

T E X A S S T A T E S E N A T O R

# BORRIS L. MILES

AN OPEN LETTER TO THE CITIZENS OF SENATE DISTRICT 13



**BORRIS L. MILES**  
STATE SENATOR • DISTRICT 13

*Dear Friend:*

The 87th Legislature came to a close with a session full of highs and lows. With the state facing the twin crises of Covid-19 and Winter Storm Uri, the leadership of this state instead decided to focus on red meat primary election issues that will not make our families safer or guarantee that our lights will stay on in an energy crunch. Because of their inability to govern effectively, the Legislature has been called back to multiple special sessions.

Exactly one year after George Floyd was murdered, the Legislature passed my bill, SB 69, bans the use of chokeholds by police and creates a duty to intervene for officers who witness police misconduct. After witnessing the horrors of unlicensed boarding homes in Harris County, we passed a package of bills which will enhance penalties for operators of unlicensed boarding homes and make it easier for law enforcement and fire marshals to address dangerous boarding homes. We also renewed a health care fund that will provide more than \$1 billion per year for uncompensated care in Harris County without raising taxes.

Of course, this session had its fair share of lows as the Legislature tried to turn back the clock on civil rights and social progress. The focus of the regular and special sessions has been passing anti-voter legislation which would create deliberate barriers to voting. The bills targeted the innovations made by Harris County like drive-thru voting, 24 hour voting, and setting up in-person drop boxes for mail-in ballots.

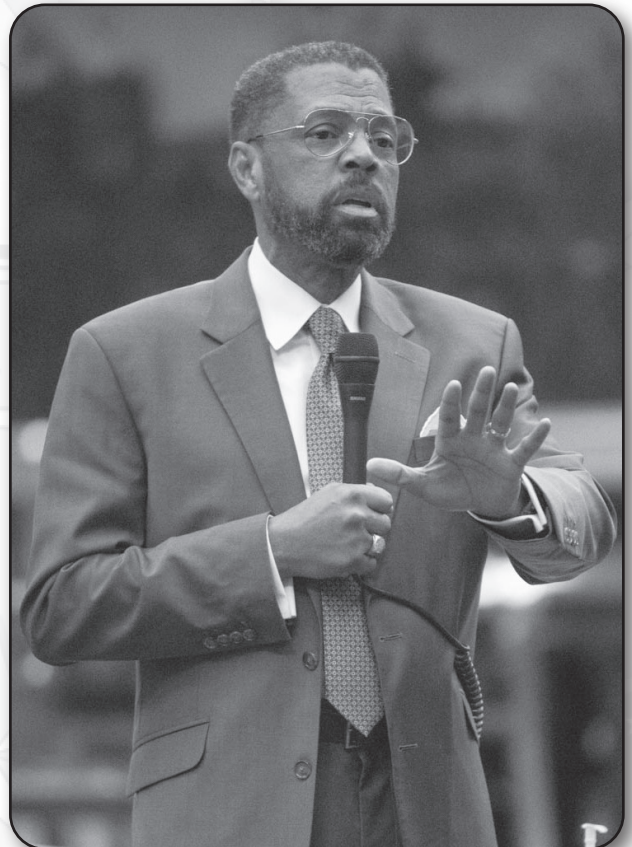
Attempts to marginalize transgender youth were also defeated. Unfortunately, bills did pass that will severely limit a women's ability to make her own reproductive health decisions, allow the unpermitted carrying of handguns and will force teachers to teach a distorted, whitewashed version of American history.

While I didn't see as many of you as I would have liked because of Covid-19, I was still able to stay in touch whether by phone, email or Zoom. Thank you to the people of SD 13 for your continued support. As always, you can count on me to be, "Your Voice in Austin."

Keep the Faith, Keep the Fight!

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be the initials "B" followed by a long horizontal stroke.

Borris L. Miles



# MAJOR ISSUES: 87th Session

## COVID-19

Many nursing homes and assisted living residents rely on family members, friends, or other caregivers to provide emotional support. At the beginning of COVID-19, access to friends and family was restricted for these long term care residents, causing a negative impact on the physical and mental well being of many residents. The Legislature passed Senate Bill 25 to address this issue by allowing visitors for long term care residents and directs the establishment of infection control measures to ensure resident and staff safety during caregiving visits.

