equipment</i>	SB 22	
Taking Care of Retired Teachers	YES	<i>Voted to provide a cost-of-living adjustment to certain annuitants of the Teacher Retirement System of Texas</i>	HJR 2	SB 10
Protecting the Unborn	YES	<i>Voted to expand alternatives to abortion</i>	SB 24	
Wealth Tax Ban	YES	<i>Voted to prevent Texas from ever imposing a wealth tax</i>	HJR 132	



Sen. Sparks marks UT Permian Basin's 50th Anniversary at the capitol.

Landmark Legislation



Sen. Sparks on the Senate Dais

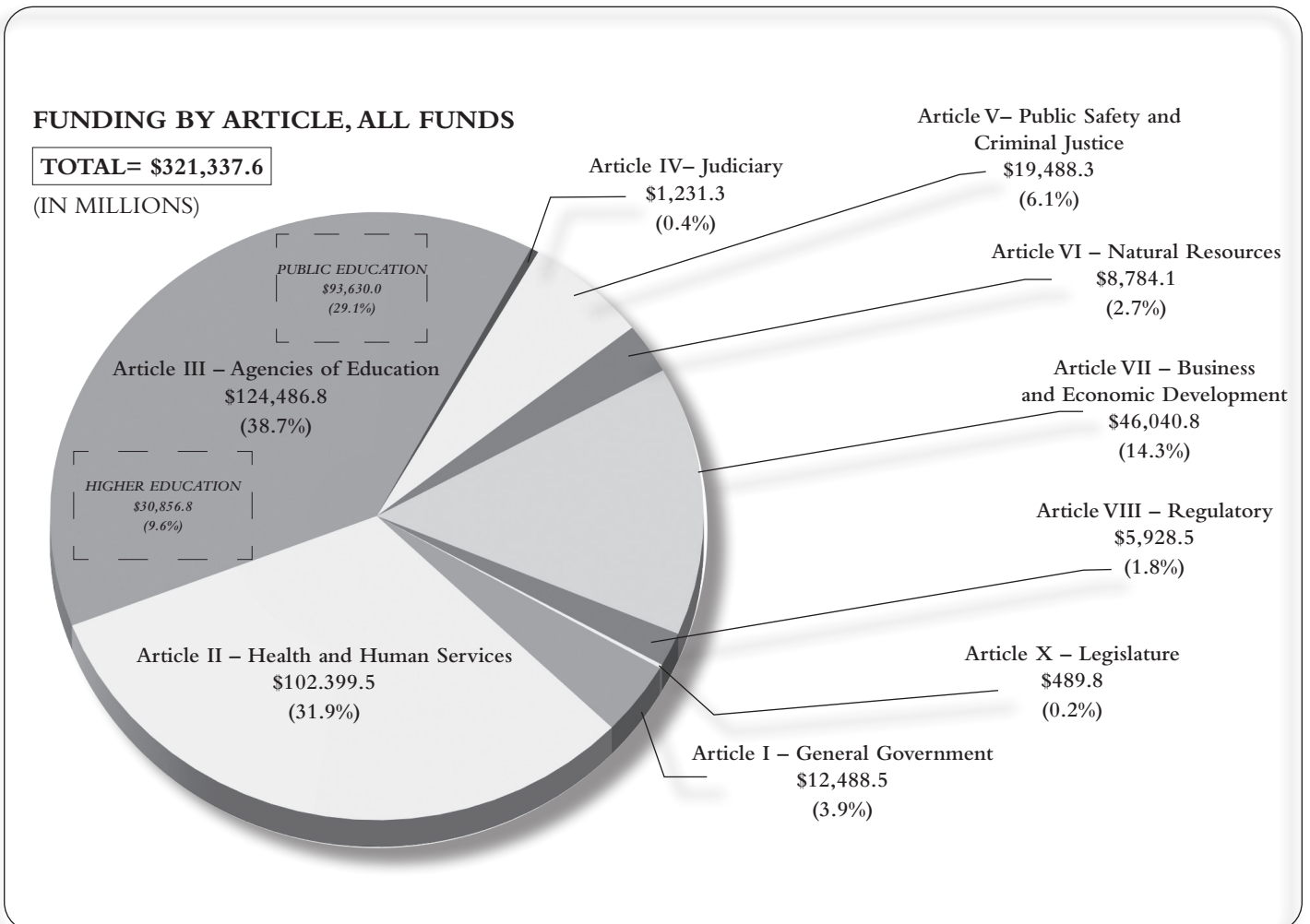
Property Tax Relief

- Provides an \$18 billion property tax cut to homeowners statewide
- Raises the homestead exemption from \$40,000 to \$100,000 upon voter approval
- Doubles the franchise tax exemption threshold to \$2.47 million
- Eliminates the No-Tax Due franchise tax return document
- Adds 3 new members to County Appraisal Districts in counties with 75,000+ people
- Introduces a 3-year pilot program for a 20% cap on annual increases for non-homesteaded properties valued at \$5 million or less
- Includes “hold harmless” provisions for the state to assist school districts that may see a decrease in revenue resulting from these tax cuts

If Ballot Proposition 4 is approved by voters in November, the impact of the \$100,000 homestead exemption and school district tax rate compression will be retroactive for the 2023 tax year, resulting in a tax cut of approximately \$1,250 to \$1,450 for the average homeowner. I am thankful to serve in a legislative body where the debate was not about *if* we would provide tax relief but about *how* we would deliver a tax package that Texans deserve. The money belongs to the taxpayers, and that fact matters to the Senate.

