

Senator Judith Zaffirini



Reports to the Families of District 21

Dear Friends:

Working for the families of Senate District 21 always is as wonderfully challenging as it is productive. Through continued effective collaboration and communication, cumulatively we reap the benefits of prioritizing the needs and interests of those who live in our region.

As a lifelong resident of our district I understand not only how much our counties have in common, but also how we differ. Above all, we are committed to improving educational opportunities for all and to strengthening our families, with an unparalleled commitment to our very young and our very old.

SD 21 comprises nearly 700,000 persons in 17 counties, namely, Atascosa, Bee, northeast Bexar, Dimmit, Duval, Frio, Jim Hogg, Karnes, LaSalle, Live Oak, McMullen, San Patricio, Starr, Webb, Wilson, Zapata and Zavala.

During the 2007 Texas Legislative Session it was my pleasure to host representatives from each of these counties. Their feedback, advice and leadership enhanced my effectiveness in passing another 66 bills, securing funding and voting for or against legislation. Equally important, leaders from SD 21 counties helped me craft and pass legislation, including 11 local bills.

Our efforts were facilitated when Lt. Governor David Dewhurst reappointed me to serve as Chair of the Senate Higher Education Subcommittee, Vice Chair of the Senate Finance Committee and a member of the Senate's Committees on Administration, Education and Health and Human Services.



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– Senator Judith Zaffirini

Equally important, he appointed me to a seventh term on the Appropriations Conference Committee that wrote the state's final \$153 billion budget.

I began my 21st year in the Texas Senate as the second highest-ranking senator and the highest-ranking senator for Bexar County and the border region.

Building on the foundation of another successful legislative session, the interim at hand affords us another opportunity to prepare for the session that will convene on Jan. 13, 2009. So that we can be proactive, rather than reactive, I will maintain my open door policy and continue to visit SD 21 counties to interact directly with constituents while addressing their priorities.

To work together efficiently, we must communicate effectively. Accordingly, it is again my pleasure to submit *Senator Judith Zaffirini Reports to the Families of District 21*. My annual newsletter serves as a progress report and a plan of action. It focuses on our opportunities to assess our community needs

and to plan for positive action and resolution of area concerns.

Faith and family continue to serve as the foundation for every initiative, every aspect of my leadership for SD 21. I pray the Lord continues to guide our work and actions.

Judith Zaffirini

Judith Zaffirini
State Senator, District 21



MORE THAN 100 FOURTH GRADE STUDENTS from Pearsall Intermediate School visit the State Capitol during their class field trip. Senator Judith Zaffirini greets the students before introducing them, their teachers and sponsors in the Senate.



DIMITT COUNTY EDUCATION AND HOUSING leaders honor Senator Judith Zaffirini for championing quality and excellence in pre-school programs. They are (L-R) Maria Ortiz, Carrizo Springs Texas Early Education Model coordinator; and Alfredo Castañeda, Carrizo Springs Housing Authority.

Bills Enhance Educational Access for All

An educator with 13 years of teaching experience, Senator Judith Zaffirini is a leader in the quest for excellent education for all students. She continues to advocate on behalf of persons with developmental and intellectual disabilities, as well as improve bilingual education and early childhood education programs.

Quality Pre-K Programs

Senator Zaffirini authored Senate Bill 50, which would have expanded Texas Early Education Model (TEEM) sites statewide; increased the quality of educator training; raised reimbursement rates for child care providers; and improved the recruitment, retention and quality of early childhood education professionals.

Although SB 50 died in the House, Senator Zaffirini secured \$20 million to increase reimbursement rates, including \$2 million for an innovative program to enhance professional development by early childhood education professionals and encourage providers to seek additional higher education opportunities.

“Quality child care programs assure working parents that their children are prepared for first grade,” the senator said.

Bilingual Education

One of Senator Zaffirini’s top priorities in public education is to monitor and contribute to the success of bilingual education in Texas.

With Rep. Scott Hochberg, D-Houston, Senator Zaffirini passed SB 1871, which will require school districts to evaluate the effectiveness of different bilingual education and special language program models by improving data collection and analysis procedures and reporting these findings to the Texas Education Agency (TEA).

