



# PETE FLORES

CAPITOL UPDATE

88TH TEXAS LEGISLATURE



## The Senate of The State of Texas

Senator Pete P. Flores

District 24

### Howdy!

The 88th Legislative Session has officially come to a close. It has been an honor to serve as your State Senator in Austin for the regular and special sessions and I take great pride in having your trust and support in the Senate.

This session, the legislature once again addressed a diverse range of issues. Key highlights include providing law enforcement with additional trainings and resources to better protect themselves and our State, increasing wages for community care workers providing essential health services, supporting ongoing efforts to secure our southern border with funding and strict penalties to further deter criminal activity, and providing teacher pay incentives and retired teacher cost of living adjustments. Overall the session was a success, passing good policy that will truly make our state better.

To those who communicated to the office about the issues most important to you, thank you. Hearing from you is how I best convey the unique perspective and needs of SD-24. Our team heard from thousands on topics ranging from education to border security to mental health services, and each and every opinion was registered and taken into consideration when determining votes. One of my greatest accomplishments this session was achieving a 100% voting attendance record for the session! When I am present and voting, your voice is amplified and heard.

Serving on the Finance Committee gave SD-24 a strong position for appropriation requests. Millions of dollars are going directly to the district for priority funding items such as a new campus for Texas A&M Central Texas, the Fredericksburg World War II Nimitz Museum, and necessary appropriations to fund several priority pieces of legislation. It was an honor to serve as the Vice-Chair of Border Security and Criminal Justice this session and you'll find highlights of the incredible committee work accomplished inside the newsletter here. Additionally, being a member of the Education Committee and the Water, Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee allowed district priorities to be at the forefront of the business accomplished.

SD-24 has diverse needs, from Fort Cavazos to the Texas Hill Country to the South Texas Plains; the issues these areas face are vastly different, but it is a privilege to serve each of you and do the best job possible to ensure the continued success of our communities and all who call them home.

God Bless you, and God Bless Texas!

Pete Flores

Committee on Border Security,  
Vice chair  
Committee on Criminal Justice,  
Vice Chair

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Committee on Education  
Committee on Finance  
Committee on Water, Agriculture,  
and Rural Affairs

# PASSING A BALANCED BUDGET

## House Bill 1 and Senate Bill 30 – the Biennial Budget

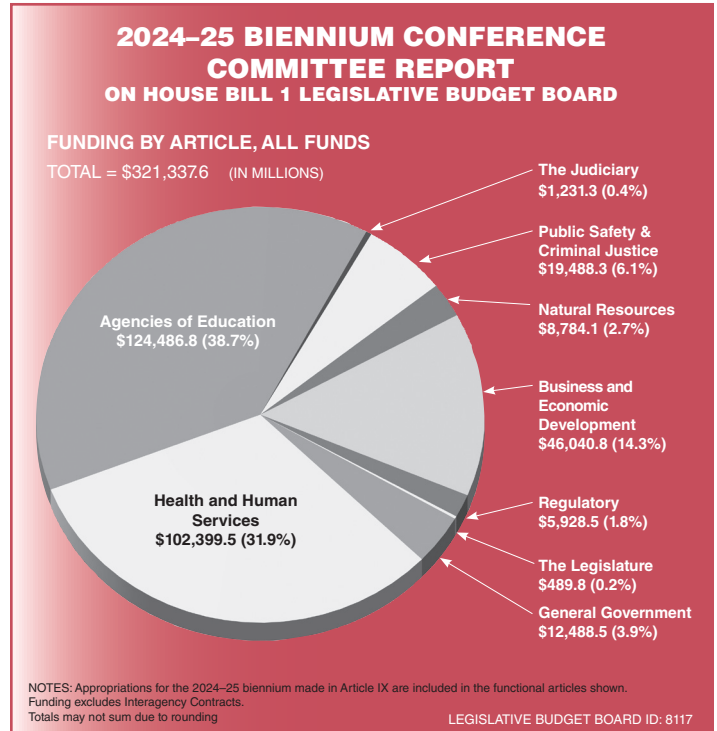
This session, the legislature passed a historic budget that provides necessary funding for State programs. The budget includes **\$18 billion** to combat skyrocketing property taxes and over **\$5 billion** for border security – the most in Texas history. We also provided **\$5 billion** for our Texas Retired Teachers for a cost of living adjustment as well as a 13<sup>th</sup> supplemental check.