State Budget

This session’s budget also provided historic funding to various needed sectors of state government. Aside from the property tax relief included, we provided \$5.1 billion for border security, \$3.4 billion for a cost-of-living adjustment for the Teacher Retirement System of Texas, and \$1.4 billion for school safety measures—the most in state history. The graph below depicts the areas in which we used state and federal funds to finance throughout the next biennium:



CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS
on the ballot for Election Day, November 7, 2023

Proposition 1 | Protection on the Right to Farm | protects the right to engage in farming, ranching, timber production, horticulture, and wildlife management

Proposition 2 | Daycare Property Tax Exemption Option | authorizes a local option exemption from ad valorem taxation by a county or municipality of all or part of the appraised value of real property used to operate a child-care facility

Proposition 3 | Ban on a Wealth or Net Worth Tax | prohibits the imposition of an individual wealth or net worth tax, including a tax on the difference between the assets and liabilities of an individual or family

Proposition 4 | Property Tax Relief | establishes a temporary limit on the maximum appraised value of real property other than a residence homestead for ad valorem tax purposes; to increase the amount of the exemption from ad valorem taxation by a school district applicable to residence homesteads from \$40,000 to \$100,000; to adjust the amount of the limitation on school district ad valorem taxes imposed on the residence homesteads of the elderly or disabled to reflect increases in certain exemption amounts; to except certain appropriations to pay for ad valorem tax relief from the constitutional limitation on the rate of growth of appropriations; and to authorize the legislature to provide for a four-year term of office for a member of the board of directors of certain appraisal districts.

Proposition 5 | Creation of the Texas University Fund | relating to the Texas University Fund, which provides funding to certain institutions of higher education to achieve national prominence as major research universities and drive the state economy

Proposition 6 | Creation of the Texas Water Fund | creates the Texas water fund to assist in financing water projects in this state

Proposition 7 | Creation of the Texas Energy Fund | provides for the creation of the Texas energy fund to support the construction, maintenance, modernization, and operation of electric generating facilities

Proposition 8 | Creation of the Broadband Infrastructure Fund | creates the broadband infrastructure fund to expand high-speed broadband access and assist in the financing of connectivity projects

Proposition 9 | Supplemental Paycheck for Retired Teachers | provides a cost-of-living adjustment to certain annuitants of the Teacher Retirement System of Texas

Proposition 10 | Medical Inventory Ad Valorem Tax Exemption | authorizes the legislature to exempt from ad valorem taxation equipment or inventory held by a manufacturer of medical or biomedical products to protect the Texas healthcare network and strengthen our medical supply chain

Proposition 11 | El Paso Parks Amendment | authorizes permit conservation and reclamation districts in El Paso County to issue bonds supported by ad valorem taxes to fund the development and maintenance of parks and recreational facilities

Proposition 12 | Abolition of the Galveston County Treasurer's Office | provides for the abolition of the office of county treasurer in Galveston County

Proposition 13 | Increase in Retirement Age of State Justices & Judges | increases the mandatory age of retirement for state justices and judges

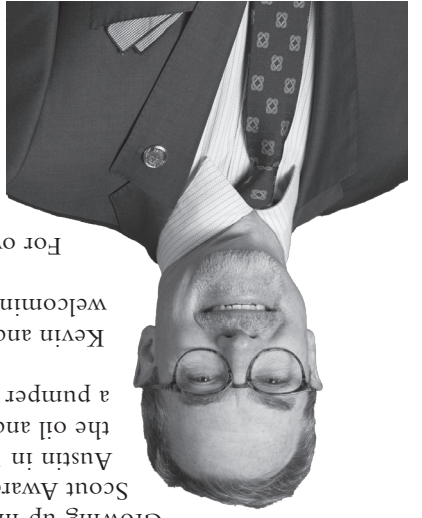
Proposition 14 | Creation of the Centennial Parks Conservation Fund | provides for the creation of the centennial parks conservation fund to be used for the creation and improvement of state parks



Sen. Sparks and family at the Senate Swearing-In Invocation

“Humbly invoking the blessings of Almighty God, the people of the State of Texas, do ordain and establish this constitution.”

– The Preamble to the Texas Constitution



Kevin has also served on the board of High Sky Children's Ranch, the Texas Public Policy Foundation, and the Natural Gas Producers Association. Kevin currently serves as a trustee at Midland Classical Academy. An avid outdoorsman, Kevin can be found hunting and fly-fishing when he's not spending time with his family.

For over thirty years, the Sparks have served their community as Young Life and church leaders. Kevin and Jill are active Stonegate Fellowship members, where Kevin serves as an elder. The Sparks lead small-groups and mentor young couples bringing-up their own families.

Kevin and his wife, Jill, reared their four children in Midland and are enjoying their growing family, welcoming their first grandchild earlier this year with another arriving soon.

Kevin is a conservative businessman and community leader in Midland, Texas, with deep West Texas roots.

ABOUT SENATOR KEVIN SPARKS



The Senate of Texas

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