

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 Family,

The 88th Texas Legislative Session has been a failure of the state's leadership. We began this year's session with more than \$33 billion in surplus funding. Coming into session, the state's leadership discussed using this unprecedented surplus funding to better our state. Unfortunately, the Legislature accomplished none of its major goals during the regular session, like increasing the basic allotment per student for public education, teacher pay raises, improving the electric grid's reliability or improving the accessibility and affordability of health care. As a result, the Legislature has been called back to multiple special sessions.

These are bipartisan issues that would impact every corner of Texas. Instead of focusing on these solutions, the Legislature spent more time on divisive issues, like ending Diversity, Equity and Inclusion programs at our universities, banning books, tying the hands of our professors from teaching critical race theory and a package of voter suppression bills targeting Harris County. I spent much of the legislative session fighting against these bills, advocating for more sound solutions to help all Texans and bringing resources and money to Senate District 13.

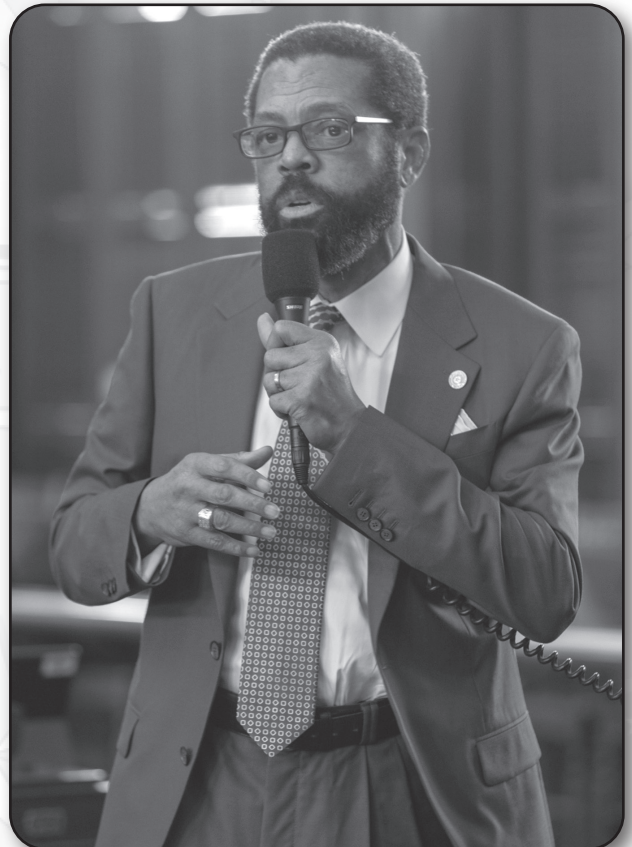
I was able to address many important issues that face the citizens of Senate District 13. Legislation passed to ban HOA discrimination against users of federal housing vouchers. Another package of bills was passed to increase regulation and improve safety at group homes. We also renewed a local health care fund that will provide more than \$2 billion for uncompensated care in Harris County without raising taxes. We passed the CROWN Act which will outlaw discrimination against people for wearing natural hairstyles. In addition, the Senate honored Opal Lee, the "Grandmother of Juneteenth," by hanging her portrait in the Senate Chamber, the first new portrait in the chamber in decades.

Thank you again for allowing me to serve as your Texas State Senator for District 13. If you need assistance navigating the local, state or federal agencies of government, don't hesitate to contact one of my offices. We are here to serve you!

Keep the Faith, Keep the Fight,

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be the initials "BLM".

Senator Borris L. Miles
District 13



MAJOR ISSUES: 88th Session

ELECTION BILLS TARGETING HARRIS COUNTY

This year the state's leadership went after how Harris County runs its elections. During the 2020 Election, Harris County made massive changes on how elections are run, from making voting more accessible, drive thru voting, 24 hour voting and much more. This created a record turnout of individuals voting for people who represented their views. This success was viewed by the Legislature as a problem, and dozens of bills were filed to outlaw those changes and suppress the vote in Harris County. Below are a few of the divisive election bills that I fought against this session:

SB 1750 – Remove the Harris County Election Administrator from office and revert election duties to the Harris County Clerk and Tax Assessor-Collector.

