



My five cents...

A monthly column from Sen. Robert Nichols
by Sen. Robert Nichols, Senate District 3

For immediate release
October 31, 2019
word count: 705

Contact: Sydni Mitchell
Tel: 512-463-0103

I am very grateful for many things in November...my family, friends, and hunting season. I am also grateful for the opportunity to represent Senate District 3 in Austin as your State Senator. As you celebrate Thanksgiving, I wish you a holiday filled with family, friends and lots of pumpkin pie or pecan pie (which is the state pie of Texas!).

Here are five things happening around your state this month:

1. Mass Violence Prevention

The Select Committee on Mass Violence Prevention and Community Safety met at the end of October to discuss how the role of digital media, dark web networks and overall cultural issues may play a part in the promotion of mass violence. The correlation of how these items might contribute to the incitement of racism, domestic terrorism, and the radicalization of individuals was also discussed.

They also examined the state's interest in public safety and its ability to protect first amendment rights to free speech and free exercise of religion, while prohibiting individuals from wearing items intended to intimidate, incite violence or engage in criminal activity. This committee has held multiple hearings around the state in the past few months and will continue to meet before the next legislative session which begins in January 2021.

2. House Public Education Hearing

The Texas House Public Education Committee recently held a hearing to examine the implementation of House Bill 3, which provided approximately \$11.6 billion to school districts across the state. They examined ways the bills language might have created hardships and/or unexpected increases or decreases in funding for school districts. Superintendents in Senate District 3 brought to my attention a complication in funding in regards to enrolling their students in career and technology courses. It is important to me to stay in touch with the school districts within Senate District 3 to ensure that I have an understanding of how the bills we pass in Austin affect those they were meant to help. The Legislature will continue to monitor House Bill 3 throughout the interim and will be able to address many of these concerns/issues in the next legislative session.

3. Interim Charges

Lieutenant Governor Patrick recently released interim charges for all of the standing Senate committees. As the Legislature only meets in odd-numbered years for 140 days, there is a limited amount of time for all issues to be addressed. Because of this, the Legislature uses interim charges as a way to study and examine the different sides of an issue, review legislation previously passed, provide suggestions for solutions and begin work on potential legislation for the next session. Over the next year, committees will hold hearings to discuss these interim charges.

Some of these charges include examining best practice models for recruiting, preparing and retaining teachers, examining and determining ways to improve health care services in rural areas and medically underserved areas, as well as examining the adequacy of long-term health care services and support options for veterans in Texas.

4. Explore Our State

We are lucky to live in a state that covers so much area and includes various types of scenery from the coastal plains of Corpus Christi to the high plains of Amarillo, to the pine trees in East Texas and the mountains in El Paso. As the holidays approach and you begin to plan trips with your family and friends, I hope you will consider making one of those trips within our great state. As our state is so large, it can often be overwhelming to know where to go. You can visit www.texastimetravel.com and explore what to see and do in the various regions of Texas, as well as if there is a specific theme you are looking at such as arts and leisure or architecture.

5. Veterans Day

Veterans Day, which was originally known as Armistice Day, commemorated the ending of World War I in 1918. In 1954, President Eisenhower changed the name to ensure all U.S. Veterans were included. On Monday, November 11th, we will pay tribute to all American veterans and their services to our country. If you have a Veteran in your life, I encourage you to honor and thank them for the sacrifices they made to ensure we have our freedom.

###