

Senator Judith Zaffirini



Reports to the Families of District 21

Dear Friends:

No Texan, given the opportunity, ever said otherwise than "I'm from Texas." These words by J. Frank Dobie, the great writer who was born in Live Oak County, ranched in La Salle County and taught at The University of Texas at Austin, reflect perfectly our shared Texan pride.

Because I care deeply about Texas, I strive daily to ensure a better future for our state's children, families and communities.

Senate District 21 is home to more than 800,000 constituents in 18 counties, namely, Bee, Caldwell, Duval, Jim Hogg, Karnes, La Salle, Live Oak, McMullen, San Patricio, Starr, Webb, Wilson and Zapata; and parts of Atascosa, Bexar, Guadalupe, Hays and Travis.

Our diverse district stretches from Laredo to the Upper Rio Grande Valley, to the Coastal Bend and the Port of Corpus Christi, across to Austin and down around San Antonio back to the border. We are united by our shared priorities, including quality education; public safety; transportation; jobs and a strong economy; a clean environment; a fair justice system; and health and human services, especially for the very young, the very old, the very poor, persons with disabilities and veterans.

My committee assignments position me to continue to make a difference while addressing these issues. Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick appointed me to serve as Vice Chair of the Natural Resources and Economic Development Committee and on the Administration, Business and Commerce and State Affairs committees; and to the Texas Judicial Council (TJC) and the Texas Access to Justice Commission.

Chief Justice Nathan Hecht appointed me to TJC's committees on Guardianship, Mental Health and Intellectual Disabilities; Civil Justice; and Public Trust and Confidence. What's more, I also serve as Senate Chair of the Eagle Ford Shale Legislative Caucus.



“Because I care deeply about Texas, I strive daily to ensure a better future for our state's children, families and communities.”

– Senator Judith Zaffirini

I am grateful for the advocates, constituents and local leaders who contacted me, provided testimony or visited the Capitol during the 85th Texas Legislative Session and subsequent special session. Your perspectives enhanced our success, and I am delighted to report that I passed 109 bills during the regular session—more than any other legislator and again breaking my personal record.

Since 1987 I have passed 1,024 bills—more than any other legislator in Texas history! In 2017 I cast my 60,000th consecutive vote in the Senate, and you can count on me to continue to cast every vote by balancing the needs and priorities of our district with those of our great state.

A champion of lifelong learning, Dobie also wrote, *I have come to value liberated minds as the supreme good of life on earth.* This educational newsletter is not only a progress report,

but also a call for ideas, discussion and collaboration.

Remember, your feedback remains critical to our success. Accordingly, we will continue to maintain our open door policy and respond to every letter, email and telephone call.

My prayer is that the Lord will continue to bless us and inspire us to work for a better future.

May God bless Texas!

Judith Zaffirini

Judith Zaffirini

State Senator, District 21

www.zaffirini.senate.texas.gov



SENATOR JUDITH ZAFFIRINI is a champion for improved health and quality of life throughout Senate District 21. She is shown in photograph 1. with olive grower Jerry Farrell and Cotulla Chamber of Commerce official Fay Schulze admiring the new La Salle County safety rest area along Interstate 35 and 2. with Dr. Rayford Mitchell, a family physician from Karnes County who served as “Doctor of the Day” at the Texas Capitol.

Senator Zaffirini: Health Care Is a Right, Not a Privilege

Senator Judith Zaffirini believes that access to quality, affordable health care is a right, not a privilege. Accordingly, in 2017 she sponsored and passed House Bill 10 with Rep. Four Price, R-Amarillo, ensuring that treatments for mental health conditions and substance use disorders are covered by health insurance plans on par with treatments for physical health conditions, and authored its companion mental health parity legislation, Senate Bill (SB) 860.

“Mental and physical health are equally important to a person’s well-being, and comprehensive mental health parity is necessary to ensure persons with mental illnesses and substance use disorders have access to the treatments they need,” the senator said. “No Texan should be denied coverage of a diagnosed illness simply because the illness is mental and not physical.”

Unfortunately, many persons with mental illnesses enter Texas’ criminal justice system, instead of appropriate medical settings where they could receive the treatment they need.