A top priority was increasing funding for our public education system. All together around **\$12 billion** was invested into our public schools including **\$1.4 billion** for school safety measures – once again the largest amount in Texas history - **\$3.2 billion** for enrollment growth, **\$2.4 billion** for increases in the golden penny yield and **\$5 billion** for additional education priorities including teacher pay increases, special education services and curriculum reform. This session, the budget also includes over **\$12 billion** for higher education funding.

Providing key funding for our State’s infrastructure was another priority, including over **\$5 billion** for grid security and infrastructure, over **\$37 billion** for transportation, **\$1 billion** in new funding for water infrastructure, and **\$1.5 billion** for rural broadband development and 9-1-1 services.

Rural law enforcement divisions will also see an increase in funds. For the first time in Texas history, the State is providing **\$381 million** for rural law enforcement and criminal justice efforts. This funding can be used for salary increases to better recruit and retain officers and personnel as well as infrastructure and resource purchasing and restoration.

HB 1 also includes crucial increases in healthcare funding. Over **\$80 billion** was provided for fully funding the projected Medicaid case load and increasing wages for community attendants. An increase of over **\$160 million** for women’s health programs, **\$178.2 million** for rural healthcare programs, and more than **\$9.4 billion** for mental health funding was provided. The mental health dollars will provide increased wages, expand community based services, and help address the statewide shortage in healthcare workers.



## SENATE DISTRICT 24 FUNDING

- **\$25 million** for border landowner compensation for criminal activity damage
- **\$7 million** for requiring active shooter training developed by ALERRT, in basic law enforcement curriculum for all Peace Officers (SB 1852)
- **\$1.8 million** for the Texas A&M University Central Texas East Williamson County Campus (SB 30 – supplemental)
- **\$5 million** for the Microbusiness Disaster Recovery Program
- **\$7.5 million** for the Nimitz Museum in Fredericksburg (Senate Bill 30 – supplemental)
- **\$1.5 million** for Peace Officers at the Comptroller to Schedule C pay (SB 1237)
- **\$1.8 million** to increase stipends for Schedule C Corporals
- **\$3.6 million** for 2.1.1 referral network at HHSC
- **\$2 million** for Life Sciences institute at UT San Antonio
- **\$5 million** for Alamo Complex Rangers (SB 2612)



## PROPERTY TAX RELIEF FOR ALL TEXANS

Property tax relief is a top priority for all Texans. Homeowners should be able to truly own their property, and skyrocketing tax rates and appraisals have barred that for too long. During the regular and special sessions, the Senate passed a multitude of property tax relief packages that provided billions in relief for property owners. During the Second Called Special Session, the legislature passed a multifaceted approach to relief including raising the homestead exemption from the current \$40,000 to \$100,000, providing around \$1,200 - \$1,400 in average annual savings per home. Additionally, SB 2 and SB 3 (88(2)) provided rate compression aimed at lowering the school district maintenance and operation portion of the tax bill, as well as providing small businesses needed relief on franchise taxes. Combined, the property tax relief package provides **\$18 billion in property tax relief**, the largest tax relief in Texas history!

It is imperative that we keep working on this issue in future sessions. During the regular session, I filed SB 750 which would have provided needed reforms on the appraisal district side. I was happy to see SB 2, (88(2)) include accountability measures. SB 2 requires large counties over 75,000, to have three (3) of the nine (9) board members be elected by the public in a general election, giving accountability and input back to the voters. I look forward to continuing the work on this issue and other property tax relief and reform measures.

It was a privilege to serve as the Vice-Chair of the Senate Committees on Border Security and Criminal Justice. This session, the committees were faced with robust policy decisions to ensure our law enforcement officers and prosecutors have sufficient tools to protect our great State and secure our border.



## BORDER SECURITY

On the Border Security Committee, hours of testimony were taken from law enforcement officials, land owners,



and state leadership on the status of our southern border. Texas reached a record number of apprehensions in the previous fiscal year, totaling over 1 million not including the countless get-aways. We have continued to fill the need for increased law enforcement personnel and funding through Operation Lone Star while the federal government dismisses the emergency need of resources. During committee, several policy ideas were discussed to best address the border crisis, including increasing criminal penalties for smuggling and illegally entering the country. We also addressed the need for land owner compensation for damage caused by illegal trespassing across private land.

During the regular and first called special sessions I was proud to champion legislation that would increase the mandatory minimum sentence to 10-years for the offense of smuggling persons. This is a truly heinous crime and increasing the penalty will further deter criminals from illegally crossing into Texas. SB 1852 (88R) and SB 5 (88(1)) both would have provided this needed change. Unfortunately, both failed to pass the full legislature. I am hopeful that Governor Abbott will add similar legislation to the call of a future special session so these important discussions can continue.



