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DONNA CAMPBELL, MD
DISTRICT 25

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Senator Campbell Files New Initiative to Ensure Government Transparency and Accountability

AUSTIN – State Senator Donna Campbell filed four bills Friday as part of her CLEAR Government Initiative designed to increase transparency and accountability of local taxing entities to taxpayers.

"The CLEAR Government Initiative is about ensuring best practices at the local level to restore power to the people," said Senator Campbell. "This is sunlight to bring awareness to the fiscal decisions our local governments make every day."

CLEAR stands for Concise Language, Easy to understand budgeting, increased Accountability through ballot language, and Resources online to provide immediate information about taxing entities to citizens, including the impact of locally created special districts.

The CLEAR Government Initiative includes:

Clear Language (Senate Bill 462): Requires clear language to appear on the ballot of bond propositions including the principal amount of debt and the aggregate amount of the outstanding principal of debt obligations of the local entity proposing the borrowing.

Easy to Understand Budgets (Senate Bill 463): Directs school districts to include an easy-to-understand cover page when adopting their budget that lays out the percent of increase or decrease in the adopted budget, the increase or decrease in revenue from property taxes, the effective tax rate and rollback rate, and the record vote of each trustee.

Accountability to Voters (Senate Bill 464): Prohibits cities from accepting pro bono legal services for ballot language challenges and requires local governments to write concise language in which the intent of the ballot measure is clear or pay for citizen's attorney fees in the case of a successful ballot language challenge. Recently, cities such as Houston, San Antonio, and Austin have had the wording of local ordinances questioned as to whether they made their intent clear to voting citizens.

Resources Online (Senate Bill 465): Directs the Comptroller's office to create and oversee an online database warehouse where taxpayers can easily find the boundaries, tax rates, and debt of every political subdivision and taxing entity that affects them.

“Texas is a fiscally responsible state and we expect our elected officials to demonstrate fiscal restraint when making decisions with our hard-earned tax dollars,” Senator Campbell said. “Increasing transparency and providing more information to the citizens about the process will ensure government works better for all Texans. The CLEAR Government Initiative is about making government more accountable to the people.”

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Senator Donna Campbell represents Senate District 25, which includes all or parts of Bexar, Comal, Guadalupe, Hays, Kendall, and Travis Counties.