What’s more, the bill seeks to evaluate the effectiveness of the current bilingual education models used by districts to ensure that English Language Learners (ELL) students are served adequately by Texas public schools.

“SB 1871 eventually will determine which type of bilingual program is most beneficial for students and what must be done to implement that program uniformly throughout Texas,” Senator Zaffirini said. “I will continue to address bilingual education during the interim.”

Scooter’s Law

Senator Zaffirini worked especially close with the Arc of Texas in passing SB 673, “Scooter’s Law,” named after Gene “Scooter” Long, the Dallas ISD student who championed the bill.

It allows students with disabilities who are in individualized education programs (IEP) and who have completed four years of high school to participate in graduation ceremonies and receive attendance certificates.

The new law will allow students to continue their IEP programs after participating in commencement ceremonies and to receive high school diplomas upon completing the program.

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We Must Strengthen Child Safety, Prioritize Families

By Lieutenant Governor
David Dewhurst

The 80th Legislative Session was productive for the people of this great state. We've delivered the largest tax cut in Texas history; increased funding for schools, colleges and universities; enhanced border and homeland security; cracked down on child predators; and held down spending to less than the rate of population growth plus inflation.

Key legislation passed by the Texas Senate and the 80th Legislature this year includes:

- ★ \$152.5 billion budget that reduces local school property taxes by \$14.2 billion in Fiscal Years 2008-09 and sets aside \$7.5 billion to guarantee continued property tax relief in 2010-11;
- ★ Texas' version of Jessica's Law to strengthen laws against child predators, including mandatory minimum 25-years to life sentences on a first sexually violent offense, and allow prosecutors the option of seeking the death penalty on a second offense;
- ★ Comprehensive water legislation to ensure Texas has an adequate new water supply for the future;
- ★ More than \$200 million for additional law enforcement officers and improved technology to enhance border and homeland security capabilities.

I am grateful that legislators passed significant portions of my *Texas Children First* initiative. In addition to Jessica's Law, these successful measures include legislation to enhance penalties against anyone who solicits a minor on



As I said while accepting the Mister South Texas 2007 honor earlier this year, I want to provide our next generation the tools to succeed in their own communities. This session we achieved many of our set goals.

– Lt. Governor David Dewhurst

the internet (SB 6); require all public schools to have at least one automated external defibrillator on campus (SB 7); institute mandatory, random steroid testing for high school athletes (SB 8); and require background checks for anyone who comes in contact with children on a public school campus (SB 9).

Protecting Texas children and families while providing them opportunities to succeed are among my highest priorities. During the 80th Legislative Session we passed one of the toughest versions of Jessica's Law in the nation to increase the penalties for those who victimize children. Texas' Jessica's Law requires lifetime GPS monitoring

for the worst offenders and gives prosecutors the option of seeking the death penalty or life in prison without parole for repeat violent offenses.

I also am pleased that the legislature passed a budget that funds essential services, limits spending to a modest 3.5 percent increase per year and delivers a record \$14 billion in local school property tax cuts. As with any budget process, there was some disagreement among legislators and the Governor regarding fiscal decisions. This budget does, however, protect Texans by ensuring essential services and guaranteeing local school property tax cuts continue through 2010-11.

What's more, Senate and House members acted swiftly to improve air quality, expand access to children's health insurance and deliver local school property tax relief to the elderly and disabled.

As I said while accepting the Mister South Texas 2007 honor earlier this year, I want to provide our next generation the tools to succeed in their own communities. This session we achieved many of our set goals.

It was my pleasure to work with Senate leaders and the other members of the Texas Legislature in meeting our state's many challenges. The 2007 legislative session was successful for the people of Texas, and I look forward to continuing our work and improving the quality of life for all Texas families.

Lieutenant Governor David Dewhurst is president of the Texas Senate.

Senator Judith Zaffirini's Legislation Addresses Priorities of Local Communities

Senator Judith Zaffirini passed another 66 bills during the 2007 legislative session, bringing her total to 581 since 1987. Her legislation prioritized the needs of communities in Senate District 21, assisted local governments during emergencies and improved the management of county groundwater and hospital districts.