## CRIMINAL JUSTICE



The Criminal Justice Committee worked to ensure “Justice for All” is upheld across Texas. Key funding was provided for the Texas Department of Criminal Justice as well as the Juvenile Justice Department to enhance safety and security infrastructure measures as well as expand capacity with new facilities for mental health beds. Many issues were discussed, one of the utmost importance is the growing fentanyl industry, and its tragic impact on Texas. Legislation was passed to ensure all Texas students receive education on the risks of fentanyl and substance abuse, as was ensuring training for prevention and emergency intervention methods in schools.

Many communities have struggled to maintain adequate law enforcement and jail personnel. HB 2183, the companion to my SB 1235, will allow for additional flexibility for county jailers. Policies like this are crucial to have a robust workforce to ensure operations continue. These workforce shortages have an inequitable impact on our rural communities.

Legislation like my SB 1852 will enhance our law enforcement officers’ abilities to serve and protect our State. SB 1852 specifically will require all Texas peace officers to participate in an active shooter response training program for their initial certification as well as continuing education. This training will be developed here in Texas by the ALERRT center at Texas State, which is the gold standard in active response training. Our law enforcement daily go above and beyond the call of duty to ensure the safety of our State and all those that call Texas home.



## PROTECTING AND PRIORITIZING TEXAS CHILDREN

During the 88th Legislature, enhancing our public education system was and continues to be a top priority. As a member of the Senate Committee on Education, I was honored to play a key role in bolstering our education system to better prepare and grow our children. In addition to the billions of dollars in funding, we passed key policy that will provide teachers with additional resources, empower Texas parents, and protect our kids.

House Bill 3, similar to Senate Bill 11, was a key initiative in protecting our schools. The bill provides for a variety of security enhancements for campuses and includes an increase for the ADA allotment as well as a per campus base fund for security expenses. HB 3 also provides for more extensive mental health services to be available and funded in public schools.

The committee looked at a variety of issues relating to curriculum and materials. There have been several reports here in Texas of inappropriate materials being made available in public spaces for children, and that is strictly unacceptable. HB 900 will require publishers to evaluate their materials so libraries and schools can better purchase books and other curriculum.

Additionally, this session, sweeping reforms were done to increase available services for special needs students, clarifying statute so students aren’t left without help over interpretation. All students deserve to have a successful education career and equitable access to services they need. I look forward to continuing discussions on increasing school funding, teacher pay, and ensuring the success of all Texas students.

# 88<sup>TH</sup> LEGISLATIVE SESSION

This session, Senator Flores had the privilege to celebrate and memorialize the tremendous residents of SD-24

## ★ CELEBRATING AND HONORING SENATE DISTRICT 24

SR 506 Recognizing Atascosa County law enforcement agencies for their role in stopping an escaped convict and suspected murderer. I want to thank Lt. Governor Dan Patrick and the Senate for honoring these brave officers for their heroic efforts and teamwork to protect our great State.



SR 414 Recognizing Tanya Tucker for her contributions to country music.



SR 431 Recognizing volunteer firefighters on the occasion of National Volunteer Week.



SR 147 Congratulating Dr. Bobby Ott for being named Superintendent of the Year by the Texas Association of School Boards.



### Celebrating the unique needs of SD-24 counties and cities



Pleasanton Delegation



Killeen Delegation



Marble Falls Delegation



Kerrville Delegation

### Honoring our law enforcement officers from across the State



Border Patrol



Sheriff's Association of Texas



CLEAT Peace Officer Memorial Service



Texas Game Wardens

## ★ BOLSTERING TEXAS AGRICULTURAL INDUSTRY AND WATER INFRASTRUCTURE

The 88th Legislature passed Senate Bill 28 to address the issue of aging water infrastructure and new water supplies by creating the Texas Water Fund, and the New Water Supply for Texas Fund. The legislation creates a solid future for water infrastructure and supply in the state of Texas. The bill directs the Texas Water Development Board (TWDB) to utilize the Texas Water Fund to administer current TWDB projects, allowing financial assistance to reach water systems quickly. It also creates the New Water Supply Fund, which commits funding to new water supply projects for Texas. Finally, Senate Bill 28 directs TWDB to utilize money from the new fund to repair pipes that leak 136 billion gallons of water every year.