Accordingly, Senator Zaffirini authored and passed SB 1326 not only to ensure that criminal defendants with mental illnesses are referred timely to adequate treatment options, but also to help free up capacity in state hospitals for other persons who need mental health services.

“SB 1326 also authorizes counties to offer competency restoration in outpatient residential, community inpatient or jail-based restoration settings and allows

judges more flexibility in selecting mental treatment options for persons charged with non-violent misdemeanor offenses,” she said.

The senator supported 2017 legislation that will reform the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS), which is charged with protecting the state’s children from abuse or neglect. These measures included bills making DFPS a stand-alone agency, providing



AFFORDABLE HEALTH CARE should be a right for all Texans, including the state’s retired teachers. Senator Judith Zaffirini is shown donating children’s books to a reading program sponsored by the Seguin-Guadalupe County Retired Teachers, including Nancy Virden (seated) and Gloria Osborn of Seguin.

more financial support to families caring for children in the agency’s custody and reforming the judicial process related to these children.

Children aging out of the foster care system can sometimes face a challenging transition to adulthood, which is why Senator Zaffirini authored and passed SB 1758. To help prepare these children to live independently once they turn 18, SB 1758 requires DFPS staff to assess their independent living skills earlier and ensure they have key personal documents such as a birth certificate, Social Security card and personal ID card or driver’s license that are critical to obtaining housing, employment and education.

“Foster youth who are prepared to live independently as adults are more likely to be successful and are less likely to need government assistance later in life,” she said.

Independent living also is important for many Texans with disabilities, and paratransit services can help this population access health care, education and employment opportunities. Accordingly, the senator authored and passed SB 402, which requires public transportation providers to promote awareness of riders’ eligibility to use these services.

“Many persons with disabilities do not know they are eligible for paratransit services that could help them live more independently or improve their quality of life,” she said.

New Laws Protect Privacy, Promote Government Accountability

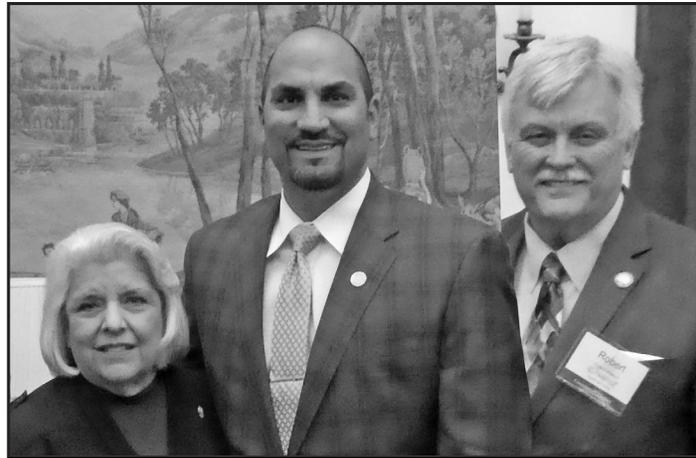
New laws resulting from Senator Judith Zaffirini's 2017 legislation protect Texans' privacy and promote transparency at all levels of government.

Her Senate Bill (SB) 840, for example, corrects a disparity in law that allowed drone use for surveillance purposes by private persons within 25 miles of the U.S.-Mexico border, but not elsewhere in Texas.

"All Texans deserve the expectation of privacy on their property and within their homes, regardless of where they live," the senator said. "There is no legitimate reason to subject more than 1 million Texans who live near the border to arbitrary drone surveillance."

On a related note, due to privacy concerns, many Texans would prefer not to disclose their home addresses in public records. Accordingly, the senator authored and passed SB 1098, which allows Texans who use notaries to provide a mailing address, rather than a residential address.

The accuracy of personal records also is important, which is why Senator Zaffirini sponsored and passed House Bill (HB) 1823 by Rep. Terry Canales, D-Edinburg, which allows the inclusion of diacritical marks on birth certificates, death certificates, marriage certificates, divorce documents and driver's licenses. What's more, the senator's SB 47



SD 21 COUNTY JUDGES work with Senator Judith Zaffirini to address the needs and priorities of their mutual constituents. These local leaders include (L-R) Webb County Judge Tano Tijerina and Atascosa County Judge Robert Hurley.

requires the state to study records retention practices related to relatively minor Class C misdemeanors.