Rural and Border Improvements

A champion of rural counties, Senator Zaffirini passed bills to ensure rural Texans have the same opportunities enjoyed in urban areas.

House Bill 2235 by Rep. Ryan Guillen, D-Rio Grande City, and Senator Zaffirini, for example, addresses directly the lack of access to technology in rural communities by establishing in the Office of Rural Community Affairs (ORCA) a grant program to fund the construc-



JIM HOGG COUNTY COMMISSIONERS (L-R) Sandalio Ruiz and Abelardo Alaniz discuss Jim Hogg County's legislative and budget priorities with Senator Judith Zaffirini.

tion of and equipment for rural technology centers. This important legislation and related funding of \$5 million will prepare students in rural counties for careers in applied technology and other highly skilled industries.

Because agricultural production is such a critical industry to South Texas, Senator Zaffirini secured \$1 million to fund research to combat the Zebra Chip disease affecting potato crops in Frio and Dimmit Counties and passed legislation to assist farmers and ranchers whose animals have been infested by ticks.

During a quarantine, landowners suffer a loss in the value and usability of their land, and most are required to spend significant amounts of money to move their livestock to other pasture land. HB 967 by Rep. Guillen and Senator Zaffirini allows a reappraisal of land quarantined by the Texas Animal Health Commission because of ticks.

Rep. Richard Raymond, D-Laredo, and Senator Zaffirini collaborated to pass eight bills, including Senate Bill 893, which authorizes border counties to construct a railroad toll bridge; HB 3594, which allows border cities to choose the location of inspection facilities; and HB 3618, which creates a bilingual coordinated health program in school districts along the border.

Emergency Preparedness

Following Hurricanes Rita and Katrina, during which SD 21 communities hosted evacuees from Louisiana, Mississippi and Southeast Texas, Senator Zaffirini passed

legislation to assist local governments respond to disasters more effectively and efficiently. SB 61 by Senator Zaffirini and Rep. Ruth Jones McClendon, D-San Antonio, allows counties to adopt an internal plan delegating administrative authorities, defining chains of succession to cover essential county functions and facilitating meeting procedures during a catastrophic event or declared disaster.

SB 1499 by Senator Zaffirini and Rep. Frank Corte, R-San Antonio, modifies the Open Meeting posting requirements temporarily for governing bodies of communities that expect large numbers of evacuees displaced by a catastrophic disaster.

"In the wake of hurricane evacuations that affected numerous Texas counties and heightened security levels issued from federal and



LA SALLE COUNTY leaders visit with Senator Judith Zaffirini in Cotulla. Joining her are (L-R) Commissioner Maria Teresa Adams, County Judge Joel Rodríguez Jr. and Commissioner José Jiménez.

state homeland security agencies, legislators must do everything possible to help our communities prepare for contingencies," Senator Zaffirini said.

Local District Enhancement

Senator Zaffirini continued to work closely with local officials to pass legislation that improves a variety of groundwater, hospital and water improvement districts.

SB 63 by Zaffirini and Rep. Juan Escobar, D-Kingsville, helps Jim Hogg County offer more efficient county services and improve colonias by providing the county with the same authority as general-law municipalities.

Starr County will benefit from two bills to improve the county's hospital and groundwater districts. SB 1236 by Senator Zaffirini and Rep. Guillen improves the monitoring and control of the hospital district's finances. HB 2072 by Rep. Guillen and Senator Zaffirini requires temporary directors of the Starr County Groundwater District to be appointed and charges those directors with holding an election to confirm the creation of the district.

HB 4067 by Rep. Tracy King, D-Batesville, and Senator Zaffirini expands the Zavala-Dimmit County Water Improvement District Number One by allowing the district to annex into the district areas within the Bermuda Reservoir.

She also passed legislation to improve the management of groundwater districts in Bee, San Patricio and Duval Counties. SB 404 by Senator Zaffirini and Rep. Yvonne González Tourielles, D-Alice, confirms the statutory au-

thority of the Bee County Groundwater Conservation District. SB 2029 by Senator Zaffirini and Rep. Juan Garcia, D-Corpus Christi, requires San Patricio County Groundwater Conservation District directors to be registered voters in the district and to be elected according to justice of the peace precincts. HB 2070 by Rep. Guillen and Zaffirini extends the deadline for the Duval County Groundwater District's confirmation election and authorizes Duval County to pay for a portion of the election.