SB 1933 - Grants the Texas Secretary of State the authority to investigate election "irregularities" in Harris County after complaints are filed.

HB 1243 – Increases the criminal penalty if someone illegally votes, even if it was done mistakenly.

FIGHTING THE HISD TAKEOVER

I have been voicing my unwavering opposition to the state taking over Houston ISD for years. The school that initiated this process, Wheatley High School, has come a long way and is now out of Improvement Required status and has been making strides in student success. In addition, the voters elected new board members and that leadership set a new direction and selected a superintendent that was laser-focused on improving our schools' academic performance district-wide. Our schools were on track to exceed expectations.

Unfortunately, the TEA did not listen to the community's concerns and moved forward with the takeover, ending representative government in the largest school district in Texas. Historically, state takeovers have failed to improve school districts financially or academically. I will continue to stand up for our HISD community that depends on our public schools and hold the temporary state administrators accountable for their actions.



Senator Miles joins members of the Texas Senate to speak against SB 17, which bans DEI offices in state colleges and universities.

DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION

One of the most contentious fights this session was SB 17, which would prohibit Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) offices at state universities. DEI policies and offices stem from efforts by colleges to correct years of historical discrimination against underrepresented minorities, and that mission is still important today.

During the debate of this bill, I stated that the banning of DEI will diminish the progress made by these policies and offices; and we will see a significant drop in women, people of color



Senator Miles standing up for voting rights and debating against SB 1933, granting the Texas Secretary of State the authority to investigate election irregularities in Harris County after a complaint is filed.

and other minorities in positions of power at our universities. In addition, this legislation sends a terrible message that Texas universities do not value diversity and will hinder efforts to recruit a diverse student body and faculty.

Unfortunately, this bill passed and was signed into law. We must continue to support our universities' efforts to have students and employees that reflect this state's diverse population.



Senator Miles welcomed students from the Houston Area Urban League to discuss public education priorities, the HISD takeover and the importance of staying active in the community to ensure their voices are heard in state government.

IMPROVING PUBLIC EDUCATION

Our state public education system has been in severe turmoil for years from teacher burnout and lack of raises, to less funding per pupil. On top of that, the state's leadership is holding increased funding for education hostage in exchange for private school vouchers.

School vouchers have gone by many names like school choice, parent choice, tax credit vouchers, education saving accounts and much more, but these plans have failed each time in Texas because of bipartisan opposition. Putting public dollars for private school tuition takes money from our already underfunded public school system. Public neighborhood schools are the backbones of our communities and deserve our continued support.

The Legislature passed long overdue benefit increases for retired teachers. These increases include a cost-of-living adjustment between 2% and 6% depending on when the teacher retired. Retired teachers will also receive a 13th check of up to \$7500 depending on their age.

EXTENDING MATERNAL HEALTH CARE

In 2013, the Texas Maternal Mortality and Morbidity Review Committee found that Black women were twice as likely as white women and four times as likely as Hispanic women to die from pregnancy-related causes. I have made reducing

LEGISLATIVE MILESTONES: B

maternal mortality a priority in the Senate. During the 88th Legislative Session, lawmakers committed to better health coverage for pregnant and postpartum mothers. HB 12 extends postpartum Medicaid coverage from two months to 12 months after birth. This new law comes at a crucial moment, as millions of Texans face the end of Medicaid benefits for the first time since the COVID-19 pandemic began in March 2020.



Senator Miles welcoming students from Elevated Places School in Southwest Houston, and giving them a personal tour of the Senate Chamber.

EXPANDING MENTAL HEALTH CARE

Leading up to the 88th Legislative Session, policymakers shared a strong resolve to do more for mental health in Texas. The new state budget includes an increase of nearly \$11 billion for behavioral health funding across 28 state agencies to expand mental health capacity. Here are a few of the areas addressed this legislative session:

- \$90 million to increase the funding for a mental health grant program that aims to reduce recidivism, arrest and incarceration among people with mental illness.
- \$32.45 million to maintain and increase the number of Multisystemic Therapy teams to effectively treat youth who have committed violent offenses, have serious mental health or substance use concerns, are at risk of out-of-home placement or who have experienced abuse and neglect.
- \$70 million for the Community Mental Health Grant Program to support community mental health programs providing services and treatment to people experiencing mental illness.
- \$7.9 million dollars for renovations and deferred maintenance at the Harris County Psychiatric Center.
- \$14 million for Youth Mobile Crisis Outreach Teams to support youth in crisis and their families, which will reduce pressure on hospital emergency rooms and the foster care system.



