

From the office of  
Texas State Representative - Dan Flynn

## **THE FLYNN REPORT**

*Legislative Newsletter*  
*February 21, 2003*

Greetings Constituents, Supporters and Friends:

The 78<sup>th</sup> Session of the Texas Legislature began to get very active this week. Legislative Council indicated they have received as many bill draft requests as they usually do by this time in the Session. That means we will probably see around 5,000 bills filed before the Session is ended.

Many of the Appropriations Sub-Committees are finding ways to reduce state budget expenditures significantly. Some Sub-Committees have found spending duplications and agency reserves or 'rainy day' funds. Well, it is raining! It is also being discussed that we could be approximately halfway to balancing the budget. This is exciting and encouraging news, and I continue to believe we will receive sound recommendations that will reward our efforts for the balanced bi-annual budget we promised.

One of the most memorial moments of this session for me will be bestowing former Texas State Representative and current U.S. Congressman, Sam Johnson, with a resolution of honor. It was remarkable that in both Houses when the resolutions were read all conversations ceased and all eyes turned to the podium with a hush that is seldom seen on the floor where there is always some degree of noise even in the most heated debates. The silent respect shown to Congressman Johnson that day was a testament to the dignity with which he has lived his life. There were few dry eyes as this authentic American hero received a standing ovation from the floor as well as the gallery. As we honored him we were honored to have this American patriot in the State Capitol receiving tribute for what he has done and will continue to do for our great country.

This week the House passed the first of many homeowner's insurance bills to come. The bill that passed deals with requiring insurance companies to report their rating formulas to the Texas Department of Insurance. Of course this is only the first step in a long journey towards reasonable insurance goals. There will be other bills to follow and I would appreciate your comments on them.

Concerning medical malpractice insurance reform, this week Speaker Craddick reminded us of his comment that back in 1995 the first step taken was merely "a bite out of the apple" in relation to implementing needed meaningful tort reform. He went on to say

“this Session, we plan to eat the whole thing and finally put this issue behind us”. I believe this issue will come before the full Legislature within the next few weeks.

Public education continues to be the highest priority for me this Session. At the present time, movement of the Robin Hood repeal bill (HB 604) has been stalled while revenue sources are identified and discussed. A bill filed that is receiving some attention is House Bill 859 by Representative Jerry Madden. This bill was previously filed in 1994 when then gubernatorial candidate George W. Bush presented many ideas on public education; one of the major proposals was the idea of "home rule" school districts. He worked to establish a "home rule" alternative in public schools. The bill that passed contained many restrictions and school districts did not choose to participate in the program. House Bill 859 seeks to remove many of those restrictions and make it more attractive for a school district to opt for "home rule." This would reward those school districts that have shown they are good stewards of the public trust with an option that affords them greater administrative flexibility. The criticism that this bill would only pay lip service to local control and would damage Texas' commitment to universally high standards for student learning and teachers is not correct. There will be no backtracking from our high standards. I have invited all School Superintendents in my district to participate in discussions this coming Friday and look forward to hearing their suggestions and will bring them back to Chairman Gruesendorf for consideration.

My staff and I welcome your input and your questions. You can reach us in our office located in the Capitol extension: **E1.324**. Mailing address: **P. O. Box 2910, Austin, TX, 78768** and our phone number is **512/463-0880**. Email **dan.flynn@house.state.tx.us**.