The COVID-19 pandemic brought to light various challenges and opportunities to improve the state's preparedness to address a public health disaster. Throughout the pandemic, concerns over access to information, challenges in coordination between state agencies, and shortages in testing and personal protective equipment (PPE) arose. Senate Bill 968 will address these concerns and ensures that Texas is better prepared for future health emergencies or disasters. The bill clarifies the roles and responsibilities of the Department of State Health Services (DSHS) as well as other state agencies during a public health disaster or emergency. The bill also outlines requirements for mandatory state PPE contracts and creates the Office of the Chief State Epidemiologist.

The state's response to the Coronavirus pandemic relied heavily on the collection and dissemination of data by DSHS. There were several issues with the uniformity, accessibility and integrity of the data. Senate Bill 969 was passed in order to better ensure the accessibility and integrity of critical data during a public health disaster.

## WINTER STORM URI

This past February, we weathered a winter storm that took the lives of many of our fellow Texans. Winter Storm Uri exposed the weaknesses of our electric grid, ERCOT was not prepared and millions of Texans were left without power for days on end. Rectifying the failures of ERCOT and the Public Utility Commission became the focus of the Legislature. However, as time went on, the Legislature failed to help customers and were more interested in bailing out electric companies.



*Ron Reynolds updates Senator Miles on the status of legislation dealing with Fort Bend County.*

Elected officials in the Legislature expressed that they wanted increased oversight in the selection of the leadership of the Board of Directors of ERCOT, and Senate Bill 2 modifies the 16 member Board of Directors in order to give state leadership more influence over its operations. After the winter storm, it became public knowledge that the Board was not made up of Texans, Senate Bill 2 addresses that by requiring the ERCOT Chairman and board members to live in Texas. The bill also requires the chairman of the board to be selected by the Governor and confirmed by the Texas Senate. In addition, all protocol changes are to be presented to the Public Utility Commission of Texas before adoption so that

the commissioners have the opportunity to veto any changes before they go into effect.

Shortly after the storm, the Senate Business and Commerce Committee held a hearing where my colleagues and I listened to hours of testimony from industry stakeholders and the leadership of relevant regulatory bodies regarding the power grid's failure. Some of the concerns that were brought up include the lack of weatherization, oversight, and communication. Senate Bill 3 attempts to address these issues by requiring the weatherization of certain facilities to handle extreme weather. The bill also creates a "Power Outage Alert" where Texans receive an emergency alert whenever the power supply in the state may be inadequate to meet demand. In order to improve coordination and communication between state agencies and industry during weather emergencies, Senate Bill 3 creates the Texas Energy Reliability Council.



*Senator Miles and Senator Royce West of Dallas celebrate the historic passage of their joint resolution naming the newest state office building in Austin after Congresswoman Barbara Jordan, who once occupied Senator Miles' current Senate seat.*

## EDUCATION AND HIGHER EDUCATION

Education and Higher Education looked very different this year and last year because of the Coronavirus pandemic. COVID-19 has highlighted the resource disparities in Texas, with some students getting left behind in the switch to virtual learning.

Public school districts are required to excuse students for temporary absences for an appointment with a medical professional, but currently there is no excused absence requirement for students facing serious long term illnesses. That's why this session we successfully passed House Bill 699, which requires public school districts to excuse students for an absence due to a serious or life threatening illness that makes attendance infeasible. This protects students from being punished for these circumstances, allowing them to focus on their health.

To keep school campuses safe, the Legislature passed House Bill 3597, which updates language regarding school safety plans and requires school safety and security memoranda of understandings to be shared with the Texas School Safety Center. The bill also provides Texas State University access to certain criminal history record information.

To address the disparities in Higher Education funding, the Legislature passed Senate Bill 1295, which provides financial support and incentives for comprehensive regional universities. Comprehensive regional universities are smaller institutions, located in underserved areas, and have a high population of at risk students who are less college ready. Senate Bill 1295 provides additional funding that incentivizes institutions to improve their performance gaps.