Senator Miles congratulating the TSU Cheerleading team on their historic championship victory, becoming the first HBCU to win a national title at a cheerleading competition.

GROUP HOMES

In September 2020, my office was called to the site of an unpermitted boarding home. What we saw there horrified me, a three bedroom, one bathroom, single family residence was housing almost 40 individuals in poor condition. People who are residents of group homes are some of the most vulnerable in society. Whether it is a physical or mental ailment, these people and their families deserve to know that they will be receiving proper care. After taking care of the residents, I made it my mission to pass legislation to protect this vulnerable population and increase oversight of these homes. Here is the legislative package that was passed and became law:



Senator Miles and Senator Judith Zaffirini of Laredo discuss the importance of his group home legislative package, which protects vulnerable populations.

Senate Bill 186 – Prohibiting Discharge to Unlicensed Group Homes

SB 186 prohibits hospitals from discharging patients into unlicensed boarding homes unless the patient requests it.

Senate Bill 187 – Mandatory Reporting by Group Home Employees

This legislation requires mandatory reporting of assault, neglect, or omission of care in group homes by their employees. This bill passed as part of SB 189.

Senate Bill 188 – Criminal Background Checks of All Group Home Employees

SB 188 requires group home owners and operators to obtain criminal history background checks on employees. It also prohibits group home owners from hiring individuals with violent or sexual criminal offenses on their record, or face a Class A misdemeanor.

Senate Bill 189 – Requiring Landlords to Report Abuse in Group Homes

SB 189 creates a criminal offense for landlords who knowingly fail to report abuse or neglect in group homes.

House Bill 3987 – Public Safety Incident Reports for Cities that Regulate Group Homes

This bill creates a requirement to collect and report data on public safety incidents for cities that regulate group homes, and repeals the requirement that licensed group homes must be allowed in residential areas, despite zoning laws. Having this data will help the state identify problem areas and will help craft future solutions to group home issues. This bill passed as part of SB 189.

ANTI-DISCRIMINATION

A homeowners association (HOA) in this state passed rules that prevented people using Section 8 vouchers from renting homes in that HOA. These rules disproportionately affected residents who were Black and female. This is 21st century redlining that could happen anywhere in the state.

Bills Passed by Senator Miles During the 88th Session

House Bill 1193 – Prohibiting HOAs from Discriminating Against Section 8 Voucher Renters

HB 1193 prohibits a property owners' association from including or enforcing any provisions that would prohibit a property owner from renting to a person based on the person's method of payment. This legislation will correct this injustice and will stop this from happening again.

HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Before this last session, the authority to investigate abuse, neglect, and exploitation of long term care centers was split between the Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) and the Department of Family Protective Services (DFPS). This was an inefficient system that created a large backlog of complaints.

House Bill 4696 – HHSC Abuse, Neglect, and Exploitation

HB 4696 would move that investigation authority fully to HHSC in order to more efficiently address these complaints. This enables HHSC to better protect the vulnerable populations in our communities.

CPS REFORM

In 2022, The Refuge, a state contractor with the DFPS was embroiled in scandal. Children who were victims of sex trafficking were revictimized at a state-contracted facility. Texas is currently in a decade-long lawsuit over the treatment of foster children and this scandal showed that things were getting worse for our most vulnerable. The Legislature acted on this, and passed several pieces of legislation to protect children that are in the care of the state.

Senate Bill 182 – Mandatory Reporting for TJJD and DFPS Workers

SB 182 addresses this issue by requiring employees and contractors of the Texas Juvenile Justice Department and DFPS to report known criminal offenses to local law enforcement.

Senate Bill 1447 – Training Program for Investigating Suspected Child Abuse

SB 1447 aims to improve the accuracy of CPS investigative findings by developing a training program for each person who investigates any instance of suspected child abuse, standardizing training and encourage implementation of already existing due process laws and policies within our state child welfare system.

