

# Senator Judith Zaffirini



## Reports to the Families of District 21

### Dear Friends:

“Perseverance keeps honor bright,” Ulysses proclaims in Shakespeare’s *Troilus and Cressida*. These stirring words reflect my belief that there is no greater honor than working passionately in the Texas Legislature on behalf of the families of Senate District (SD) 21.

Perseverance was a necessary virtue during the 82<sup>nd</sup> Texas Legislative Session as the state faced an estimated \$27 billion budget shortfall. While I fear that the budget passed by the Legislature relies too heavily on cuts, I am proud to have worked collaboratively to minimize their impact on Texans, especially the very old, the very young and persons with disabilities.

What’s more, I am especially grateful to the many constituents, students and local leaders who wrote letters, sent emails, made telephone calls or visited the Texas Capitol to share their important perspectives.

Because of their dedication, we persevered in passing legislation that benefits all Texans, including bills to enhance financial aid programs, improve early childhood education and ensure that persons with disabilities are treated with dignity and respect.

Preparation continues to be the key to our success. Accordingly, my staff and I already are working with constituents, colleagues and stakeholders to craft legislation for the next legislative session. When it convenes in January, 2013, we will be ready.

*Senator Judith Zaffirini Reports to the Families of District 21* is as much a progress report as it is a call for civic engagement. It reaches out to the nearly 750,000 constituents in our 17 counties, namely, Atascosa, Bee, northeast Bexar, Dimmit, Duval, Frio, Jim Hogg, Karnes, La Salle, Live Oak, McMullen, San Patricio, Starr, Webb, Wilson, Zapata and Zavala.



*There is no greater honor than working passionately in the Texas Senate on behalf of the families of Senate District 21.*

– **Senator Judith Zaffirini**

Because of redistricting, the district will change in 2013, requiring me to say goodbye to some constituents and to welcome others. This is a bittersweet process, but no matter where we live, our values are the same. You can count on me to continue to promote opportunities for all, including in education, health and human services, job creation, public safety and a clean environment.

I am grateful to Lt. Gov. David Dewhurst for appointing me to committees through which I can continue to make a difference in these arenas: I serve as Chair of the Senate Higher Education Committee; Co-Chair of the Legislative Oversight Committee on

Higher Education Governance, Excellence and Transparency; and as a member of the Legislative Budget Board and of the Senate Committees on Finance, Redistricting, Health and Human Services, Economic Development and Administration.

Effective communication enhances my ability to advocate for you. Your feedback is critical, especially because constituents historically have suggested some of my best legislation. As always, we will continue to respond to every letter, email and telephone call.

My prayer is that the Lord will continue to bless all Texans and inspire us to excel and to create a better future for our children and grandchildren.

Judith Zaffirini

State Senator, District 21

[www.zaffirini.senate.state.tx.us](http://www.zaffirini.senate.state.tx.us)





**1** LISTENING TO CONSTITUENTS is key to Senator Judith Zaffirini's success in the Texas Senate. She is shown in photograph 1. with Clara Jo Horton of Cotulla and George Krueger of Encinal; in 2. with former Asherton Mayor Ramón Saldivar; and in 3. with Texas Veterans Commission Executive Director Colonel Thomas Palladino and National Guard Major John Ploch of La Vernia on *Wounded Warrior Day* at the Texas Capitol.

## Drastic Cuts Endanger Texas' Economic Vitality

When the 82<sup>nd</sup> Legislature convened in January, 2011, the state faced an unprecedented budget shortfall estimated at \$27 billion. Lawmakers had three major tools to address the gap: cuts in spending, increases in revenue and use of the Rainy Day Fund. In the end, Senator Judith Zaffirini voted against the budget because of its severe cuts, including to all levels of education and vital health and human services programs.

"While I advocated for a balanced approach that would have utilized the state's Rainy Day Fund and created sustainable new revenue," she said, "I also worked tirelessly to mitigate the cuts' impact on Texas' economic vitality and on families."

One of the areas hardest hit by the budget cuts is public education. For the first time in more than 60 years, the state did not fund enrollment growth in

public schools. After a long battle that required a special legislative session to resolve, schools received \$4 billion less than what the current law required. This massive reduction likely will result in unprecedented teacher layoffs, increased property taxes and a decline in the quality of public education that could render Texas' workforce less attractive to businesses.