The Legislature also passed Senate Bill 1385, which provides compensation to student athletes who participate in NCAA sports for their Name, Image, and Likeness. This bill was a product of several conversations with stakeholders and students.

# LEGISLATIVE MILESTONES: B

## HIGHER EDUCATION

### The University of Houston, \$493.9M Appropriation

Under Senate Bill 1, the University of Houston's central campus received \$493.9 million in appropriations this biennium. Out of that amount, the William P. Hobby School was appropriated \$400,000 to analyze demographic, economic, and related data on markets and other factors impacting Houston and other parts of Texas. The College of Pharmacy has been appropriated \$9 Million, and Multicultural Success has been appropriated \$2.5 Million out of the general revenue fund. The University of Houston is quickly rising in the ranks of Texas and national higher education institutions, the funding that the Legislature has appropriated for the school will ensure its continued success.

### The University of Houston- Downtown, \$90.6M Appropriation

Under Senate Bill 1, \$90.6 million was appropriated to the University of Houston Downtown. This includes \$95,000 earmarked for UH-D's Wonderworks Art and Culture program for high school students.

### Texas Southern University, \$136.9M Appropriation

Under Senate Bill 1, \$136.9 million was appropriated to Texas Southern University. This funding includes an additional \$4 million for Health and Safety purposes which would be used towards renovating infrastructure. In addition to this, \$229 million dollars was appropriated for the Academic Development Initiative. This additional funding helps close the gap in disparities between Texas Southern and peer institutions, along with ensuring the university's continued success.



*Senator Miles reviews his notes in his bill-book prior to being recognized on the floor to pass his historic legislation, Senate Bill 69, which prohibits police chokeholds and creates the duty to intervene for police officers who witness the use of excess force.*

### Senate Bill 1251 Joint Public Health Program

COVID-19 has brought to light the inequities and disparities within our healthcare systems in Texas. This session we passed Senate Bill 1251, which would allow the University of Texas M.D. Anderson Cancer Center to administer joint graduate and doctoral degree programs with the University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston in population and public health.

## PUBLIC EDUCATION

### Miles Ahead Scholars Funding

During the 87th Legislative Session, Senator Miles secured \$10.4 million for the Miles Ahead Scholars Program. The program provides educational assistance to schools located in disadvantaged communities and have a high number of struggling students. It is targeted to assist minority males, who statistically test poorly on state assessments and rank among the lowest of all groups to attend college.

### Senate Bill 746 Updating Student Contact Information

School districts have been unable to keep track of every



*Senator Miles stands up for the Barbara Jordan Voting Rights Act.*

The Higher Education committee also focused on reskilling and upskilling Texans, and passed several pieces of legislation focusing on our emerging workforce.

## BUDGET

The budget is the only bill that is constitutionally required to pass. The legislature passed a \$248 billion budget for the state under Senate Bill 1, authored by my colleague Senator Nelson. Senate Bill 1 spends over \$116 billion in revenue and does not tap into the state's rainy day fund. The approved budget is about a \$13.5 billion decrease from the 2020-2021 budget, due to federal funding for coronavirus relief.

The budget allocated about \$8.6 billion for higher education, including about \$486 million to fund enrollment growth. The bill also includes \$110 million for need based financial aid for students at two and four year schools. There will be another special session in the fall where \$16 billion in additional federal funding will be distributed.

## DIVISIVE LEGISLATION

This session was filled with bills that would harm the constituents of Senate District 13, and I fought and voted against these pieces of legislation. The Legislature did not focus enough on the effects of Winter Storm Uri and the Coronavirus pandemic, instead it focused on limiting Texan's right to vote, women's right to make their own health choices, and Critical Race Theory.

Senate Bill 7, the Anti-Voter bill, which passed the Senate but died in the House because the House Democrats walked out, would have limited the voting rights of many Texans.

House Bill 1927, the Permitless Carry bill, which did pass, will make the state less safe by allowing individuals over the age of 21 to openly carry holstered pistols without training nor licensure. The bill also limits police officer's ability to question individuals solely because they are carrying a pistol.

Senate Bill 8, the Heartbeat bill, which did pass and goes into effect in September, bans abortions after a fetal heartbeat can be detected, but before many women know they are pregnant. The bill includes no exception for rape or incest and only includes exceptions for medical emergencies.

