



Pete's Periódico

Committee Work Begins

by Sen. Pete Flores, Senate District 19

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We are now a few weeks into the 86th Legislative Session. Governor Greg Abbott and Lt. Governor Dan Patrick have been officially inaugurated for second terms, hundreds of bills have been filed, and even more visitors have come through my office. And, perhaps most significantly, Senators were assigned to Senate committees.

Senate committees are based on policy areas. The Texas Senate has 16 different committees this year—each one is composed of 5 to 15 Senators, two of which lead the committee as Chair and Vice Chair. Each Senator must be on at least one committee (most are on three or more) and every bill, after it is filed, must be referred by the Lt. Governor to the committee most relevant to the subject matter of the bill. Given the amount of legislation that comes through the Texas Capitol and the limited duration of a legislative session, committees are where legislation is first heard for public hearing, and can be amended and modified the most.

Committee membership is entirely determined by the Lt. Governor. I was appointed to four Senate committees, all of which reflect my life experiences, interests, or Senate District 19. Those committees are: Finance, Natural Resources and Economic Development, Criminal Justice, and Health and Human Services.

★ Finance Committee is primarily responsible for overseeing the state of Texas \$200+ billion budget. We inspect every aspect of government spending; which, as you can imagine, is not a short task. We are scheduled to have a hearing almost every day for the first six weeks of session, each one usually lasting from 9 o'clock to late in the afternoon. As the only freshman Senator on this 15-person committee, it is a distinct honor to be included.

★ Natural Resources and Economic Development Committee focuses on oil and gas, environmental protections, miscellaneous taxes, and general economic growth. Senate District 19 is rich in oil, gas, farmland, and natural beauty. Our district is home to 10 state parks and over 20,000 oil and gas wells in the two of the largest plays in the world: Permian Basin and Eagle Ford Shale.

Additionally, Senate District 19 has thousands of businesses from small mom-and-pop stores to international corporations based out of the District. Texas is a haven for job creation and low taxes; preserving this pro-business climate and continuing the economic success of all Texans is a central task of this Committee.

★ Criminal Justice Committee represents my personal life experience. As you may well know, I served as a Texas Game Warden for 27 years, honorably retiring as a Colonel after leading the Texas Parks & Wildlife Department's law enforcement division. I understand well the daily sacrifice law enforcement officers make, as well as the importance of public safety on our state. I hope to make some progress on protecting

our law enforcement officers and ensuring incarcerated individuals are prepared to successfully re-enter civil society.

★ Health and Human Services Committee oversees healthcare, physician regulations, and the administration of the largest single appropriation in the Texas budget: Medicaid. Given the rural and low income areas of Senate District 19, many of my constituents have limited to access to healthcare. I hope I can use my membership on this committee to fight for pro-life causes and advocate the most defenseless of our population.

All committees will begin having regular hearings soon. The schedules, agendas, and livestream are available on the Texas Senate website (www.senate.texas.gov). In order for a bill to pass through committee to reach the Senate floor for a vote, it must undergo a public hearing, giving the opportunity for any Texan willing to testify. I hope to hear from many of you during these hearings. If you have any questions on how to testify at a hearing, please contact our office.

As always, I look forward to hearing from you. Adelante!

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.