

CHARLES PERRY

CAPITOL REPORT 2019

Dear Fellow Texans,

I am excited to report that West Texas had a very successful legislative session, which will benefit our region for years to come. In this letter, I have highlighted some of the most impactful initiatives passed this session.

A priority for rural Texas was the critical shortage of large animal veterinarians. The legislature responded by fully funding the Texas Tech School of Veterinary Medicine with \$17.4 million, thereby helping protect our ranchers' livelihood, and as a result our food supply.

As historic flooding and hurricanes continue to strike Texas, I was tasked with authoring the first-ever State Flood Plan. This legislation benefits the entire state through a coordinated bottom-up approach to flood planning. In addition, \$150 million is budgeted to reinforce high-hazard dams, many of which are located in West Texas.

The legislature also cut school property taxes by \$5 billion and took meaningful steps to address school finance and education reform.

To address increases in living and healthcare costs across the state, our retired teachers will receive an additional pension check. In addition, healthcare insurance premiums through TRS-Care will remain unchanged.

Rural hospitals will see much needed relief through the over \$100 million invested to increase Medicaid reimbursement rates and labor and delivery services in rural hospitals.

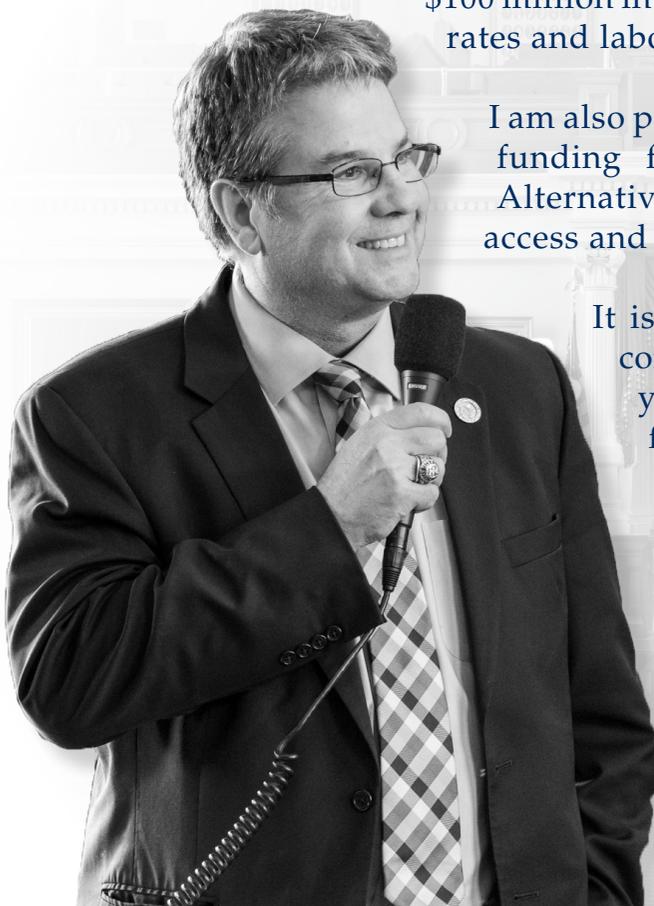
I am also proud to report that the legislature increased funding for the Healthy Texas Women and the Alternatives to Abortion programs, adding additional access and benefits to maternal and postpartum care.

It is an honor and blessing to serve the rural communities I have always called home. I hope you enjoy reading this newsletter and look forward to meeting each of you as I travel around West Texas.

God Bless Texas,



Senator Charles Perry
Senate District 28



ABOUT CHARLES PERRY

Senator Charles Perry was born and raised in West Texas. He graduated from Sweetwater High School in 1980 and worked his way through college. In 1984, he earned a Bachelor of Business Administration in Accounting and Management Information Systems from Texas Tech University. Today, Senator Perry practices as a Certified Public Accountant (CPA) at his firm in Lubbock.