As damaging as the cuts will be, the budget gap was too large to be bridged with cuts alone. Instead of identifying sustainable revenue sources or tapping into the Rainy Day Fund, the budget bill was balanced via quick-fix accounting measures.

"Deferring payments and accelerating tax collections are viable options to address temporary shortfalls that occur because of cyclical variations in revenue," Senator Zaffirini said. "These tools, however, do not solve the state's recurring fiscal challenges, including the structural deficit created by the business tax enacted in 2006. Count on me to continue to be at the forefront in addressing these issues."

## Redistricting Alters SD 21 Boundaries

The redistricting plan passed by the 82<sup>nd</sup> Texas Legislature includes substantial changes to Senate District (SD) 21, represented by Senator Judith Zaffirini, D-Laredo.

The plan removes northeast Bexar, 98 percent of Atascosa, Dimmit, Frio and Zavala counties from SD 21 and adds Caldwell County and southeast Travis, east Hays, south Bexar and most of Guadalupe counties.

"I will miss representing the many longtime constituents and friends in the counties we lost," Senator Zaffirini said.

While the current SD 21 includes all or part of 17 counties, the new district will include all or part of 18. It will stretch more than 360 miles from Austin to Starr County.

"These communities can count on my best effort to bring them together in the spirit of collaboration," Senator Zaffirini said. "I look forward to meeting my new constituents as soon as possible."

Unless they are altered by the courts, the new district lines will take effect in January, 2013.

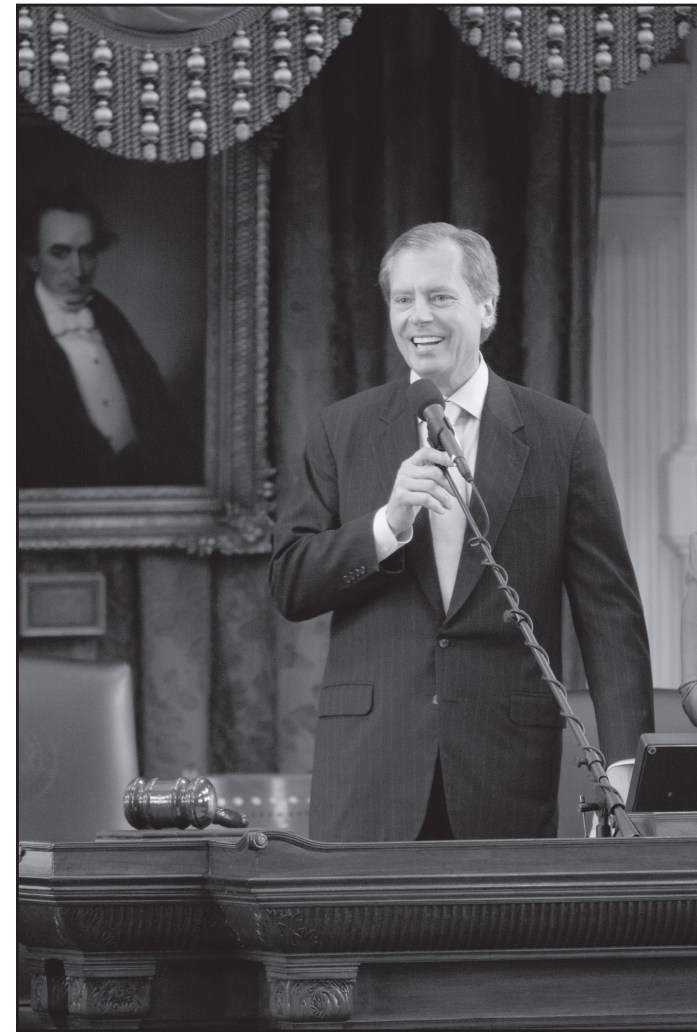
## Lt. Governor David Dewhurst Issues 82<sup>nd</sup> Session Report

By Lieutenant Governor David Dewhurst

The Texas Legislature just finished a very challenging Regular and Special legislative session, but working together, we have proven once again that there is no limit to what we can accomplish when we put Texans first.

This Session, our most important priority was to address the projected \$27 billion revenue shortfall. So we rolled up our sleeves, got to work and scrubbed the budget program by program. In the end, members of the Legislature came together to balance the budget by making government live within its means without raising taxes—cutting a historic \$15 billion from current state spending—while protecting essential services that Texans depend on. The 2012-13 budget also saves nearly \$6.5 billion in our Rainy Day Fund to ensure our state budget stays balanced in the future.

