

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

KELLY HANCOCK

CAPITOL REPORT



The Senate of The State of Texas SENATOR KELLY HANCOCK

Dear Friends,

Texas is a remarkable state, and in 2017, Texans showed the world their remarkable character.

From the wake of Hurricane Harvey to the tragedy in Sutherland Springs, Texans look out for one another. Texans, from generous hearts, give to those in need. Texans put our state motto, "Friendship," into practice every day. And because of its people, Texas is *strong*.

It is a true privilege to serve the State of Texas and the residents of District 9 in the Senate.

As you may know, the Texas Legislature meets biennially for 140 days for a regular business session. That session ran from January 10th to May 29th this past year, and we also met for a special session from July 18th through August 15th.

I had the honor of serving on a number of committees for both of these sessions including the budget-writing Finance Committee, the Transportation Committee, the Natural Resources and Economic Development Committee and as Chairman of the Business and Commerce Committee.

In this newsletter, we have provided an update on some of the key legislation that was passed during the 2017 legislative sessions. We hope you find the information useful and would also encourage you to contact our district office in North Richland Hills or our Capitol office in Austin at any time if you have questions or concerns regarding Texas state government policy and operations.

During the interim, or the period between legislative sessions, committees continue meeting to study key issues, and our office remains actively involved in research and preparations for the upcoming session. Your input is a valuable part of that process, so we hope to hear from you.

We wish you and yours a very Happy New Year. Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to be your voice in Austin.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kelly Hancock".

Kelly Hancock
State Senate, District 9
Chairman, Business & Commerce

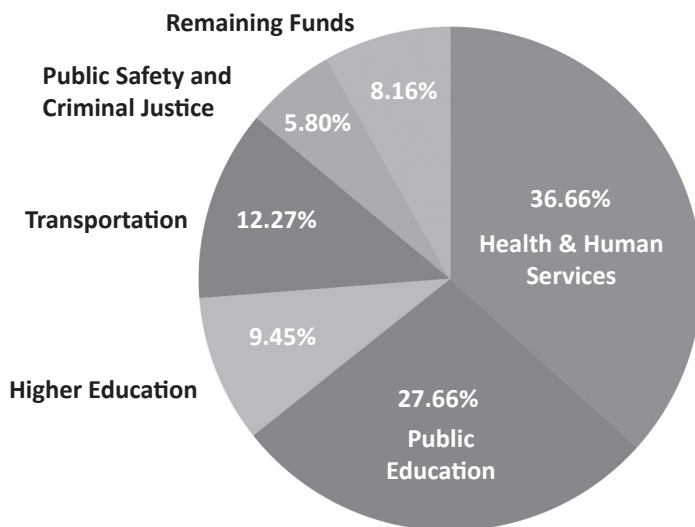


85th LEGISLATIVE SESSION

The Budget: Your Tax Dollars at Work

Each regular legislative session, the Senate's Finance Committee spends hundreds of hours combing through and hearing testimony on state expenditures as we look at the best way to put your tax dollars to work. This is always a tough process, but the 2018-2019 budget is balanced and has been funded with an *increase* of \$508.5 million to Child Protective Services (CPS) and \$695.9 million to the Teacher Retirement System (TRS), all while keeping a projected \$10.9 billion in the state savings account, the Economic Stabilization Fund (ESF). The graph below provides a good look at how the budget is allocated.

**The 2018-19 Texas Budget:
A Breakdown by Category**



Economic Impact: Business and Commerce

Did you know Texas has the 10th largest economy in the *world*? As Chairman of the Senate's Business and Commerce Committee, I believe it's important to keep government out of the way of our state's job creators so we can maintain that strong economy. Burdensome regulations stifle economic growth. That's why we passed legislation to deregulate more than 15,000 occupational licensees for things like eyebrow threading (SB 2065) and created a uniform, statewide framework for accessing 5G wireless technology (SB 1004).