After serving two terms in the Texas House of Representatives, Senator Perry won a special election to the Texas Senate in 2014. Outside the legislature, Senator Perry has served on a number of charitable boards dedicated to protecting and providing services to women and children, such as the National Council on Family Violence and the Women’s Protective Services of Lubbock. He currently serves as a deacon at Southcrest Baptist Church. He has been married to his wife Jacklyn, a retired school teacher, for over 37 years. They have two children and three grandchildren.

Geographically, Senator Perry represents the largest senate district in Texas. The district consists of 51 counties and is over 48,000 square miles, which is larger than 107 countries.

LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEES

- Water & Rural Affairs, Chair
- Health & Human Services, Vice-Chair
- State Water Implementation Fund for Texas (SWIFT), Co-Chair
- Agriculture
- Criminal Justice
- Finance
- Redistricting
- Transportation

GUBERNATORIAL APPOINTMENTS

- Southwestern States Water Commission
- Western States Water Council



Sen. Angela Paxton, Sen. Charles Perry, and Sen. Joan Huffman discussing legislation.

TEXAS TECH UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF VETERINARY MEDICINE

The legislature fully funded the establishment of the Texas Tech School of Veterinary Medicine to meet the demands of a growing population, protect our food supply, and preserve the livelihood of farmers and ranchers. This \$17.4 million appropriation was a top priority for rural legislators to solve the critical shortage of veterinarians in Texas.

VETERINARY SCHOOL PRIORITIES

- Address the critical shortage of veterinarians in rural Texas, with a focus on large animal care.
- Educate and graduate highly skilled veterinarians who will work in rural communities.
- Help meet the growing demands of the livestock industry as it feeds a growing population.
- Provide an affordable education for future Texas veterinarians.
- Deliver practical training and real-world experiences to students.

RURAL HEALTH CARE

Since 2013, over 20 hospitals across rural Texas have temporarily or permanently closed, causing Texas to lead the nation in rural hospital closures. Rural hospitals provide critical services and meet other healthcare needs in the communities they serve. They are often the only source of care for Texans living across 80% of the state.

As hospitals financially struggle with low reimbursement rates and uninsured patients, they have few ways to make up for these losses. Several rural hospitals that remain open have reduced services, often in labor and delivery.

To address this serious problem, I passed Senate Bill 170, which directs the Health and Human Services Commission to reimburse rural hospitals at cost for Medicaid patients. The enactment of this bill, along with over \$100 million budgeted for rural hospitals, will help keep their doors open so they can continue providing high-level care to rural Texans.

ALTERNATIVES TO ABORTION

The Alternatives to Abortion Program helps women from the beginning of their pregnancy up to three years after the birth of their child. This program provides support services including parenting classes, counseling, job placement assistance, as well as physical goods such as car seats and cribs.

To date, the program has 145 locations statewide. Over the next two years, the Health and Human Services Commission is authorized to spend up to \$80 million. This will allow the program to add new locations to address the needs of more women across Texas.



Sen. Perry and Sen. Buckingham with members of the Air Force.



Sen. Perry and Sen. Buckingham with constituents.

STATE FLOOD PLAN

Following the destruction of Hurricane Harvey, officials were ready to pursue a statewide approach toward flood prevention. I spent the last two years collaborating with local leaders, stakeholders, and state and national experts to address flooding throughout Texas.

West Texas, like the coastal region, is no stranger to flooding and flash floods. In the fall of 2018, Sonora experienced catastrophic damage to over 300 homes, several buildings, and 30 road crossings. Junction also experienced severe flooding that resulted in the loss of life and infrastructure damage.

I authored and passed Senate Bill 8 to create a framework for the first State Flood Plan in Texas. The plan is a bottom-up approach in which the Texas Water Development Board coordinates with regions throughout the state on a watershed basis. Each region is then tasked with submitting flood control projects, while making sure their efforts do not negatively impact their neighbors.