We all know that the future of Texas is forged in our classrooms. That is why I'm so pleased that the budget we passed saved the jobs of thousands of our best teachers and maintained our commitment to providing a world-class education for every student in every district across our state. The Legislature increased state funding to the Foundation School Program by nearly \$4 billion and provided school districts more flexibility with their management and operations.



*"I look forward to working with Senator Zaffirini and the constituents of Senate District 21 to build a better future for all Texans."*

– Lt. Gov. David Dewhurst

To improve medical outcomes for all Texans, this Session the Legislature passed landmark health care reforms that will save money by incentivizing doctors and hospitals to use best practices and focus on wellness and prevention, rather than the number of procedures they perform. This legislation removes regulatory barriers so that physicians and hospitals can explore permissive, free-market solutions that will ultimately reduce the rising costs associated with health care programs like Medicaid.

Despite the national economic downturn, the Texas economy is booming. We continue to lead the nation in job creation, business relocation, homebuilding, international exports and Fortune 1000 company headquarters. In fact, since June 2009, Texas has created 48 percent of all new private sector jobs in America.

With such strong economic growth, it's no coincidence that people are voting with their feet for Texas. In just one year, from July 2008 to July 2009, almost 150,000 people moved to Texas from the other 49 states. Because of this explosive growth, Texas was apportioned four new Congressional District seats, and the Texas Legislature was tasked with redrawing the Texas House, Senate and Congressional Districts to fairly represent all Texans for the next decade.

Though our work is never finished, I know that Members of the Legislature will continue to turn our challenges into opportunities. Senator Judith Zaffirini, as Chair of the Senate Higher Education Committee, will help lead the way and I look forward to working with her and the constituents of Senate District 21 to build a better future for all Texans.

**Texas Lieutenant Governor David Dewhurst, R-Houston, is president of the 31-member Texas Senate, a position he has held since January, 2003.**

### How to Contact Senator Judith Zaffirini

#### Southern District Office

1407 Washington St.  
P.O. Box 627  
Laredo, Texas 78042-0627  
956/722-2293  
Telefax: 956/722-8586  
judith.zaffirini@senate.state.tx.us



#### Capitol Office

P.O. Box 12068  
Austin, Texas 78711  
512/463-0121  
800/851-1568  
Telefax: 512/475-3738  
Dial 711 for relay calls



#### Northern District Office

12702 Toepperwein Rd.  
Suite 214  
San Antonio, Texas 78233  
210/657-0095  
Telefax: 210/657-0262  
www.zaffirini.senate.state.tx.us

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# Senator Judith Zaffirini Champions Higher Education Access, Affordability and Excellence

It is an article of faith for Senator Judith Zaffirini that all Texans should have opportunities to succeed and become productive members of society. As Chair of the Senate Higher Education Committee, she champions access, affordability and excellence because she believes Texas students deserve a world-class public higher education system that prepares them for careers, improves their quality of life and instills in them intellectual curiosity and a lifelong love of learning.

Accordingly, she agrees with the American geologist, Nevin Fenneman, that “The purpose of primary education is the development of your weak characteristics; the purpose of university education, the development of your strong.”

Keeping Texas’ colleges and universities strong was the focus of Senator Zaffirini’s efforts during the 82<sup>nd</sup> Texas Legislative Session. Despite significant funding reductions to universities, community colleges and financial aid, she passed 24 higher education bills, including

legislation to enhance financial aid programs, strengthen the state’s accountability system and eliminate unfunded mandates.

## Enhancing Affordability

Enhancing financial aid programs for Texas families remains among Senator Zaffirini’s top priorities in the Texas Senate. Her Senate Bill (SB) 28 reforms the Towards Excellence, Access and Success (TEXAS) Grant program to prioritize grants for high-achieving, low-income students.

“SB 28 re-focuses the TEXAS Grant program on its original mission: helping low-income students who will benefit greatly from financial assistance,” she said. “These grants empower students to access and afford college and be graduated timely.”

To reduce confusion, preclude missed deadlines and enhance efficiency, Senator Zaffirini passed SB 851, which requires the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) to work with four-year universities to develop a single statewide financial aid deadline.