The legislature also passed important legislation to protect the rights of farmers from expanding municipalities. House Bill 1750 and House Joint Resolution 126 were both passed out of the Senate unanimously and was signed into law, granting farmers and ranchers the right to continue their existing agricultural operations without fear of expanding municipalities enforcing unfair regulation.

Another key issue that passed with unanimous support was "truth in labeling." As meat alternatives continue to become more prevalent in our stores, SB 664 will put needed regulation on the labeling of goods made to imitate meat, fish, poultry, and egg products to ensure consumers have clear knowledge of the contents of the merchandise.

## SENATOR FLORES 88R BILLS SIGNED BY THE GOVERNOR

Bill	Caption
HB 420	Relating to the offense of providing an alcoholic beverage to a minor; increasing a criminal penalty.
HB 433	Relating to the definition of a commercial fleet.
HB 467	Relating to the limitations period for certain criminal offenses based on assaultive conduct.
HB 562	Relating to the confidentiality of certain information received or maintained by the Veterans' Land Board.
HB 1133	Relating to an exemption from the application of the Private Security Act for volunteer security services provided at certain places or events.
HB 1207	Relating to the statute of limitations for tampering with certain physical evidence.
HB 1290	<b>Relating to the confiscation or misappropriation by a nursing facility of certain federal payments to a Medicaid recipient; increasing an administrative penalty.</b> <i>Several senior citizen activist groups brought it to my attention that nursing homes and similar facilities were exploiting their residents for selfish financial gain. HB 1290 will impose a hefty financial penalty for this horrible crime. Our elderly deserve our support and should not be subjected to this sort of mistreatment.</i>
HB 1434	Relating to the staggering of terms of aldermen of the governing body of a Type A general-law municipality.
HB 1688	Relating to water quality protection areas.
HB 1689	Relating to the use of county hotel occupancy tax revenue for an electronic tax administration system and the reimbursement of tax collection expenses.
HB 1699	Relating to the authority of the Evergreen Underground Water Conservation District to impose certain fees.
HB 1789	Relating to the application of nepotism prohibitions to a person appointed or employed by a school district as a bus driver.
HB 2154	Relating to the adoption of physical fitness programs and standards for law enforcement officers employed by the office of the attorney general.
HB 2183	<b>Relating to the temporary appointment of county jailers.</b> <i>Like many other industries, our jail systems are facing extreme staffing shortages. Allowing for additional flexibilities will help alleviate the burden for our county jails so they're able to continue operations.</i>
HB 2333	Relating to noncharitable trusts without an ascertainable beneficiary.
HB 2442	Relating to certificates of public convenience and necessity issued to certain retail public utilities.
HB 2503	Relating to the issuance of specialty license plates for veterans with disabilities and recipients of the Texas Humanitarian Service Medal and federal Humanitarian Service Medal.
HB 2636	Relating to liability of a recreational vehicle park or campground entity for injuries arising from certain activities.
HB 2708	Relating to visitation policies for inmates and state jail felony defendants.
HB 2755	Relating to the minimum instruction requirement for the boater education program and the disposition and use of money received by the Parks and Wildlife Department from the boater education program.
HB 3013	Relating to exempting certain contracts from procurement notice requirements.
HB 3075	Relating to the operation of an unmanned aircraft over a correctional facility or detention facility; creating a criminal offense.
HB 3731	Relating to the Bandera County River Authority and Groundwater District.
HB 3808	Relating to the pediatric acute-onset neuropsychiatric syndrome advisory council.
HB 4451	Relating to a report by the Texas Workforce Commission regarding apprenticeship opportunities in this state for emerging and high-demand industries.
HB 4635	<b>Relating to organized crime, racketeering activities, and collection of unlawful debts; providing a civil penalty; creating criminal offenses.</b> <i>SB 1788, the companion to HB 4635, was my top priority bill this session – creating a state racketeering offense. This will truly target criminal organizations and transnational gangs at the core of their operations, their financial assets. Providing prosecutors and law enforcement officers enhanced evidence gathering abilities will strengthen cases against these heinous criminals and protect our great state.</i>
HB 4879	Relating to incident-based reporting of information and statistics concerning offenses committed in this state and the establishment of the Texas crime information system by the Department of Public Safety.
SB 876	Relating to the licensing and regulation of dog and cat breeders; expanding the applicability of an occupational license.
SB 1008	<b>Relating to establishing residency for purposes of admission into public schools.</b> <i>First bill sent to the Governor's Desk</i>
SB 1236	Relating to the use of certain weapons in or on the bed or bank of a navigable river or stream; providing a penalty.
SB 1237	Relating to compensation and leave for certain security officers or investigators commissioned as peace officers by the comptroller.
SB 1850	Relating to the presiding officer of the State Board of Veterinary Medical Examiners.
SB 1852	<b>Relating to active shooter training for peace officers.</b> <i>The ALERRT center at Texas State University, San Marcus is the gold standard for active shooter response training. Requiring all peace officers to take training developed by ALERRT will protect our schools, public places, and save the lives of Texans.</i>
SB 2612	<b>Relating to the commissioning by the General Land Office of certain Alamo complex rangers as peace officers.</b> <i>It is crucial to ensure our historic landmarks are protected and preserved for generations to come. Commissioning Alamo Rangers as peace officers will allow them to efficiently protect the Alamo grounds.</i>