The bill also requires the State Flood Plan to provide an evaluation of the condition of existing flood infrastructure, an analysis of development in the 100-year floodplain areas, ranking of new and on-going strategies, and recommendations for continued improvement.

Additionally, Senate Bill 8 prioritizes projects in the flood plan that emphasize water supply, federal matching and participation, and disaster prevention and recovery.

EARTHEN DAM FUNDING

Texas is home to over 2,000 earthen dams. While originally built by the federal government, local sponsors now operate and maintain these dams, with the Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board providing assistance.

Approximately 500 of these dams have been upgraded to a high-hazard classification due to population growth near them. The senate district I represent has 47 of these high-hazard dams. These dams are in need of rehabilitation and repair to meet proper standards.

This session, I helped secure \$150 million to begin the process of repairing dams across the state and maximizing federal funds.

RURAL BROADBAND

Currently, millions of Texans do not have access to reliable broadband, commonly referred to as high-speed internet. According to the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the state’s digital divide (those with access and those without) could result in rural communities missing out on the creation of over 21,000 jobs.

Access to reliable broadband is important not only for connecting rural citizens to the global marketplace, but also for providing access to education and healthcare resources. When high-speed internet is readily available, rural Texans can connect with Texas doctors day or night via telemedicine. Students would also be able to take advantage of more high tech educational resources.

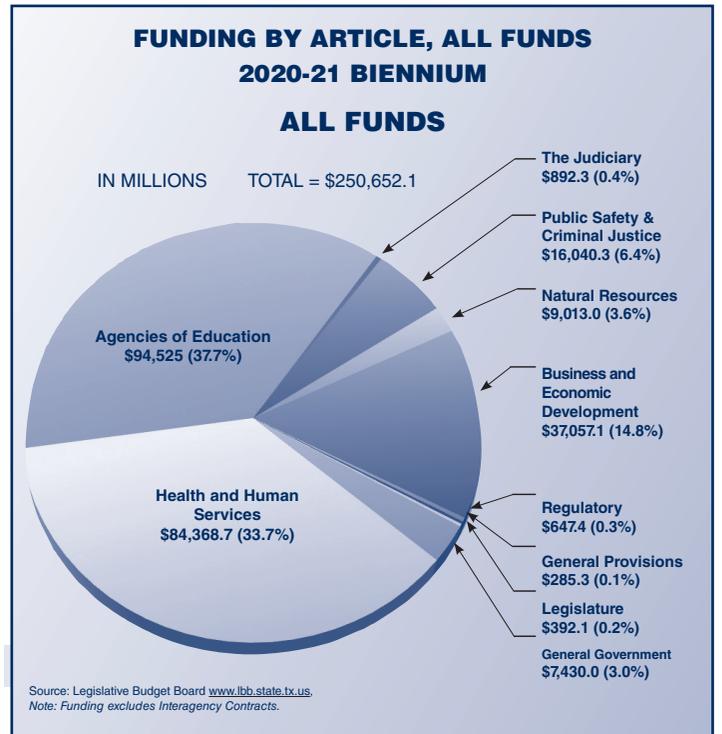
The legislature responded by passing Senate Bill 14, House Bill 1960, and House Bill 2422. All three bills aim to increase access to affordable and reliable broadband in rural areas.

THE BUDGET

The legislature balanced the state’s budget while cutting property taxes by \$5 billion. In total, the General Appropriations Act appropriated \$250.6 billion for the 2020-2021 fiscal years.

The legislature’s top funding priorities this session were public education, property tax relief, and healthcare. For example, nearly 63% of All Funds are dedicated to public education and health and human services. This equates to an investment of \$72.6 billion in public education (not including higher education) and \$84.3 billion for health and human services.

By investing these dollars in fellow Texans, we are ensuring that our state has a strong and bright future.