SCHOOL SAFETY

Currently, the City of Houston uses criteria that excludes Houston high schools from having school zones. North Forest High School is located on a very busy street, where drivers regularly drive well over the speed limit. This school has no permanent school zone flashing lights to alert drivers to slow down for students and to allow for safer entrance and exit for school buses and student drivers. In 2022, there were at least 20 crashes near North Forest High School. The exclusion in the City of Houston's policy has left almost all Houston high schools, like North Forest, without safety features such as school zone flashing lights to alert drivers.

House Bill 1263 – HISD Crosswalk Bill

HB 1263 addresses this situation by requiring the City of Houston to include high schools in their standards, policies, and ordinances regarding crossing zones or crosswalks. This bill will increase the safety of students around Houston high schools.



Senator Miles joins members of the Texas Legislative Black Caucus and Opal Lee, the "Grandmother of Juneteenth," for her official portrait hanging in the Senate Chamber.

HARRIS COUNTY HOSPITALS

House Bill 1925 – Reauthorizing the Harris County Local Provider Participation Fund

HB 1925 renews the Harris County Local Provider Participation Fund (LPPF). The LPPF allows hospitals in Harris County to receive more than \$2 billion in federal dollars to help offset some of the uncompensated care costs to help care for the indigent and uninsured in our community.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE/ NEIGHBORHOOD PROTECTION

Senate Bill 1346 – Creating a Conspiracy Charge for Illegal Dumping

Our community has been plagued with the illegal dumping of tires, mattresses, furniture and other unwanted materials in our neighborhoods. This dumping pollutes our streets, lots, and waterways and destroys the quality of life in our neighborhoods. Under the current law, only the person doing the dumping can be prosecuted. However, SB 1346 now allows the District Attorney to prosecute the person or corporation who orders the dumping as well. The District Attorney can use this prosecutorial power to stop dumping at the source and protect our neighborhoods.



Senator Miles and Senator Sarah Eckhardt of Austin discuss his CPS reform package to protect our most vulnerable children, who are in the care of the state.

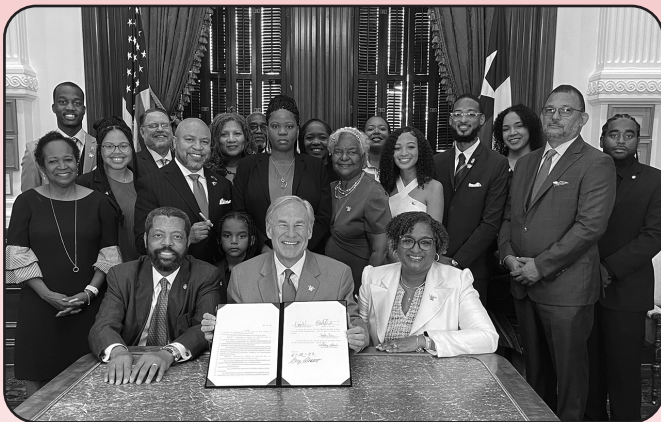
Senate Bill 2101 – Modernizing Crime Victim Notification

Crime victims have a right to be notified if and when their offender is released on bail and when the offender is convicted or placed on community supervision. However, under current law, the only method allowed to contact victims is by letter or phone call. This is out of step with how people communicate today. SB 2101 will now allow communications by email, text, phone call, or personal contact. This legislation updates the forms of communications to be in line with the technology of today, making it more convenient for crime victims to be notified.

PASSING THE CROWN ACT

Hair discrimination has been an ongoing problem in Texas and across the country, especially for Black women. A 2019 Dove study found that Black women were 1.5 times more likely to be sent home from a workplace because of their hair, with 80% saying they've had to change their hair to fit in. Texans continue to report being refused housing, getting fired, and having offers of employment rescinded. Students also report being punished for wearing natural hairstyles.

This makes it even more evident why legislation such as the CROWN Act, an acronym for **C**reating a **R**espectful and **O**pen **W**orld for **N**atural Hair, is so important. Supporters of this legislation traveled from around the country to testify in support of prohibiting hair discrimination in employment, education and housing. As the Senate sponsor of the bill, I was proud to bring this legislation to the floor, pass it and join the Governor to sign this into law.