House Bill 3979, the Critical Race Theory bill, will force educators to teach a distorted, whitewashed version of American history. The bill also bans schools for awarding credit for political activism or involvement.

These are all pieces of legislation that divided both the House and the Senate along party lines, I fought and debated against these bills. These were not productive bills that benefit the constituents of SD 13. I continued to fight and vote against bad legislation during the Special Sessions.

# Bills Passed by Senator Miles During the 87th Session

enrolled student, a problem that was exacerbated by the switch to online learning during the pandemic. Reports indicate that up to 75% of districts across Texas saw a decrease in enrollment during the 2020-2021 school year. Attendance affects the amount of funding each school receives. Senate Bill 746 requires that student contact information for every student be provided by their parents or legal guardian. This provides the necessary line of contact with each student, ensuring that no more children fall through the seams and that funding is accurately allocated to public schools.

## CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFORM

### Senate Bill 69 Chokehold Ban and Duty to Intervene

We were all shocked and horrified by the video of the last 8 minutes and 46 seconds of Senate District 13 native George Floyd's life. This session we passed Senate Bill 69 which will protect citizens by banning chokeholds by law enforcement. Senate Bill 69 also requires peace officers to intervene to stop or prevent another peace officer from using excessive force.

### House Bill 2831 Advanced County Jail Standards

Our county jails lack adequate resources and training in regard to the provision of services and treatment for incarcerated persons with intellectual or developmental disabilities (IDD). House Bill 2831 remedies this issue by equipping our county jails with resources and guidelines, all encompassing trainings, and best-practices in rehabilitating those with IDD. The bill also creates an advisory committee to assist in making the best of these tools.

### House Bill 3157 Enhanced Penalty for Improper Contact by Jailers

Concerns have been raised that the penalties for correctional and juvenile facility employees who violate the civil rights of a person in custody or engage in sexual activity with a person in custody are not severe enough. House Bill 3157 seeks to hold abusers and sexual predators accountable by enhancing the criminal penalties for such offenses.

## HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

### Senate Bill 73 Local Health Authority Access to Medicaid

Local public health entities are a vital part of the health care delivery system in many communities and should continue to play an integral role in improving access to health care for those who may not be able to afford it otherwise. Senate Bill 73 seeks to ease barriers to participation in the Medicaid program by allowing local health departments to become providers under Medicaid managed care.

### Senate Bill 1353 Vaccine Inequity Reporting During Health Disasters

Since Texans do not have equal access to life saving immunizations, including the COVID-19 vaccine, some Texans are more likely to suffer and die from preventable diseases. Black, brown, and rural Texans all experience inequities in access to vaccines. Under Senate Bill 1353, if a public health disaster requiring immunizations occurs, then the reporting of immunizations by race, age and county must be added to DSHS biannual immunization report to better understand and address inequities in vaccine administration.

### House Bill 135 Parental Right to Record CPS Interviews

Texans are unaware of their right to record interactions with government agencies, particularly with respect to sensitive matters such as a Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) investigation into an allegation of child abuse or neglect. House Bill 135 requires DFPS to notify families in advance of an investigation that they have the right to tape all interactions with DFPS, and that they have the right to an administrative review after the investigation.



Senator Miles and Education Chairman, Senator Larry Taylor, and Higher Education Chairman, Senator Brandon Creighton, negotiate key education issues on the Senate Floor.

## WINTER STORM URI

### Senate Bill 1876 Emergency Planning for Dialysis Centers

During recent disasters like Hurricane Harvey and Winter Storm Uri, many dialysis centers were forced to close their doors, leaving patients with missed appointments to much needed dialysis care. In order to address this issue, we passed Senate Bill 1876, which requires dialysis centers to develop emergency preparedness plans, which include the provision of services to patients, including transportation, and grants priority to dialysis centers for the restoration of power and water on par with hospitals.