More Budget Numbers

- \$66.5 billion for Medicaid
- \$31.1 billion for transportation
- \$7.8 billion for mental and behavioral health
- \$347 million for women’s health services
- \$1.1 billion for Teacher Retirement System healthcare (TRS-Care)
- \$100 million for school safety enhancements
- \$3.8 billion for Child Protective Services
- \$58.4 million for combating human trafficking
- \$800.6 million for border security and protection



Sen. Hancock, Sen. Bettencourt, Sen. Perry, and Sen. Hall working on the Senate floor.



Gov. Abbott, Sen. Perry, Sen. Hinojosa, Rep. Krause, and medically fragile children and their families at the bill signing for SB 1207.

MEDICALLY FRAGILE CHILDREN

The Medically Dependent Children Program serves approximately 5,600 children and young adults under the age of 21 with medically complex conditions in Texas. I saw the need to support these children and their families, so I authored and passed Senate Bills 1096 and 1207 to help families better navigate barriers within the Medicaid healthcare system.

SB 1096 ensures that Medicaid insurance cannot place additional burdens or prior authorization requirements for prescriptions other than what is allowed by the state. SB 1207 improves care coordination between insurance companies for medically fragile children. Seeking insurance approval is often time sensitive because delays can cause children to have major surgeries cancelled or critical medications denied, resulting in the child’s condition deteriorating.

THE “SAVE CHICK-FIL-A” BILL

In San Antonio, the city council denied a contract to Chick-fil-A to operate in the airport based on their donations to the Salvation Army and the Fellowship of Christian Athletes. The government should not be able to infringe upon First Amendment rights simply because of a business or organization’s religious affiliation.

Therefore, I proudly supported religious freedom legislation known as the “Save Chick-fil-A” bill (Senate Bill 1978) this session. This legislation will ensure that the government cannot punish a business because of its religious beliefs or associations.



Sen. Perry speaks with Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick between votes.

PUBLIC EDUCATION AND SCHOOL FINANCE REFORM

A major milestone this session was public school finance reform, which was addressed in House Bill 3. This bill includes \$6.5 billion to increase per-student funding by approximately 20%. It also funds salary increases for teachers, nurses, counselors, and other full-time employees; as well as providing funding for eligible four-year-olds to attend full-day pre-K. Additionally, the bill reduces the state’s recapture program, also known as “Robin Hood,” by \$3.5 billion. This will allow more local school tax dollars to stay local.

In total, the legislature allocated \$72.6 billion to public education, which includes over \$5 billion in school property tax relief for homeowners.

PROPERTY TAX REFORM

Many homeowners have been forced to sell their home because of an inability to afford rising property taxes. It is no wonder that Texas citizens have been asking the legislature to address this important issue.

To help homeowners and combat rising property taxes, the legislature passed Senate Bill 2 and House Bill 3. Senate Bill 2 reduces the amount a taxing entity may raise taxes from 8% down to 3.5%, with some exceptions. It also promotes transparency in the property appraisal process, reduces the petition requirement to challenge proposed tax rates, and provides taxpayers with more information at the ballot box during bond and tax elections. Additionally, House Bill 3 cuts school property taxes by over \$5 billion to reduce the tax burden on homeowners.



Phil Crenshaw as Pastor of the Day in the Texas Senate. He is the last living Army Chaplain’s Assistant from World War II.

More Highlights

- **Child Protective Services (CPS) Court Funding:** House Bill 1 funded a new CPS court for Taylor County to handle the increased caseload.
- **Born Alive Act:** House Bill 16 further protects the well-being of children born after a failed abortion or premature birth.
- **Surprise Medical Billing Reform:** Senate Bill 1264 further protects consumers from surprise medical bills when receiving emergency care from out-of-network providers.
- **Mail Theft:** House Bill 37 gives law enforcement more tools to pursue criminals who steal mail off of porches or out of mailboxes.
- **School Safety:** Senate Bill 11 will “harden” school campuses (e.g. metal detectors or more law enforcement officers) and promote threat assessment protocols that protect students and faculty.
- **Groping Reform:** Senate Bill 194 increases the penalty for groping and indecent assault and raises the current penalty from a Class C misdemeanor to a Class A.