Another bill she authored and passed, SB 1910, requires the state to adopt best practices from the private sector to enhance cybersecurity and protect Texans' personally identifiable or confidential information online.

"Technological advancements have increased the likelihood of cyberattacks," Senator Zaffirini said. "Texas has a responsibility to protect the data of Texans who use state websites and mobile apps."

Protecting the privacy of lottery winners is the goal of HB 59 by Rep. Ryan Guillen, D-Rio Grande City, and Senator Zaffirini, which allows a person who wins a lottery prize of \$1 million or more to remain anonymous.

To enhance transparency and open government, the senator authored and passed SB 988, which clarifies that a county judge may participate in a commissioners court meeting via videoconference if he or she cannot be physically present at the meeting. Additionally, HB 630 by Rep. Donna Howard, D-Austin, and Senator Zaffirini requires state health and human services agencies to broadcast their open meetings live over the Internet and archive the video online.

"These agencies conduct a variety of public meetings that include the consideration of new payment rates and the deliberation of advisory committees," the senator said. "They often meet in Austin, and lack of online access to their meetings can present a barrier to interested Texans throughout the state who cannot attend the meetings."

Continuing her longtime advocacy for better oversight of state contracts that involve taxpayer money, she also authored and passed SB 262, which requires improved monitoring of purchase reports submitted under the state's cooperative contracts program; and SB 255, which enhances training for state agency personnel who deal with contracts.

"When the state contracts for services with taxpayer dollars, it needs to be accountable for every penny," Senator Zaffirini said.



THE BEST IDEAS for legislation often come from Senator Judith Zaffirini's constituents and local officials. She is shown meeting in 1. with Caldwell County residents (L-R) Patricia White, Lockhart Mayor Lew White and former Lockhart Council Member Paul Gomez; and 2. with John Huff of Live Oak County, McMullen County Commissioner Max Quintanilla Jr. and Julia Huff of Jim Hogg County.

Senator Judith Zaffirini Champions Public Safety, Access to Justice for All Texans

Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. Because Senator Judith Zaffirini agrees with the words of Dr. Martin Luther King, she works tirelessly to promote public safety and ensure that all Texans can access justice and are treated fairly and equally under the law.

Enhancing Court Security

After a horrific assassination attempt against Travis County Judge Julie Kocurek, Texas Supreme Court Chief Justice Nathan Hecht appointed six members of the Texas Judicial Council, including Senator Zaffirini, to a Court Security Committee.

“The attack on Judge Kocurek was not only an assault on our judicial system, but also a wake-up call to improve security for all judges and courthouses in our state,” the senator said.

Based on the Court Security Committee’s recommendations, Senator Zaffirini authored and passed Senate Bill (SB) 42 to improve court security at the places where Texans seek justice.

Specifically, the bill creates the position of Director of Security and Emergency Preparedness at the Office of Court Administration (OCA), establishes local court security committees and requires security training for judges and other court personnel. What’s

more, it protects judges by removing their personal information from public documents and allowing the Department of Public Safety to provide personal security to judges who are threatened or attacked.

“The implementation of these measures will improve safety for everyone who interacts with the Texas justice system, including judges, courthouse personnel, lawyers, jurors, law enforcement officers and citizens,” Senator Zaffirini said.

Dismantling Debtors’ Prisons

For at least four decades the U.S. Supreme Court has dictated that imprisoning a defendant for inability to pay fines denies equal protection and that a person cannot be punished for his or her poverty.

Nevertheless, thousands of low-income Texans are trapped in a cycle of debt, license suspensions, arrest warrants and jail time when they cannot afford to pay traffic tickets and other low-level, fine-only citations.

“This system is not only unconstitutional and destructive to families, but also a burden to Texas taxpayers,” the senator said. “Each of the more than 641,000 persons jailed in 2016 received only a \$50 credit per day in jail, but at a cost to taxpayers of \$80 per day. This means that—as ridiculous as it sounds—it cost \$80 NOT to collect \$50.”