### House Bill 1935 Thirty Day Emergency Insulin Refill by Pharmacists

Currently, pharmacists are permitted to issue emergency 72-hour refills of maintenance medication in the event the prescribing doctor cannot be reached. A 72-hour refill can be challenging for those living with diabetes because daily use of insulin and other diabetic medications varies. House Bill 1953 allows pharmacists to issue 30-day supplies of insulin when the prescribing doctor cannot be reached.

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

### Senate Bill 1990 Giving the Gulf Coast Rail District Power to Provide Commuter Services

The Texas Legislature created the Gulf Coast Rail District (GCRD) to enhance the economic benefits of rail, while improving the regional quality of life. With an anticipated addition of 4.2 million people and 1.6 million jobs by the year 2045, the eight county Houston-Galveston region will see an influx of millions of additional trips on its transportation network. Senate Bill 1990 allows the GCRD to construct Bus Rapid Transit projects which will facilitate important partnership opportunities in transportation for the greater Houston-Galveston region.



Senator Angela Paxton and Senator Miles discuss issues important to both of their constituencies: fixing our electrical grid.

## AFRICAN AMERICAN ISSUES

### Additional Appropriations for Texas Southern University and Prairie View A&M University

The Coronavirus Pandemic highlighted the disparities in education within Texas, specifically at our Historically Black Colleges and Universities. We secured an additional \$4 million in funding for Health and Safety Purposes for Texas Southern University. Additionally, we secured an increase of \$6 million for Prairie View A&M University.

### Senate Concurrent Resolution 29 Changes Racially Offensive Names

This session, Senator Miles led the fight for the US Board on Geographic Names to change the names of geographic features in Texas which contain the word "negro." Twenty years ago, the Legislature directed the Board to rename 20 geographic features in Texas all containing the word "negro." However, this was never accomplished. After passage of SCR 29, the Board voted to change these offensive names.



Senator Miles and members of 100 Black Men meet in the historic Civil Rights Room above the Senate Chamber to discuss strategy around various legislative issues this past session.

## TACKLING UNREGULATED BOARDING HOMES

Last year, almost 40 individuals were found living in a three bedroom, one bathroom house in squalid conditions. Allegations of abuse, neglect, prostitution and other crimes at this location are currently under investigation. The operator of this location operated another two such homes. My investigations revealed that industry participants recognize the prevalence of the problem.

"Rogue" or unpermitted boarding homes pose a serious threat to some of the most vulnerable Texans. State law currently allows cities and counties to require Boarding Home Facilities to obtain a local permit, both the City of Houston and Harris County operate such permitting programs. However, unpermitted or "rogue" facilities are still litter our community. I passed a package of bills to address these unpermitted facilities, and keep our most vulnerable citizens safe.

Senate Bill 500 increases the penalty for operating an unpermitted Boarding Home Facility from a Class C Misdemeanor to a Class B, allowing law enforcement quicker turnaround on warrants. SB 500 also directs the Health and Human Services Commission to study how Boarding Home Facilities are regulated. Senate Bill 504 grants local Fire Marshals the same authority that the State Fire Marshal has to enter into group homes to determine the existence of dangerous conditions. Senate Bill 1354 facilitates prosecution of rogue group homes by allowing prosecutors to more easily prove custody over a person. House Bill 1240 grants the Harris County and Fort Bend County Fire Marshals the authority to issue citations for Class C Misdemeanor tickets.

## MILES ON THE MOVE

Check out these photos from around the district!

Senator Borris L. Miles is always on the move in Senate District 13. If you would like to invite him to your event or community meeting, please contact our office by calling 713-665-8322 or emailing [Borris.Miles@senate.texas.gov](mailto:Borris.Miles@senate.texas.gov).



Senator Miles with Harris County Commissioner Rodney Ellis and State Representative Shawn Thierry at a general meeting of the Greater Sugar Valley Civic Club to address the issues facing the community.



Senator Miles and fellow community leaders at the inauguration of the first class of the Miles Ahead Scholars. Male role models and mentors are a key component of the program, they show the young men of the Miles Ahead Scholars that anything is possible with hard work.



Senator Miles and community activists discuss the challenges they face at the Union Pacific Railyard in Northeast Houston, where the local community has suffered the ill-effects of uncontrolled creosote pollution for generations.



Senator Miles joins the Houston Oaks Lions Club during the COVID lockdown to help with a food drive for the local community.