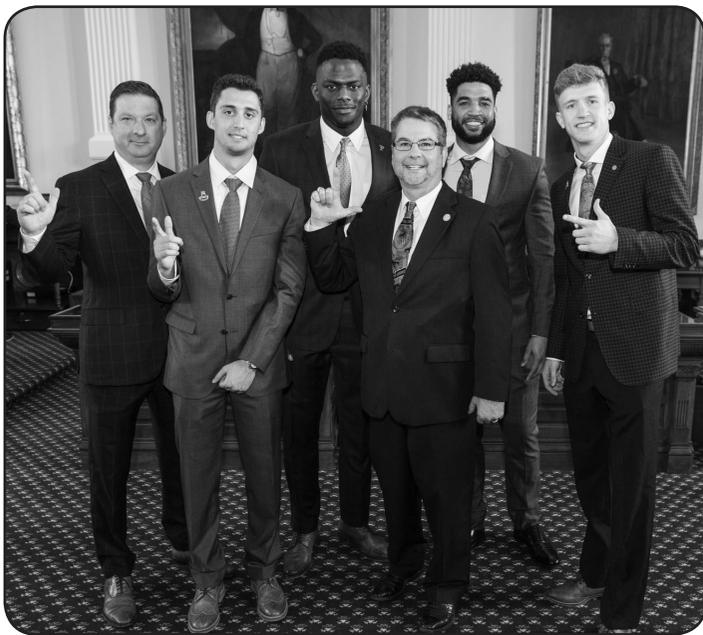
RETIRED TEACHERS

Supporting our retired teachers was also a top priority this session. Teachers have dedicated their lives educating our children, and the legislature sought to honor their service by strengthening the Teacher Retirement System (TRS). This system is essential to providing healthcare and pension benefits to retired school teachers.

The legislature appropriated \$5.2 billion to TRS, which includes a \$524 million supplemental appropriation to help achieve actuarial soundness. This appropriation also includes \$1.1 billion for retiree healthcare benefits.

The legislature approved a number of measures that will positively impact retired public school teachers, including:

- an additional \$231 million for TRS-Care to cover the projected shortfall for healthcare costs,
- increased funding for the TRS retirement plan in an effort to establish long-term solvency of the fund, and
- \$589 million for an additional pension check to help retirees with the rise in the cost of living.



Sen. Perry, Coach Beard, and several Texas Tech basketball players in the Texas Senate after the NCAA National Championship game.

HIGHER EDUCATION

Higher education plays an integral role in our state’s ability to maintain a healthy economy. The state’s investment in higher education is pivotal in producing a talented and skilled workforce, which is necessary to compete in an ever-changing global marketplace. Accordingly, the legislature invested \$20.6 billion in these quality institutions across the state to educate our future leaders. Additionally, the budget increased spending on community colleges by \$73.9 million, following an increase from the previous legislative session. This will help deliver a more affordable and quality education for our students.



Sen. Perry with the Texas Tech University System in the Texas Capitol rotunda.

TRANSPORTATION

Currently, only I-27 connects Amarillo to Lubbock. By extending I-27 down to Laredo and up to Colorado, it would complete the proposed I-27 Ports-to-Plains Corridor.

Representative Four Price and I believe extending the interstate highway will shape the future of West Texas. We worked together to pass House Bill 1079, directing the Texas Department of Transportation to study the feasibility and cost to extend this interstate.

This highway will help transport our agricultural products and other goods across the continent and ultimately, around the world. The increased trade and commerce traveling to and through West Texas will boost our region’s economy for years to come.

In total, \$31.1 billion is budgeted to expand, improve, and develop new roads across our entire state. Specifically, \$250 million has been set aside to provide grants to counties through the Transportation Infrastructure Fund for roads damaged by heavy trucks.