In 2017 Senator Zaffirini authored and passed SB 1913 to reduce the number of persons trapped in this vicious cycle and to provide an alternative to jailing thousands of low-income Texans for no reason other than their inability to pay fines.

“We ensured that defendants satisfied their legal financial obligations through community service, work programs, electronic monitoring and tutoring programs,” she explained, “by ex-

panding the availability of community service and work options that defendants can complete in lieu of paying fines and costs—or being jailed as a consequence.”

The modern day debtors’ prison system results in a cascade of harmful impacts. When low-income Texans cannot pay tickets, they lose their driver’s licenses and cannot renew their vehicle registration, making it illegal for them to drive to work or to pick up their children at school. When they are arrested and imprisoned, they may lose their jobs, housing and families; jeopardize their families’ health and safety; and spiral deeper into poverty.

Protecting Vulnerable Texans

Even before her first election in 1986, Senator Zaffirini prioritized protecting vulnerable Texans, including persons with disabilities and the elderly. Approximately 53,000 of these vulnerable Texans are under guardianship. Because many courts lack the resources to oversee these cases properly and to prevent abuse and exploitation, she has taken a leadership role in reforming the state’s guardianship system.

Building upon the 11 guardianship bills she passed in 2015, in 2017 she passed another eight as stand-alone measures or as amendments to other bills. These include legislation regulating guardianship programs (SB 36); enhancing protections against fraud and abuse (SB 39); and requiring probate bonds to protect vulnerable persons from judicial negligence (SB 40).

Another of her bills, SB 667, would have provided \$5 million to establish a statewide guardianship compliance program to protect vulnerable persons and their \$5 billion in assets. Unfortunately, Governor Greg Abbott vetoed this bill, even though it was a unanimous recommendation from the Texas Judicial Council and the Senate State Affairs Committee and a top priority of Chief Justice Hecht.

“Without oversight, these vulnerable Texans will continue to be subject to abuse, neglect and financial exploitation,” Senator Zaffirini said. “Count on me to continue to champion this issue and to re-file this bill in 2019.”

Despite state law enforcement’s robust efforts to combat human trafficking and sexual assault in Texas, these problems persist. Accordingly, the senator authored and passed SB 2039, which directs the Commissioner of Education, in coordination with the state’s Human Trafficking Prevention Task Force, to develop a prevention program that a school district may use in the district’s health curriculum.

“Such a curriculum could teach young persons to be aware of unhealthy relationships or risky behaviors, thereby reducing their vulnerability to the influence of traffickers,” she said.

Honoring Those Who Protect Us

Brave men and women put their lives on the line every day to protect our communities, our state and our country. Accordingly, Senator Zaffirini prioritizes ensuring they have the support they need and honoring their sacrifices.

“In 2017 I was delighted to sponsor and pass House Bill (HB) 263 by Rep. J.M. Lozano, R-Kingsville, creating a *Back the Blue* specialty license plate to raise awareness of the important role that law enforcement officers play in Texas communities,” she said.

Recognizing peace officers who dedicated their lives to serving Texas and SD 21 communities, she also authored and passed SB 396, creating the Texas Game Warden Teyran “Ty” Patterson Memorial Highway in Guadalupe County, and HB 1162 by Rep. Ryan Guillen, D-Rio Grande City, and Zaffirini, creating the Trooper David Lee Nevarez Memorial Highway in Jim Hogg County.

What’s more, her SB 1968 clarifies that all veterans, including those not in uniform, may make the military salute or recite the pledge during patriotic ceremonies related to the Texas state flag.

Expanding Access to Justice

Because Senator Zaffirini is passionate about improving justice for all Texans, Lieutenant Governor Dan Patrick in 2017 appointed her to the Texas Access to Justice Commission. Created by the Texas Supreme Court in 2001, the commission is charged with

increasing access to justice for Texans who lack financial resources.

“Lack of access to justice can have devastating effects on low-income Texans,” the senator said. “Removing related barriers not only helps them resolve legal issues affecting their work, their health and their families, but also helps our country meet its promise of ‘justice for all.’”