Continuing the Fight: Balance Billing Reform

This past September, SB 507 took effect and is now the law of the land. I authored this bill to expand consumer protections against a concerning medical billing practice called "balance billing." Balance billing is common practice in the healthcare system. It occurs when patients are directly billed by a provider for the portion of medical expenses not covered by their insurance. Often times these bills are a shock to the patient. For instance, patients admitted to an "in-network" facility may unknowingly receive treatment from an "out-of-network" doctor and wind up with a hefty bill.

In 2009, we wrote and passed legislation to create a mediation process through the Texas Department of Insurance (TDI) for patients who receive a balance bill. In 2017, we expanded access to that system which now covers *all* emergency providers and *all* out-of-network providers working at a network facility, including freestanding emergency rooms. SB 507 also expanded mediation protections to more than 250,000 Texans enrolled in the Teacher Retirement System (TRS-Care) and 430,000 enrolled in the self-funded TRS-ActiveCare program. ***If you have a balance billing complaint and need assistance, please contact the TDI Consumer Help Line at 1-800-252-3439.***

Special Session: Protecting Your Vote

Governor Greg Abbott called a special session of the Legislature last summer to work on 20 important issues that weren't sufficiently addressed during the regular session. I worked closely with State Representative Craig Goldman of



Members of the Senate Committee on Business and Commerce, 85th Legislature. L to R: Sen. Donna Campbell, Sen. Robert Nichols, Sen. John Whitmire, Sen. Larry Taylor, Chairman Hancock, Sen. Charles Schwertner, Sen. Judith Zaffirini, Sen. Craig Estes. Not pictured: Sen. Brandon Creighton, Vice-Chair.

85th LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Fort Worth to tackle one of those: mail-in ballot fraud. Mail ballot voting is a prime target for illegal voting and election fraud, as evidenced by ongoing investigations in multiple Texas counties. For example, in Dallas County, approximately 700 mail-in ballots from last May's election were sequestered due to suspicions of fraud. The Legislature did pass our special session bill, SB 5, to add some much-needed teeth to

the election code. This new law creates signature verification checks and balances, requires that the Attorney General be notified about mail ballots rejected due to fraudulent signatures, establishes an offense for submitting mail ballot applications without a voter's knowledge, and enhances penalties for fraud perpetrated against elderly and disabled voters. SB 5 took effect on the first of December.

CONSTITUENT SERVICES



Sen. Hancock and Sen. Jane Nelson welcome Leadership Grapevine to the Texas Capitol.

State Agency Assistance: Cutting through the red tape of a government agency can be a challenge. If you need help contacting or interacting with a State of Texas agency, we are available to assist you. Please contact our District Office at (817) 514-3804 for immediate assistance or to learn about our upcoming Mobile Office Hours near you.

Improving Government: The people of Texas make our state great. Citizen input is key to improving the way Texas state government operates. If you have a policy recommendation or suggestion to improve a state agency, we want to hear about it. Please contact us by phone or email to share your thoughts.

Visiting Austin: Everything is bigger in Texas - including our State Capitol! If your family or group is planning a visit to Austin and would like a tour of the Capitol building, please call the State Preservation Board's tour office at (512) 463-0063. Be sure to stop by *your* State Senate office (1E.9) to say hello!

Page Program: During the legislative session, students between 6 and 18 years of age are encouraged to apply for a shift as a "Page for a Day" in the Texas Senate. This program is managed by the office of the Sergeant-at-Arms and provides a firsthand look at government in action. For more information, please call our Capitol office at (512) 463-0109.



Carter Bernett of North Richland Hills, a participant in the page program, joins Sen. Hancock on the Senate Floor.

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Senator Kelly Hancock



First elected to the Texas Senate in 2012, Kelly Hancock represents District 9, which includes portions of Tarrant and Dallas Counties. He previously served three terms in the Texas House of Representatives where he advocated for core conservative values of limited government, lower taxes, and strong family values.

Throughout his legislative career, Kelly has worked to pass voter identification legislation, pro-life legislation, border security legislation, and state sovereignty legislation.

A graduate of Baylor University, Kelly possesses an extensive business background through his work at his family-founded company. He and his wife, Robin, have been married for 30 years and have three adult children.

On the floor of the Texas Senate: Kelly with his wife and high school sweetheart, Robin, and their children Chloe, Skylar, and Harrison.