The interim at hand presents an excellent opportunity to develop similar legislation that improves SD 21 communities. Persons interested in developing legislation for 2009 should contact Senator Zaffirini or her legislative staff via 800/851-1568.



NORTHEAST LAKEVIEW COLLEGE President Dr. Eric Reno receives Senator Judith Zaffirini's certificate commemorating the groundbreaking of the Alamo Community College District's newest campus. Program participants include Representative Ruth Jones McClendon, D-San Antonio; and Roberto Zarate, chair, Alamo Community College District board of trustees.



ZAPATA COUNTY OFFICIALS visit the Texas Capitol to announce and celebrate the City of Zapata being named "micro" City of the Future by *Foreign Direct Investment* magazine. Discussing legislative priorities and issues with Senator Judith Zaffirini are (L-R) Ramiro V. Martínez; Commissioner Joe Rathmell; Doroteo "Teo" Garza, county auditor; Laura Guerra, assistant to the county judge; County Judge Rosalva Guerra; Commissioner Norberto Garza; and former Sen. Hector Uribe, D-Brownsville.



BEE COUNTY OFFICIALS receive Senate Resolution 462, declaring Bee County Day at the State Capitol and highlighting the county's uniqueness. Joining Senator Judith Zaffirini at the Texas Senate are (L-R) Joe Móntez, executive director, Bee Development Authority; Commissioner Carlos Salazar Jr.; Commissioner Eloy Rodríguez; Bee County Judge David Silva; and Sheriff Carlos Carrizales.



SD 21 COUNTY SHERIFFS discuss community law enforcement and public safety issues, including border security, emergency preparedness, and operations and personnel financing, with Senator Judith Zaffirini. They are (L-R) Leroy Moody, San Patricio County; David Jalufka, Karnes County; Joe D. Tackitt Jr., Wilson County; Bruce Thomas, McMullen County; Larry R. Busby, Live Oak County; Tommy Williams, Atascosa County; and Santiago Barrera, Duval County.



DISABILITY ADVOCATES honor Senator Judith Zaffirini for promoting family life independent living and community services for persons with disabilities. Presenting her with a photograph of children who, thanks to her efforts, were able to leave nursing homes to live with families are (L-R) Spencer Duran, United Cerebral Palsy of Texas; Colleen Horton, UT Center for Disability Studies; Amy Young, Texas Council for Developmental Disabilities; Dennis Borel, executive director, Coalition of Texans with Disabilities; Bob Kafka, ADAPT, and his sister, Tina Darlow; and Ron Cranston.



OPERATION LONE STAR provides free medical and dental services annually to thousands of South Texans and the Texas border region. Senator Judith Zaffirini greets Starr County families waiting to receive general medical care, adult dental care, immunizations, diabetic and high blood pressure screenings and pharmacy services.

Funding Secured For Health And Human Services

During the 2007 legislative session Senator Judith Zaffirini served her third consecutive term as Vice Chair of the Senate Finance Committee, on which she has served since 1991. Lt. Gov. David Dewhurst also appointed her to a seventh term on the Appropriations Conference Committee that finalized the state's \$153 billion budget, and she was the primary Senate negotiator for health and human services. Mental health care and services for persons with disabilities are among Senator Zaffirini's top priorities.

She helped redesign community mental health crisis service systems

by securing \$82 million for the Department of State Health Services (DSHS) to reduce the state's use of emergency rooms and jails for mental health crisis services. This funding also will help reduce suicide and lengthy jail stays while increasing mental health treatment services.

What's more, Senator Zaffirini continues to work with aging and disability advocacy groups to promote independence and support persons with physical, intellectual and developmental disabilities. The budget includes funding for two new Independent Living Centers,

including one that should be in Senate District 21. Additional funding for adaptive technology also will help persons with disabilities live independently and enhance their productivity.

