



SENATOR JOSÉ MENÉNDEZ DISTRICT 26

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

November 12, 2018

Contact: Tomas Larralde 210-269-4060 | Tomas.Larralde@senate.texas.gov

or Cynthia Cabral 210-639-8686 | Cynthia.Cabral@senate.texas.gov

Senator José Menéndez Releases "People First" Legislative Agenda

Austin, Texas - Today, Senator José Menéndez (D-Bexar County) pre-filed his first set of bills for the upcoming Legislative Session. The bills are based primarily on direct input from the 26th District of Texas to focus on the needs of the people of Texas. Almost 400 people showed up to four gatherings and provided their thoughts on potential legislation.

"Legislation should reflect the needs of the people we serve," Menéndez said. "After holding a series of community gatherings throughout our district, we heard a variety of concerns and ideas and are drafting legislation driven by that input."

Creating a Fair and Level Playing Field

Senate Bill **91** would outlaw the use of Non-disclosure agreements designed to silence the victims of sexual harassment.

Senate Bill **112** would require that women are paid the same as men for performing the same job, aka equal pay for equal work.

"We must address the toxic and inequitable conditions that many women have in the workplace. All of us should be able to work in a dignified, respectful and fair work environment, and when a task is performed it should be compensated equally regardless of the gender who performs it," Menéndez said. "Pay inequality costs women-led households nationwide nearly \$900 billion each year and women in Texas only receive 81 cents for every \$1 their Male peers performing the same job receive. For Latinas, the figure is 54 cents for every \$1."

Respecting Workers

Senate Bill **113** and SJR **5** will raise the minimum wage to \$10.10

"The legislature must stand up on behalf of working people and demand a raise. Employers lose good employees because of the lack of adequate pay. Employers end up paying more to retrain and hire new employees. No Texan should work full time and still find themselves in poverty." Menéndez stated.

Children Benefit When We Support Our Teachers

Senate Bill **95** would give every teacher in Texas a pay raise. Texas currently ranks in the bottom 25% of what teachers earn nationally. Senate Bill would grant a \$4,000 pay increase.

"We cannot recruit or retain the best and brightest to educate our children if we continue to pay teachers less than other states," Menéndez commented. "Great teachers changed my life and great teachers change the lives of kids all over Texas every day. They deserve to be put on a path towards fair pay as compared to other states."

Senate Bill **96** will reduce standardized testing for grades 3-8 to only what is federally required. This would eliminate three unnecessary and burdensome tests in the lower grades. This simple move would free up millions of dollars that can be reprogrammed to classrooms.

"I've heard from the parents, teachers, administrators, and students and they are tired of our public education system focusing on testing rather than teaching," Menéndez said. "Teachers want to change lives by inspiring the highest achievement, not the basic attainment."

Protecting Our Retired Teachers

Senator Menéndez filed four bills that give our retired teachers what they have earned and deserve.

Senate Bill **92** would give every retired teacher a 13th check. This one time extra payment will help alleviate the increased medical insurance costs that retired teachers have had to endure.

Senate Bill **93** to give the first cost of living increase to retired teachers in 5 years; although some retirees have never received an increase.

"Texas has not adequately funded the health care of our retired teachers. Premiums have skyrocketed and out of pocket expenses have significantly increased, however, the pensions of our retired teachers have remained stagnant," Menéndez said. "We made a promise to these teachers decades ago and we need to honor that promise. It impacts recruitment, retention, and quality of life."

Senate Bill **94** and SJR **4** would mandate that the state increase its contribution to TRS from 6% to 7%. This would be a constitutional amendment.

"If the state is serious about getting relief for our retired teachers, we must fully fund TRS."

Making Voting for all Texans Hassle-free

Senate Bill **101** would allow for county wide voting.

Senate Bill **102** would provide same day registration at polling places.

Senate Bill **103** would allow for automatic registration when your driver's license is renewed or issued.

Senate Bill **104** would eliminate a modern poll tax by removing the requirement that voters obtain a photo identification in order to vote.

"A record number of Texans voted this past election. Many Texans, including families I represent, waited patiently in long lines, but too many dealt with challenges that made voting more difficult than it should be," Menéndez said. "For two weeks we let people vote anywhere they want, and then the last day we change the rules and limit access to the ballot-that doesn't make sense."

Protecting Our Most Vulnerable

Senate Bill **98** would allow foster care payments to follow the child no matter if a family member adopts the child.

Senate Bill **99** would lower the eligibility age and expand the eligibility for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program to other kinship family members.

"As the newly appointed head of the Blue Ribbon Task Force, I am not only working with each of our stakeholders to secure more funding but also to provide better policies that focus on the interest of our children." Menéndez said.