Senator Miles joins the Governor and members of the Texas Legislature for the official bill signing of HB 567, the CROWN Act, a new law that prohibits hair discrimination in employment, education and housing.

HISTORIC PROPERTY TAX CUTS

The Legislature passed a historic \$18 billion dollar property tax relief plan, which includes raising the homestead exemption to \$100,000, cutting franchise taxes for small businesses and much more. The tax bill for the average home in Texas would be reduced by more than \$1,300 a year.

Earlier this year, I hosted two Property Tax Workshops with the Harris County Tax Assessor-Collector's Office and Harris Central Appraisal District where we discussed how many homeowners in poor and minority communities have been victims to gentrification by taxation. This legislation will help communities of color tremendously as we have seen home values in our neighborhoods skyrocket and have taxed homeowners out of their homes.



Senator Miles hosted a Property Tax Workshop at Wheeler Avenue Baptist Church to help homeowners learn how they can reduce their property taxes.

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.



Senator Miles speaking at the DeLuxe Theater for the TCEQ Public Meeting on the Union Pacific Creosote Site.



Senator Miles joins constituents at his Sunnyside Job Fair, which brought more than 300 jobs to the community.



Senator Miles hosted his 3rd Annual Internship Fair at HCC Stafford to help junior and senior level high school students compete for an internship or a summer job.



Senator Miles joins the Gulfton community for National Night Out.

HELPFUL PHONE NUMBERS

Texas Department of Insurance Consumer Help Line.....1-800-252-3439	Texas Health & Human Services Commission Disaster Assistance.....3-1-1 Medical Hotline.....2-1-1 Non-Emergency Help Line.....3-1-1 Texas/United Way Help Line.....2-1-1 24-Hour Information and Referral Network Office of Consumer Credit Commissioner Consumer Helpline.....1-800-538-1579 Public Utility Commission of Texas Consumer Protection Division.....1-888-782-8477 United States Social Security Administration Help Line.....1-800-722-1213
Division of Workers' Compensation Injured Worker Hotline.....1-800-252-7031 Safety Violations Hotline.....1-800-452-9595	Office of Attorney General Child Support.....1-800-252-8014 Consumer Protection Hotline.....1-800-621-0508 Crime Victims Compensation Office of the Governor Information and Referral Hotline.....1-800-843-5789
Texas Department of Public Safety Driver License Customer Service.....512-424-2600 Vehicle Inspection.....512-424-7293 Emergency Roadside Assistance.....1-800-525-5555 Texas Crime Stoppers Hotline.....1-800-252-TIPS	Texas Department of State Health Services Substance Abuse Services.....1-866-378-8440 WIC.....1-800-942-3678 Family and Community SVCs.....1-800-422-2956 Mental Health Consumer Rights.....1-800-252-8154
Texas Department of Motor Vehicles Hotline.....1-888-368-4689	Texas Department of State Health Services Main Line.....512-438-3011 Ombudsman for State Supported Living Centers.....1-877-323-6466 Self-reporting abuse, neglect or.....1-800-458-9858
Texas Medical Board Consumer Complaint Hotline.....1-800-201-9353	Texas Department of Aging & Disability Services Hotline.....1-888-777-3186
Texas Veterans Land Board Veterans Hotline.....1-800-252-VETS	Texas Commission on Environmental Quality Hotline.....1-888-777-3186
Texas Bar of Texas Hotline.....1-800-204-2222 Grievance Information.....1-800-932-1900 Lawyer Referral Service.....1-800-252-9690	Texas Department of Housing & Community Affairs Hotline.....1-800-525-0657 Fair Housing/Discrimination.....1-888-452-4778 Disaster Assistance.....1-877-541-7905 Homebuyer Help & Education.....1-800-792-1119
Texas Department of Criminal Justice Victim Services Division.....1-800-848-4284 Offender Status Line.....1-800-535-0283 Offender Parole Review Status Line.....1-844-512-0461	Texas Department of Environmental Quality Hotline.....1-888-777-3186



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