“With its multitude of deadlines, the financial aid process can be confusing, especially for first-generation college students,” she said. “Creating a single statewide financial aid deadline will allow local governments, businesses, high schools and other stakeholders to collaborate effectively to encourage more students to fill out the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).”

What’s more, Senator Zaffirini sponsored and passed House Bill (HB) 2910 by Rep. Dan Branch, R-Dallas, which created the Texas Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (T-STEM) Challenge Scholarship Program. The T-STEM Challenge program will promote training in high-

tech fields and encourage partnerships between Texas community colleges and local businesses.

“To compete for jobs in high-tech fields, Texas students need access to quality science, technology, engineering and mathematics education,” she said.

Senator Zaffirini also worked tenaciously to craft and pass SB 5, which relieves higher education of many unfunded mandates, including by eliminating costly, unnecessary and duplicative reports. Those efficiencies should enhance the affordability of a college degree.

“Budget reductions are forcing public colleges and universities to do more with less,” she said. “Recognizing that higher education funding was cut significantly, legislators supported our effort to at least relieve administrative burdens and enhance savings.”

## Supporting Excellence in Research

Senator Zaffirini believes that promoting excellence in research is key to ensuring Texas has a world-class higher education system. Accordingly, her SB 29 allows graduate students who receive research fellowships to participate in university health insurance programs. The bill will allow universities to attract and compete for more fellowship recipients and help maximize research funding.

What’s more, Senator Zaffirini and Rep. Branch passed HB 1000, which continues a multi-session effort to expand and enhance national research universities in Texas by providing a criteria-based incentive and distribution methodology for the National Research University Fund (NRUF).

Their HB 51 (2009) promoted excellence for Texas’ 38 public universities by supporting research, creating centers of excellence and establishing procedures by which emerging research universities can access the NRUF.

“The mutually-beneficial interaction between teaching and research not only leads to important scientific and medical breakthroughs, but also enhances the quality and value of a student’s degree,” Senator Zaffirini said.

## Promoting Accountability

Prioritizing an efficient, effective and transparent public higher education system not only is good public policy, but also keeps Texas’ colleges and universities focused on excellence.

“Accountability should be more than just a buzzword,” Senator Zaffirini said. “It should entail identifying and implementing meaningful policies to ensure students are receiving the highest-quality education possible.”

Her SB 36 requires THECB, together with academic advisors, to develop a system for incorporating academic advising in the state’s higher education accountability system.

“To improve graduation rates, student success and the quality of education at our colleges and universities, students must receive effective, appropriate academic advising from qualified academic advisors,” she said. “A system to evaluate academic advising not only will help achieve these goals, but also will strengthen an already nationally-admired accountability system.”

Accountability also was the focus of her SB 38, which she passed as an amendment to SB 1534 by Senator Florence Shapiro, R-Plano. This bill requires THECB, together with for-profit and career schools, to develop a system to bring those institutions into the state’s accountability system.

“As for-profit and career institutions become a significant presence in the higher education marketplace, it is important that students, parents and policymakers have access to up-to-date information about them,” Senator Zaffirini said. “Bringing these schools into the accountability system will help students access necessary information before they enroll.”

## Focusing on Oversight

In May Lt. Gov. David Dewhurst appointed Senator Zaffirini Co-Chair, with Rep. Branch, of the newly formed Joint Oversight Commit-

tee on Higher Education Governance, Excellence and Transparency (HEGET). The committee will encourage governing boards to follow best practices in policy development and implementation, ensure that major policy decisions are vetted adequately and discussed transparently and protect the excellence and high quality of our state’s public institutions of higher education.

“I am grateful to Lt. Gov. Dewhurst for this important committee assignment because our colleges and universities are among our state’s most important assets,” Senator Zaffirini said. “They not only provide high quality workforce training, but also conduct nationally-recognized basic and applied research, thereby expanding knowledge, creating new technologies and positioning Texas at the forefront of the knowledge-based economy.”

The committee welcomes the perspectives of all Texans and will issue an initial report of its findings before the 83<sup>rd</sup> Texas Legislature convenes on Jan. 8, 2013.



TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY-CORPUS CHRISTI students meet with Senator Judith Zaffirini. They are (L-R) student leaders Samantha Hernandez and DeeAnn Elizondo of San Patricio County and Kelsey Lyssy of Karnes County.