In addition to her legislation addressing debtors’ prisons, in 2017 she authored and passed SB 1911, which authorizes counties to help establish legal self-help centers where persons who represent themselves can seek guidance. The bill’s passage is a continuation of her multi-session effort to expand access to legal resources that benefit low-income Texans. Her 2015 legislation created simple, standardized forms for landlord-tenant disputes, wills and other basic legal matters that can be used by those who cannot afford to hire attorneys.

The senator shares her passion for justice with her husband and son, both attorneys and businesspersons. Carlos Jr., who is a board member of the Texas Access to Justice Foundation, established the Carlos Sr. and Senator Judith Zaffirini Access to Justice Initiative. It pays for bar review courses and exams for low-income UT Law School graduates who pledge to represent low-income clients.



LAW ENFORCEMENT PROFESSIONALS can provide valuable insight regarding public safety, border security and the justice system. From Zapata County, they include (L-R) former Sheriff Sigifredo Gonzalez, Captain Aaron Sanchez, Michael Alvarez and Salvador Elizondo.



VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENTS play a key role in public safety and emergency response throughout Senate District 21. Their leaders include (L-R) Assistant Chief Juan Soliz of San Diego in Duval County; Chief Bill Burris, Firefighter Matt Villa and Captain Kevin Folsom of Beeville in Bee County; and Chief Edwin Baker of Stockdale in Wilson County.



JUNIOR ROTC CADETS (L-R) Prisma Hinojosa, Aissa Morales and Valeria Padilla welcome Senator Judith Zaffirini to Rio Grande City in Starr County.



GOVERNOR GREG ABBOTT hosts a signing ceremony for Senate Bill 42, the Judge Julie Kocurek Judicial and Courthouse Security Act of 2017, bipartisan legislation sponsored and passed by Senator Judith Zaffirini and Rep. John Smithee, R-Amarillo. Shown (L-R) are Will Kocurek, Judge Julie Kocurek, Supreme Court Chief Justice Nathan Hecht, Governor Abbott, Senator Zaffirini, Rep. Smithee and Office of Court Administration Executive Director David Slayton.



ENHANCING EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES for all students at all levels is Senator Judith Zaffirini’s goal in the Texas Senate. She is shown in 1. visiting the STAR Research Park at Texas State University in Hays County with President Denise Trauth and Chancellor Brian McCall; and 2. welcoming San Patricio County elementary school students DeNiya Parker, Tess Rodríguez and Tyler Broerman to the Texas Capitol.

Legislation’s Goal: Quality, Accessible Education for All

Senator Judith Zaffirini believes in the power of education to change lives for the better, which is why she advocates for enhanced educational opportunities for all students at all levels.

In 2017 she authored and passed legislation improving data collection regarding the participation of persons with disabilities in higher education and the workforce (Senate Bill [SB] 719) and regarding student participation in work-study programs (SB 1119).

“More complete data will help us not only strengthen the quality of educational services, but also identify new ways to ensure higher education is affordable and accessible to all,” Senator Zaffirini said.

Another bill she authored, SB 748, helps students in special education transition to adulthood and helps reduce guardianships by making sure that schools recognize alternatives. What’s more, she authored and passed SB 1123, which helps ensure that children in foster care benefit from tuition exemptions designed to aid them.

Texas law allows elected officials to nominate eligible, high-achieving students to

receive the Texas Armed Services Scholarship. If a nominee did not meet the eligibility criteria, however, the scholarship at times was not used. Accordingly, Senator Zaffirini authored and passed legislation (SB 49) to ensure an alternate student may be nominated when the initial nominee does not meet the eligibility criteria.

Understanding the positive impact that Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (JROTC) programs have on students, Senator Zaffirini also sponsored and passed House Bill (HB) 156 by Rep. Richard Raymond, D-Laredo, al-

lowing students at Webb County high schools to participate in JROTC in lieu of placement in a disciplinary or juvenile alternative education program.

Recognizing the importance of every step in the educational pipeline, she also sponsored and passed bills creating an early childhood teaching certification (HB 2039 by Rep. Dan Huberty, R-Houston) and requiring community college students to file degree plans timely (HB 655 by Rep. Travis Clardy, R-Nacogdoches).