Roland Martin interviews Senator Miles on the pressing issues like voting rights and race relations.

## HELPFUL PHONE NUMBERS

|   |   |  |   |
|---|---|--|---|
| <p>Texas Department of Insurance<br/>Consumer Help Line.....1-800-252-3439</p> <p>Division of Workers' Compensation<br/>Injured Worker Hotline.....1-800-252-7031<br/>Safety Violations Hotline.....1-800-452-9595</p> <p>Texas Department of Public Safety<br/>Driver License Customer Service.....512-424-2600<br/>Vehicle Inspection.....512-424-7293<br/>Emergency Roadside Assistance.....1-800-525-5555<br/>Texas Crime Stoppers Hotline.....1-800-252-TIPS</p> <p>Texas Department of Motor Vehicles<br/>Hotline.....1-888-368-4689</p> <p>Texas Medical Board<br/>Consumer Complaint Hotline.....1-800-201-9353</p> <p>Texas Veterans Land Board<br/>Veterans Hotline.....1-800-252-VETS</p> <p>Texas Workforce Commission<br/>Hotline.....512-463-2222</p> | <p>Texas Health &amp; Human Services Commission<br/>Disaster Assistance.....3-1-1<br/>Medical Hotline.....2-1-1<br/>Non-Emergency Help Line.....3-1-1<br/>Texas/United Way Help Line.....2-1-1<br/>24-Hour Information and Referral Network</p> <p>Office of Consumer Credit Commissioner<br/>Consumer Helpline.....1-800-538-1579<br/>Public Utility Commission of Texas<br/>Consumer Protection Division.....1-888-782-8477</p> <p>United States Social Security Administration<br/>Help Line.....1-800-722-1213</p> <p>Office of Attorney General<br/>Child Support.....1-800-252-8014<br/>Consumer Protection Hotline.....1-800-621-0508<br/>Crime Victims Compensation<br/>Office of Consumer Affairs Hotline.....1-800-720-7777</p> <p>City of Houston<br/>Non-Emergency Help Line.....3-1-1<br/>Texas/United Way Help Line.....2-1-1<br/>Disaster Assistance.....3-1-1<br/>Medical Hotline.....2-1-1<br/>Disaster Assistance.....3-1-1</p> | <p>Texas Department of Criminal Justice<br/>Victim Services Division.....1-800-848-4284<br/>Offender Status Line.....1-800-535-0283<br/>Offender Parole Review Status Line.....1-844-512-0461</p> <p>Texas Department of Housing &amp; Community Affairs<br/>Hotline.....1-800-525-0657<br/>Fair Housing/Discrimination.....1-888-452-4778<br/>Disaster Assistance.....1-877-541-7905<br/>Homebuyer Help &amp; Education.....1-800-792-1119</p> <p>State Bar of Texas<br/>Lawyer Referral Service.....1-800-252-9690<br/>Grievance Information.....1-800-204-2222<br/>Hotline.....1-800-932-1900</p> <p>Texas Department of Environmental Quality<br/>Hotline.....1-888-777-3186</p> <p>Texas Department of Aging &amp; Disability Services<br/>Main Line.....512-438-3011<br/>Ombudsman for State Supported Living Centers.....1-877-323-6466<br/>Self-reporting abuse, neglect or.....1-800-458-9858</p> | <p>Office of Consumer Credit Commissioner<br/>Consumer Helpline.....1-800-538-1579<br/>Public Utility Commission of Texas<br/>Consumer Protection Division.....1-888-782-8477</p> <p>United States Social Security Administration<br/>Help Line.....1-800-722-1213</p> <p>Office of Attorney General<br/>Child Support.....1-800-252-8014<br/>Consumer Protection Hotline.....1-800-621-0508<br/>Crime Victims Compensation<br/>Office of Consumer Affairs Hotline.....1-800-720-7777</p> <p>City of Houston<br/>Non-Emergency Help Line.....3-1-1<br/>Texas/United Way Help Line.....2-1-1<br/>Disaster Assistance.....3-1-1<br/>Medical Hotline.....2-1-1<br/>Disaster Assistance.....3-1-1</p> |
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