Senator Zaffirini secured \$193.2 million to reduce the Medicaid waiver waiting lists, increase provider rates and improve access to community-based and home services for low-income children, the elderly and persons with disabilities. This funding will remove more than 14,625 persons from interest and waiting lists and will serve more than 8,340 persons during the 2008-09 biennium.

South Texans Get Free Medical, Dental Care

Senator Judith Zaffirini proudly announced that Operation Lone Star 2007, an annual joint effort of the Texas Military Forces, Texas Department of State Health Services, Texas Health and Human Services Commission and volunteers, again will provide free dental and medical services to South Texas families.

"It is my pleasure to welcome the outstanding partnership of state health service officials and Texas military service personnel that annually brings Operation Lone Star to South Texas," Senator Zaffirini said. "This program is an exceptional demonstration of humani-

tarian service provided by the collective efforts of many dedicated persons."

After the devastating terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, Senator Zaffirini recommended to then Texas Adjutant General Daniel James III that a special unit of the Texas State Guard be established to provide medical assistance to Texas communities during times of emergency.

With the support of James Kazen, Executive Vice President for Administration at the University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio (UTHSCSA), the recommendation was made to Governor Rick Perry to create the Texas Medical Rangers.

In 2003 the Texas Medical Rangers officially became part of the Texas Military Forces under the direction of the Adjutant General and sponsorship of UTHSCSA. The Medical Rangers are composed of dedicated volunteer medical professionals who provide life-saving emergency medical services. They also are a significant part of the personnel that comprise Operation Lone Star.

Services provided by Operation Lone Star include general medical care, adult dental care, immunizations and pharmacy services.

Senator Zaffirini Champions Higher Ed

As Chair of the Senate Higher Education Subcommittee and as a member of the Appropriations Conference Committee workgroup that wrote the higher education budget, Senator Judith Zaffirini played a significant role in improving higher education in Texas during the 2007 Legislative Session.

Continuing her efforts to provide financial relief for the escalating costs of higher education, she passed Senate Bill 1231, which creates uniform procedures to process tuition refunds from institutions that offer academic terms shorter than regular semesters.

Zaffirini's SB 1232 provides greater flexibility in tuition installment plans and authorizes electronic agreements for emergency loans. Significant improvements also were made to higher education excellence because of the multiple institutional enhancements passed by Senator Zaffirini. Her SB 1233 authorizes institutions to apply student property deposits toward tuition balances and en-

hances the efficiency of issuing refunds, and her SB 1495 assists the Texas A&M University System by streamlining multiple student-approved fees.

Senator Zaffirini also passed legislation to enhance access to higher education. SB 1050 by Zaffirini and Rep. Diane Patrick, R-Arlington, significantly expands student work-study mentoring programs. What's more, she secured increased funding for state work-study programs by \$5 million for a total of \$15 million for the biennium.

SB 1051 by Zaffirini and Rep. Guillen allows institutions that offer joint degrees with foreign universities to offer foreign students a four-hour course, *The American Way*, in lieu of the required 12 hours of history and government.

Dependents of volunteer law enforcement officers who were killed or disabled in the line of duty are now exempt from college costs because of House Bill 741 by Rep. Tracy King, D-Batesville, and Zaffirini.

What's more, HB 2371 by Rep. Geanie Morrison, R-Victoria, and Zaffirini streamlines the process in which the Texas Workforce Commission issues cease and desist orders

against career schools that operate without authority.

HB 3826 by Rep. Morrison and Zaffirini creates a uniform admissions code based on the recommended or advanced high school program, and HB 3827 by Rep. Morrison and Zaffirini authorizes junior college district boards to meet via telephone conference calls.

While justifiably proud of these and numerous other legislative and funding successes, Senator Zaffirini was disappointed that Gov. Rick Perry vetoed essential funding for universities, community colleges and bills designed to meet the goals of *Closing the Gaps*.

"I will work closely with Lt. Gov. David Dewhurst and our colleagues during the interim to correct this situation," she emphasized.

The governor's vetoes include \$154 million in health insurance benefits that will severely strain community college resources and hinder efforts to achieve the goals of *Closing the Gaps*.