DRIVER’S LICENSE OFFICES

A number of Texans have expressed concerns about the increase in wait times for driver’s license renewals. To help reduce wait times, the legislature increased funding to the Department of Public Safety (DPS) by \$210 million. These monies will allow for the hiring of more clerks and help reduce employee turnover. In addition, DPS has several other initiatives underway to improve wait times. These will begin to rollout in the fall of 2019.

INDUSTRIAL HEMP

Hemp-derived products have been available in major Texas grocery and retail stores for years. However, prior to this legislative session, Texas was one of the few states that prohibited farmers from growing and profiting off this drought resistant crop. Farmers in other states benefit because hemp can be used in various applications such as food, textiles, paper, cosmetics, and construction materials.

To take advantage of this economic opportunity, and in accordance with the 2018 U.S. Farm Bill, Sen. Perry sponsored House Bill 1325 by Rep. Tracy King. This bill allows Texas farmers to grow hemp and establishes some of the strongest consumer protections in the nation for hemp products. As defined by the Farm Bill, hemp may not exceed 0.3% THC, a concentration incapable of producing an intoxicating effect.

To ensure safety and compliance, growers must pass background checks and seeds must be approved. In addition, the state will conduct pre-harvest tests and random inspections to guarantee that all crops are grown in accordance with state and federal law.

If you have any questions about the hemp program’s implementation, you may call the Texas Department of Agriculture’s hemp hotline: (512) 463-8215.



Sen. Perry asks questions during a Criminal Justice Committee hearing.

SENATOR CHARLES PERRY CONTACT INFORMATION

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<http://www.senate.state.tx.us/members/d28/nlsignup.php>.

USEFUL STATE GOVERNMENT TOLL-FREE NUMBERS

Office of Consumer Credit Commissioner
Consumer Credit Helpline(800) 538-1579
No Call List Registration.....(888) 382-1222
Social Security Administration(800) 772-1213
Office of the Attorney General
Child Support.....(800) 252-8014
Consumer Protection Helpline(800) 621-0508
Crime Victims Compensation.....(800) 983-9933
Public Information & Assistance.....(800) 252-8011
Office of the Governor
Citizens Assistance Helpline.....(800) 843-5789
Texas Department of Family and Protective Services
Texas Abuse/Neglect Helpline.....(800) 252-5400
Foster Care and Adoption
Inquiry Helpline(800) 233-3405
Texas Department of State Health Services
Substance Abuse Services.....(866) 378-8440
WIC.....(800) 942-3678
Family and Community Services211
Mental Health Consumer Rights.....(800) 252-8154

Texas Health & Human Services Commission
24-Hour Information and Referral Network211
Medicaid Eligibility for Elderly & Disabled
Area Agencies on Aging(800) 252-9240
Consumer Rights/Services(800) 458-9858
Complaint & Intake Management(800) 458-9858
Texas Department of Criminal Justice
SSI-related Food Stamp Benefits.....211
Texas Department of Criminal Justice
Crime Victim Clearinghouse.....(800) 848-4284
Offender Status Line.....(800) 535-0283
Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs
Hotline.....(800) 792-1119
Citizens Opinion Helpline.....(800) 252-9600
Public Utility Commission.....(512) 936-7000

State Bar of Texas

Lawyer Referral Service.....(800) 252-9690
Texas Commission for Civil Rights(888) 452-4778

Texas Workforce Commission

Unemployment Insurance Helpline.....(800) 884-6578

Texas Veterans Commission

Veterans Helpline.....(800) 252-VETS

Texas Medical Board

Consumer Complaint Helpline(800) 201-9353

Texas Department of Public Safety

Emergency Roadside Assistance.....(800) 525-5555
Missing Persons Clearinghouse.....(800) 346-3243
Texas Crime Stoppers Helpline(800) 252-TIPS

Division of Workers' Compensation

Injured Worker Helpline.....(800) 252-7031
Safety Violations Helpline.....(800) 452-9595

Texas Department of Insurance

Information and Assistance.....(800) 252-3439

Texas Commission on Environmental Quality
Helpline.....(888) 777-3186



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