Another bill she sponsored and passed, HB 1645 by Rep. J.M. Lozano, R-Kingsville, requires school districts to allow students who participate in Special Olympics to earn a letter on that basis, if other students may letter in other events.

“High quality educational programs and extracurricular activities should be available to all Texas students, regardless of race, gender or disability,” Senator Zaffirini said.

During the 2017 special legislative session, she voted for legislation providing an additional \$351 million for Texas public schools and \$212 million for reducing health insurance premiums and deductibles for retired teachers.



DEL VALLE ISD leaders (L-R) Superintendent Dr. Kelly Crook, Assistant Superintendent Dr. Celina Bley and School Board President Rebecca Birch of Travis County discuss public education issues with Senator Judith Zaffirini at her Capitol Office.

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Senator Zaffirini's Bills Help Businesses, Local Communities

As Vice Chair of the Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Economic Development and a member of the Senate Business and Commerce Committee, Senator Judith Zaffirini prioritizes legislation important to local communities and to Texas businesses of all sizes.

In 2017, for example, she authored and passed Senate Bill (SB) 1871, which addresses the state's ongoing epidemic of oil and gas theft.

"Texas is losing from 10 to 30 million barrels annually due to theft," Senator Zaffirini said. "SB 1871 will help prosecutors dismantle criminal enterprises engaged in oil and gas theft and reduce economic damage to an industry upon which so many Texans rely."

She also authored and passed a series of bills reducing or eliminating burdensome or unnecessary regulations, including SB 1501, which eliminates an ineffective state licensing program for vehicle booting, an activity better regulated at the local level. Her SB 1502, meanwhile, removes eyebrow threading from the list of activities that requires a barber's license, and SB 1503 does the same for shampooing.

Similarly, House Bill (HB) 4007 by Rep. John Kuempel, R-Seguin, which Senator Zaffirini sponsored and passed, streamlines Texas' occupational licensing procedures. Another bill she sponsored and passed, HB 2113 by Rep. Craig Goldman, R-Fort Worth, eliminates unnecessary licensing of legal services contracts.

"It is burdensome to small businesses and wasteful of public resources to administer licensing programs that do little to protect the public," the senator said.

While bills of statewide impact often dominate news headlines, Senator Zaffirini believes that local bills can be equally critical to communities. Accordingly, she prioritizes authoring and passing bills requested by local leaders.

In 2017, for example, she authored and passed SB 1198, which converts the Hays Caldwell Public Utility Agency to the Alliance Regional Water Authority, thereby allowing it to serve water customers better.

Relatedly, she sponsored and passed six bills (SBs 2295-2299 and HB 4275 by Rep. J.M. Lozano, R-Kingsville) helping five municipal utility districts in Hays County and one in San Patricio County provide needed infrastructure improvements such as water, wastewater, roads and parks. She also continued to work with local leaders and stakeholders to protect the San Marcos River.

To help Live Oak County retain a qualified county auditor, Senator Zaffirini authored and passed SB 1780, and her SB 2186 enhances governance of the county's underground water conservation district and limits the district's taxing authority.

HB 1584 by Rep. Tracy King, D-Batesville, and Senator Zaffirini authorizes Webb County to offer solid waste services in underserved areas, and her amendment to HB 2445 by Rep. Lynn Stucky, R-Sanger, will allow Laredo to use hotel-motel tax revenue to help develop its new convention center.

"I am delighted to work with local leaders to prioritize legislation addressing issues important to their communities," she said. "No issue is too big or too small, and every issue is important to someone."

New Texting While Driving Law Protects All Texans on the Road

In 2017 Texas finally joined 46 other states in banning texting while driving. The change is the result of the passage of House Bill (HB) 62, the Alex Brown Memorial Act, by Rep. Tom Craddick, R-Midland, and Senator Judith Zaffirini, D-Laredo, who also authored its Senate companion legislation, Senate Bill 31. The bill's success marked the culmination of Senator Zaffirini's decade-long effort to pass it: She filed legislation for five consecutive legislative sessions, gaining additional support for the measure each time.

