



Pete's Periódico

The Work Starts Now

by Sen. Pete Flores, Senate District 19

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It's here. As of noon on January 8, 2019, the 86th Texas Legislature has begun—and we're off to a great start. The Texas Senate, Texas House of Representatives, Governor Greg Abbott and Lt. Governor Dan Patrick are all united and ready to work this legislative session building a better Texas.

A day before the Legislature convened, Texas Comptroller Glenn Hegar released the Biennial Revenue Estimate, an analysis of the state's current economic outlook. The news was good: due to our state's robust economy and fiscal restraint, state funds available for the budget have increased 8.1 percent and the Economic Stabilization Fund (the state savings account) is on track to hit a record \$15 billion, making it the largest such state savings account in the country.

This report is crucial to my colleagues and I as we begin to write the 2020-2021 state budget.

In addition to budget-writing responsibility, I want to focus this session on core issues that affect Senate District 19 constituents on a daily basis. Tax relief, education, public safety—these issues and more will be my focus during the coming months.

Among all these issues, two big priorities stand out: school finance and property tax reform.

School finance—the process by which we fund Texas schools—is inadequate and outdated. Our state's population and demographics have changed drastically in the past few decades, but the formula to fund public schools has not.

The school finance funding formula combines local, state, and federal funds and appropriates them to the school districts located in the 254 counties across the state. What was once a parity between local and state funding has turned lopsided, with local districts forced to bear the burden. We need to modernize the school finance system with an updated formula.

We have a constitutional duty to our children to provide a quality education and a moral duty to our taxpayers to spend their money as efficiently as possible. I hope both groups can be better served as we undertake the restructuring of our school finance system.

When state dollars fail to show up, local tax dollars must take the place. These levies typically arrive in the form of property taxes.

Texas has one of the highest property tax rates in the country. These ever-increasing taxes limit the ability for Texans to own a home, a financial capstone for many families. They also diminish economic activity and hurt renters as landlords pass down the costs.

Over the past two decades, the property tax burden has increased by 230%. This is in part due to an outdated school finance system. As a school district's population grows, they need more money. We are optimistic that we will bring some much-needed relief to our Texas homeowners.

These are the two big issues my colleagues in both chambers and on both sides of the aisle will be working on. Indeed, it's hard to address one without the other. But, as I mentioned, they are not the only issues.

I filed a bill making it easier for homeowners to challenge their property's appraisal. I am a co-author of a bill establishing a Texas Mental Health Care Consortium coordinate and expand mental health services in Texas. I filed another bill seeking to waive registration fees for specialty license plates for World War II veterans.

And we're just getting started. I'm hoping to address other areas of education, public safety, transportation, healthcare, natural resources, and more.

Please continue to contact my office as we walk through this legislative session. You, my constituents, are the ultimate boss here. I want to be receptive to your needs here in Austin. We're in this together.

Sen. Pete Flores is a Republican Texas Senator representing Senate District 19.

To contact Sen. Flores, call his Capitol office at (512) 463-0119 or send an email to District19.Flores@senate.texas.gov. Sen. Flores welcomes all constituents to visit his office at the Texas Capitol, room E1.608. Sen. Flores has an office in San Antonio and will soon have district offices open in Del Rio and Ft. Stockton. For constituent concerns in San Antonio, contact Monica Rojas at Monica.Rojas@senate.texas.gov; for Del Rio, contact Zachary Cadena at Zachary.Cadena@senate.texas.gov. For daily updates, follow him on Facebook: [SenatorPeteFlores](#) and on Twitter: [@PeteFlores_TX](#).