SENATOR JUDITH ZAFFIRINI welcomes Starr County constituents to the Texas Senate. They are (L-R) Araceli Saenz, Valerie Brown Garza, Nilda Elizondo, Rose Benavidez, Juan Zuñiga and Rio Grande City Mayor Ruben Villarreal.



ARIEL PEREZ, Monica Faz and their son, Ariel Perez Jr., welcome Senator Judith Zaffirini to Zavala County.



SOUTH TEXAS LEADERS discuss mutual interests with Senator Judith Zaffirini. They are (L-R) Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board (TSSWCB) Field Representative Tony Franklin, McMullen County; Sylvia A. and Israel Hinojosa, Jim Hogg County; Nelda and Leonel Ramirez and TSSWCB Field Representative Adrian Perez, Duval County.





AN ARDENT CHAMPION for the very young, the very old and persons with disabilities, Senator Judith Zaffirini is shown in photograph 1. with students Baylea Herring and Erynn Studlar of Live Oak County, Gage Bush and Ethan Campos of Wilson County and Mallori Johnson of Bexar County; in 2. with Sister Beatrice Cruz of Bee County; and in 3. with Atascosa County advocates Michael and Susan Peace.

## Legislation's Goal: Quality Care, Respect for All

As a member of the Texas Senate Health and Human Services Committee, Senator Judith Zaffirini believes that all families should have access to quality health care. While prioritizing funding and legislation that promote healthy families, she is a champion for patients, doctors, nurses, health educators and persons with disabilities.

Her Senate Bill (SB) 37 continues the Promoting Independence Advisory Committee, which helps Texans with disabilities live in community settings

## Zaffirini Promotes Early Education, Protects Children with Food Allergies

Persevering in the face of substantial budget cuts to public education during the 82<sup>nd</sup> Texas Legislative Session, Senator Judith Zaffirini continued to advocate tirelessly for Texas public school students, teachers and parents.

Her Senate Bill (SB) 54, for example, will improve training for teachers of students with visual impairments. The legislation, which Senator Zaffirini first filed in 2009, was the result of collaboration with parents, persons with disabilities and educators.

"Approximately 8,500 Texas public school children have visual impairments," she said. "SB 54 will ensure that their teachers are prepared to teach critical subjects, including Braille and orientation and mobility."

A longtime champion for early childhood education, Senator Zaffirini also authored and passed two bills relating

or with their families, instead of in costly institutions.

Additionally, her SB 1857 promotes safe self-administration of medications by persons in community-based programs.

"Giving persons with disabilities the opportunity to live in the community allows them to lead healthier, happier and more productive lives," she said.

SB 41 by Zaffirini prohibits the use of dangerous restraints in State-Supported Living Centers. What's more,

to improving childcare in Texas. SB 264 will provide information about the quality of area childcare programs to families, thereby allowing them to make informed decisions. SB 265 specifies who may provide the training required for employees of Texas childcare providers.

"Requiring comprehensive training is critical because the level of training attained by a childcare provider is one of the strongest predictors of quality," Senator Zaffirini said.

Her SB 27 requires Texas school districts to implement policies based on statewide food allergy management guidelines. Children with food allergies, parents, medical professionals and educators helped ensure the bill's passage.

"Food allergies can be life-threatening, and prevention is key," Senator Zaffirini said. "Because of this legislation, we will save lives and prevent needless tragedies."

her SB 43 ensures accountability for abuses in the mental health system.

SB 26 by Zaffirini was her second attempt to eliminate the hurtful slur, "retarded," from statutes. She sponsored and passed its companion bill, House Bill (HB) 1481 by Rep. Vicki Truitt, R-Keller, which requires agencies to use respectful language when referencing persons with disabilities.

An advocate for organ donation, Senator Zaffirini authored and passed legislation to establish and to enhance the Glenda Dawson Donate Life-Texas Registry. This year she sponsored and passed HB 2904 by Rep. John Zerwas, R-Simonton, which streamlines the process for registering organ donors and reduces its cost.

"There is no greater gift than life itself," said Senator Zaffirini, a registered organ donor.

She believes that prevention is key to improving public health. Accordingly, she sponsored and passed HB 3724 by Rep. Ryan Guillen, D-Rio Grande City, which requires implementing an early detection plan for chronic kidney disease.

"Kidney disease is a serious problem affecting millions of Texans," Senator Zaffirini said, "Early detection is critical to its treatment and to improved health outcomes."