Although Senator Zaffirini helped obtain approximately \$1.3 million to fund the new Northeast Lakeview College campus in San Antonio, Governor Perry vetoed funding for it and for four other new campuses. He also vetoed \$5 million in funding for A&M International's Student Success program.

"While I am disappointed in the Governor's vetoes of important legislation that received overwhelming support in the Senate and the House and funding that is so critical for South Texas, his actions will not deter me from prioritizing the needs of Senate District 21," she added. "In spite of his actions, we have much cause to celebrate. The interim at hand offers us countless opportunities to strive for even loftier goals for higher education."



ABOVE: COMMUNITY COLLEGE LEADERS honor Senator Judith Zaffirini for her tireless leadership on their behalf. They are (L-R) Dr. Blaine Bennett, Southwest Texas Junior College; Dr. Carlos Garcia, Del Mar College; Dr. Bruce Leslie, Alamo Community College District; Dr. John Brockman, Coastal Bend College; Dr. Rey Garcia, President, Texas Association of Community Colleges; Dr. Shirley Reed, South Texas College; and Dr. Ramon Dovalina, Laredo Community College.



RIGHT: ZAVALA COUNTY future college students welcome Senator Judith Zaffirini to the Crystal City Spinach Festival. The popular annual celebration highlights the region's vibrant and flourishing spinach industry that greatly benefits the state's agricultural economy.



Senator Zaffirini Casts 38,530th Consecutive Vote

Continuing her unique career-long 100 percent voting record since 1987, Senator Judith Zaffirini cast her 38,530th consecutive vote during the 2007 Legislative Session.

Her legendary work ethic also is reflected in her 100 percent perfect attendance in the Senate, except for breaking quorum deliberately in 2003 to prevent an untimely redistricting that the U.S. Supreme Court ruled (2006) violated the Voting Rights Act and disenfranchised voters in

her district. Her voting record continued because no votes could be taken in the absence of a quorum.

In 1997 *State Legislatures* magazine highlighted her 15,000th consecutive vote in an article titled, *15,000 and Still Counting: The Tireless Texan*. No one responded to the magazine's query about similar records in any other state.

"I am thankful for the opportunity to cast votes that prioritize the needs and interests of the families of SD 21 and of Texas," Senator Zaffirini said. "This milestone chronicles my continuous commitment to work as hard as possible on their behalf."

Senator Zaffirini has received more than 575 awards and honors for her



SENATE INAUGURAL CEREMONIES attract family members to the Capitol. Joining Senator Judith Zaffirini are her husband, Carlos, and their son Carlos Jr. Behind her are (L-R) her aunt, Josefina Alexander González, and her cousin, Yvonne Czar.

legislative, public service and professional work, including more than 100 for communication projects. In 2007 she received the Mirabeau B. Lamar Medal for championing excellence in higher education, was recognized by the Hispanic Women's Network of Texas as their first "Latina Trailblazer" and received the People's Choice Award from the Texas Association for Home Care.

She also received six awards in the 2006-07 Press Women of Texas Communications Contest, including a first-place statewide and second-place nationally for her motivational children's book, *If Judy Pappas Can Do It, Anybody Can!* and first place for her UT Austin Law School commencement speech titled, *Who Lives? Who Dies? Who Decides?*

Recognized as a trailblazer, Senator Zaffirini is featured in approximately 15 books, referenced in 15 and included in more than 17 biographical reference works. Typically they capture the story of a girl from Laredo who grew up to earn B.S., M.A. and PhD degrees from UT-Austin and become a leader in professional, public service and civic arenas.

Senator Zaffirini's 2007 legislative successes include passing bills to provide financial incentives for community college students to transfer to four-year institutions; prevent the online solicitation and exploitation of minors; enhance border communities and colonias; provide needed resources for state health and human services; and increase higher education access, affordability and excellence. She has sponsored and passed 581 bills and 51 substantive resolutions and co-sponsored another 278 bills.

She and her husband, Carlos, share an office in Laredo, where he practices law, and she owns Zaffirini Communications, an award-winning communications firm. Their son, Carlos Jr., is a graduate of the UT Schools of Business and Law.

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