"I am grateful to Lt. Governor Dan Patrick for bringing this important bipartisan bill for a vote in the Senate

and to all my colleagues who supported it or worked to improve it," said Senator Zaffirini, who in 2019 plans to re-file her 2017 legislation creating a statewide hands-free law. "We succeeded because of the countless Texas families who called their legislators, wrote letters and provided compelling testimony."

The new law makes texting while driving a misdemeanor offense punishable by a fine of at least \$25 but not more than \$99 for a first offense, and from \$100 to \$200 for subsequent offenses. Exceptions are included for emergencies and using a cell phone for GPS, playing music or making a phone call (unless a local ordinance prohibits cell phone use).



STATEWIDE AND LOCAL issues are equally important to Senator Judith Zaffirini. She is shown in 1. discussing local priorities with Sandy Oaks Mayor Karen Tanguma of Bexar County and 2. receiving congratulations from fellow senators on the passage of her legislation banning texting while driving statewide, a photograph taken by Ricardo B. Braziell of the *Austin American-Statesman*. They include Senators (L-R) Brian Birdwell, R-Granbury; Jane Nelson, R-Flower Mound; Juan "Chuy" Hinojosa, D-McAllen; Donna Campbell, R-New Braunfels; Royce West, D-Dallas; and Kirk Watson, D-Austin. Texas joins 46 other states that prohibit texting while driving.

Senator Zaffirini Casts 60,000th Consecutive Vote in Texas

In 2017 Senator Judith Zaffirini extended her career-long 100 percent voting record by casting her 60,000th consecutive vote in the Senate—a record that is unique in Texas and nationally.

Recognized repeatedly as one of the best legislators, she was named *Best of the Legislature* in 2017 by *Capitol Inside*, which noted that she “reaffirmed her distinction this year as the hardest-working lawmaker in Texas in three decades at least.” Known for her work ethic, she has maintained a 100 percent attendance record in the Texas Senate since

1987, except for breaking quorum deliberately in 2003 to prevent an untimely redistricting that violated the Voting Rights Act.

Applauding Senator Zaffirini’s productivity in 2017, *Capitol Inside* noted, “The towering stack of Zaffirini bills on the governor’s desk is a tangible monument to...[her] experience, skill, relationships, work ethic and sheer will to succeed.”

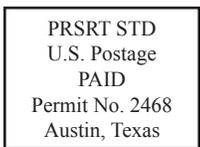
In 2017 she was named a *Champion Against Hate* by Texas Students United for her work to promote equality and stop discrimination and *Legislator of the Year* by AAA Texas

for passing a statewide texting-while-driving ban.

The Texas Access to Justice Foundation named her a *Legislative Hero* in 2016 for her advocacy for civil legal services for disadvantaged Texans.

The owner of Zaffirini Communications, she also received 31 statewide and 6 national awards in 2017 from the Press Women of Texas and the National Federation of Press Women.

Senator Zaffirini holds B.S., M.A. and PhD degrees—each with a 3.9 grade-point average—from The University of Texas at Austin, which named her a *Distinguished Alumna* in 2003; named



her an *Outstanding Alumna* of the Moody College of Communication in 2016; awarded her the Presidential Citation in 2013; and inducted her into *The Daily Texan* Hall of Fame in 2016.

She is featured in 25 books and referenced in 19. Her story is told in *If Judy Pappas Can Do It, Anybody Can!*, her book for students at her namesake elementary school in Laredo. Other buildings bearing her name include a library at Laredo Community College, the student success building at Texas A&M



FAMILY IS THE FOUNDATION of Senator Zaffirini’s lifetime of public service, and what she wishes for her own family is what she champions in the Texas Senate for all families. Hers includes her husband, Carlos Sr.; their son, Carlos Jr., and his wife, Audrey; and her first grandchild, Asher Maxwell, who was born in June, 2017.

International University in Laredo and a drug treatment facility in Edinburg.

Senator Zaffirini has been married to attorney Carlos Sr. for 52 years. Their son, Carlos Jr., and his wife, Audrey, are the proud parents of Asher Maxwell. Carlos Jr. endowed scholarships in his mother’s name at The University of Texas at Austin, Baylor College of Medicine and A&M International. At the latter, the annual Senator Judith Zaffirini Medal is presented to faculty members and students who excel in scholarship and leadership.