"Count on me to promote policies that improve health care for all Texans. We must preserve our progress in promoting independence and in reducing waiting lists for critical services for the very young, the very old and persons with disabilities."

## Water Conservation Reduces Drought's Impact

Promoting water conservation and planning are among Senator Judith Zaffirini's top priorities as Texas experiences one of the worst droughts in history. Relentless heat and lack of rain have made it a challenging year for Senate District (SD) 21 families, especially those involved in agriculture.

"Texans are facing the most severe single-year drought since record-keeping began 116 years ago," she said. "The extreme conditions highlight the importance of conserving resources and implementing policies that help farmers and ranchers."

According to the Texas AgriLife Extension Service, the drought's economic impact to Texas agriculture was \$5.2 billion as of August, 2011.

The senator encourages families who need drought assistance to visit the Texas Department of Agriculture's website, [www.TexasAgriculture.gov](http://www.TexasAgriculture.gov), for an extensive list of resources.

An advocate for soil and water conservation, Senator Zaffirini has passed 32 bills relating to protecting precious water resources, including by creating water conservation districts in eight SD 21 counties. These districts help protect important water sources, including the Edwards and Carrizo-Wilcox Aquifers. She also sponsored and passed legislation in 2001 to continue and improve the operations of the Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board.

"Water conservation always is a wise practice, but it is especially impor-

tant during a drought," Senator Zaffirini said. "Because of increased population and economic development related to the Eagle Ford Shale, careful planning for future water needs is critical."

All SD 21 families can help conserve water, including by limiting yard-watering and by washing only full loads of laundry.

"Making small changes in your daily routine not only saves water, but also reduces utility bills," Senator Zaffirini said.

Drought conditions spawned damaging wildfires in SD 21 and throughout Texas. Duval County was among 45 counties in Texas that were declared

## Zaffirini Prioritizes Lake Safety

South Texas lakes are not only natural treasures, but also major attractions for tourists, boaters and fishing enthusiasts. Senator Judith Zaffirini and State Representative Ryan Guillen, D-Rio Grande City, collaborated in 2011 to pass four bills that emphasize lake safety, including at Choke Canyon Reservoir, Falcon Lake, Lake Casa Blanca and Lake Corpus Christi.

"Prioritizing safety will help ensure that visitors have peace of mind," Senator Zaffirini said. Accordingly, the duo passed House Bill (HB) 2138, which supports cooperative efforts between game wardens and state military forces in rescue operations.

"Partnership is important in ensuring the success of water-related res-

a federal disaster area after fires ravaged thousands of acres. Accordingly, 250 of Texas' 254 counties, including all SD 21 counties, had instituted burn bans as of August, 2011.

The Texas Department of Public Safety estimates that 90 percent of all wildfires are caused by human activity. Fireworks, trash fires and stray cigarettes are the primary causes.

"Preparation for a natural disaster can mean the difference between life and death," she cautioned. "Be sure to have a plan in case an evacuation is needed. Having a supply kit in your car and quick access to family valuables will save time."

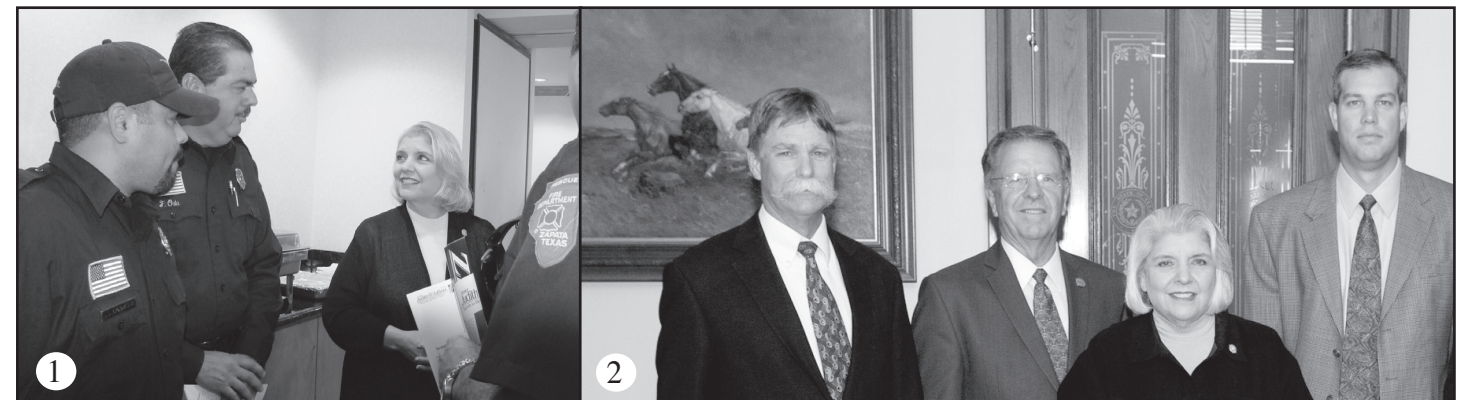
cues," Senator Zaffirini said. "They can be complex operations in which every minute counts."