SENATE DISTRICT 24 COUNTY CLERKS:	
Atascosa:.....(830) 767-2511	Public Information/Open Records .....(877) 673-6839
Bandera:.....(830) 796-3332	Texas Workforce Commission Unemployment and
Bell:.....(254) 933-5160	Mortgage & Foreclosure Assistance \ Texas
Burnet:.....(512) 756-5406	Department of Housing and
Coryell:.....(254) 865-5911 x2278	Community Affairs .....(800) 792-1119
Gillespie:.....(830) 997-6515	Tx. Dept. of Savings and
Kerr:.....(830) 792-2255	Mortgage Lending.....(877) 276-5550
Kimble:.....(325) 446-3353	Office of Consumer Credit
Lampasas:.....(512) 556-8271	Commissioner.....(800) 5381579
Llano:.....(325) 247-4455	Texas Department of Insurance
Medina:.....(830) 741-6070	Workers' Compensation Hotline .....(888) 489-2667
Sutton:.....(325) 387-3815	Office of Injured Employee Counsel ....(866) 393-6432
Williamson:.....(512) 943-1515	Consumer Helpline/File a Complaint.....(800) 252-3439
<b>STATE GOVERNMENT NUMBERS:</b>	
Information and Referral Hotline .....211	Texas Youth & Runaway Hotline .....(800) 989-6884
Secretary of State	Department of Public Safety
Vote Information .....(800) 252-VOTE (8683)	Concealed Handgun Licenses .....(800) 224-5744
Office of the Attorney General	Driver's Licenses .....(512) 424-
Child Support Division .....(800) 252-8014	Surcharges, Driver Responsibility Program .....
Consumer Protection .....(800) 621-0508	2600
Public Information/Open Records .....(877) 673-6839	
Texas Workforce Commission Unemployment and	
Mortgage & Foreclosure Assistance \ Texas	
Department of Housing and	
Community Affairs .....(800) 792-1119	
Tx. Dept. of Savings and	
Mortgage Lending.....(877) 276-5550	
Office of Consumer Credit	
Commissioner.....(800) 5381579	
Texas Department of Insurance	
Workers' Compensation Hotline .....(888) 489-2667	
Office of Injured Employee Counsel ....(866) 393-6432	
Consumer Helpline/File a Complaint.....(800) 252-3439	
Texas Abuse/Neglect Hotline .....(800) 252-5400	
Foster Care and Adoption Information .....(800) 233-3405	
Texas Youth & Runaway Hotline .....(800) 989-6884	
Department of Public Safety	
Concealed Handgun Licenses .....(800) 224-5744	
Driver's Licenses .....(512) 424-	
Surcharges, Driver Responsibility Program .....	
2600	
Complaints Against Vehicle Dealers.....(800) 687-7846	
Texas Dept. of Motor Vehicles Information Hotline .....	
Complaints against your lawyer .....(800) 932-1900	
State Bar of Texas	
Texas Rio Grande Legal Aid .....(956) 447-4837	
Environmental Complaints .....(888) 777-3186	
Public Assistance Hotline .....(800) 687-4040	
Texas Commission on Environmental Quality	
Telephone Counseling Center .....(800) 223-8778	
Teacher Retirement System	
Information and Referral Hotline .....(888) 963-7111	
Complaint Hotline .....(888) 973-0022	
Dept. of State Health Services	
Services Information Hotline .....(800) 628-5115	
Dept. of Assistive & Rehabilitative Services	
Office of Consumer Rights and Services.....(800) 458-9858	
Dept. of Aging & Disability Services	
Veterans Hotline .....(800) 252-8387	
Texas Veterans Commission	
Public Information/Open Records .....(877) 673-6839	

**Useful State Government Toll-free Numbers**



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