Senator Zaffirini and Rep. Guillen also passed HB 3722, which will sustain the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department's (TPWD) online Boater Education Program.

"Boater education can save lives," Senator Zaffirini said. "Something as simple as learning the proper use of a life vest can make an enormous difference."

HB 1450 by Guillen and Zaffirini will allow TPWD to seek an insurance policy to cover its dedicated volunteers, thereby reducing liability issues.

Another bill, HB 1449, streamlines the application process for easements on TPWD land.



PUBLIC SAFETY AND AGRICULTURE are important issues for South Texas in general and for Senate District 21 in particular. Senator Judith Zaffirini is shown in photograph 1. with Lt. Jorge Oyervides and firefighter Fermín Orta of the Zapata County Fire Department and in 2. with Texas Farm Bureau members Rob Hinnant of Frio County and Bobby Nedbalek and Nicholas Pinkston of San Patricio County.





## Zaffirini Named a *Best Legislator, People's Friend*

Leading by example, Senator Judith Zaffirini works tirelessly on behalf of the families of Senate District 21 and of our great State of Texas. Her legendary work ethic is reflected in her 100 percent perfect voting record since 1987, having cast her 47,584<sup>th</sup> consecutive vote in the Texas Senate when the 82<sup>nd</sup> Texas Legislative Session adjourned.

In 2011 *Texas Monthly* named Senator Zaffirini one of Texas' *10 Best Legislators*, and the *Texas Observer* honored her with the *People's Friend: Lord's Work Award*.

What's more, she received the inaugural *Subiendo Leadership Award* from The University of Texas at Austin, and the *Laredo Morning Times* named her a *Hero of Hope*.

This year marks the fourth time that *Texas Monthly* has included Senator Zaffirini on its "10 Best" list. It also included her in 2005, 2001 and 1997; gave her the *Bull of the Brazos* award in 2009 and an *Honorable Mention* in 2003.

In naming Senator Zaffirini to the list, the magazine described her



**SENATOR JUDITH ZAFFIRINI is a champion for Texas families. Her service is inspired by her husband, Carlos Sr., and their son, Carlos Jr.**

as the "key player" on the Senate Finance Subcommittee on Medicaid and cited her "encyclopedic knowledge of the health and human services budget" and her ability to persuade her colleagues.

"During debates, she wields facts like knives," the *Observer* noted. "Few lawmakers in the Capitol fight for vulnerable Texans with Zaffirini's skill and tenacity."

What's more, the article praised Senator Zaffirini's work on the Senate Finance Committee, where she championed minimizing the impact of harmful budget cuts on Texas families.

"We know that—had it not been for her work—those cuts likely would have been far deeper," the *Observer* said.

"I appreciate these recognitions and share them with all who partnered in our success," Senator Zaffirini said. "Each award reflects continual and effective collaboration with Senate colleagues; my hard-working staff; and many advocates, constituents, volunteers and leaders." She has passed 725 bills and received more than 670 awards and

honors for her legislative, public service and professional work, including more than 160 in communication.

Senator Zaffirini holds B.S., M.A. and PhD degrees from The University of Texas at Austin, each with a 3.9 grade-point average.

The first Hispanic woman elected a Texas state senator, her inspiring story is recounted in a publication for students at the Senator Judith Zaffirini Elementary School in Laredo, namely, *If Judy Pappas Can Do It, Anybody Can!*

A lector at Blessed Sacrament Catholic Church, she and her husband, Carlos Sr., celebrated 46 years of marriage in 2011. Their son, Carlos Jr., is an attorney who owns a health care finance consulting company.