



From the Desk of
Representative
Dan Flynn



The Flynn Report

April 2, 2005

Greetings constituents, supporters and friends:

The Texas House of Representatives this week passed House Bill 7 (HB 7) that abolishes the Workers' Compensation Commission in an attempt to eliminate the burdensome regulations imposed by that agency. The bill's author, Representative Bert Solomons, reports that HB 7 will apply prompt pay laws to workers' comp. to limit confusion and disputes over billing. There will be a transfer of regulatory functions to The Texas Department of Insurance (TDI) and will move education function to Texas Workforce Commission to improve outreach and education of employers. The effort is to streamline dispute resolutions and is a move to eliminate administrative burdens and improve timely access to care. It requires TDI to evaluate the performance of all participants in the system and focus enforcement action on poor performers and recognize high performers. Roughly 40% of Texas businesses have opted out of the comp system, forgoing lawsuit protections. That's the highest level since 1993. Texas workers were even less satisfied than workers in other state comp systems, despite the high health care costs.

The plan for HB 7 is to streamline the process, abolish The Workers' Comp Commission, create Health Care Networks and require TDI to certify the networks to assure adequacy and access to quality care. It will also require state and political subdivisions to utilize networks where feasible which should provide savings of millions of tax dollars and open workers' comp networks to Group Health insurers to improve health access. The effort is to refocus the workers' compensation system on the injured worker and put into law the purpose of the Texas comp system that being to promote a safe work environment for employees and when an injury does occur, assure timely, appropriate, and quality healthcare that returns the injured worker back to work.

The Appropriations Bill will come before the full House this week and I understand the proposed House budget is almost \$20 billion larger than the last Appropriations Act passed in the 78th Legislature for all funds; the Senate plan is over \$20 billion more.

It seems that every increase in spending can be justified and/or rationalized. It will be necessary for the members to remember the objectives of the previous session and the rewards realized from that hard look at the budget. If spending is not corralled by stringent methods the trend line could force taxes to be raised to fund the budget. I continue to believe there is a commitment from the majority to not allow this to happen. Several bills have been introduced that will give conservative members the opportunity to reaffirm their core principles on fiscal policy.

With the Legislature in session it is not always known if I can make meetings in the district. I was pleased to have had that opportunity to attend The Hunt County Republican Men's Club this Saturday, April 2, in Greenville. I want to thank Doyle Thomas for giving Senator Bob Deuell and me the time to discuss some of the points being brought up concerning the Public Education Reform Bill (HB2) and the tax bill (HB3) recently passed out of the House to the Senate.

As we have discussed in previous reports these bills are works in process and have now passed to the Senate to continue the process. With the slim majority held by the Republicans in the House it should be noted that only 9 Republicans voted with the Democrats against this bill. In spite of that a clear 90% of the Republicans voted to keep the process moving rather than killing the opportunity for Education and Tax Reform during this 79th Legislative Session. To have true reform whether it is in education or taxes we must have the participation of everyone to solve the challenges. These bills not only offer added accountability and transparency but provide a major step towards bringing the over 80% of business that are not paying anything in taxes into participating and this is the first step towards lowering rates.

Both of these bills are now in the Senate where they will likely be changed before final passage is achieved. It was reassuring to hear Senator Deuell's encouraging words that the process is moving along and hopefully within the next couple of weeks these bills will be headed for Conference Committee of both bodies.

All conservatives know that putting more money in any government program is not the answer but rather cutting costs and improving standards. You must have the tools in place to do that and these bills not only do that but also provide the much needed property tax relief setting the stage for true education and tax reform.

It is important that those who are truly serious about reforms will work more closely with the members as we move towards the major challenges of the appropriations bill and the forces working towards expanding gambling in Texas. Both of these challenges will require the assistance of all to assure we keep our standards set by the 78th Legislature, that being to keep Texas moving forward and on the cutting edge of responsible government without the need to increase taxes or expand gambling.

I attended the ANTI-GAMBLING Rally that was held on Thursday, March 31, on the steps of the Capitol in Austin. It was pointed out by those who oppose gambling how cruel, cynical and 'dangerous a bet' it is for Texas. Studies show that video gambling terminals would have a devastating impact on Texas families. Video lottery terminals – VLT's (slot machines) are called the "crack cocaine of gambling" because they are the most compulsive form of the addiction.

New studies show that every dollar produced by gambling is offset by three dollars lost in economic and social costs. Gambling addictions is directly linked to domestic violence, child abuse and child neglect. Divorce is rampant among compulsive gamblers, and many of the resulting broken families suffer from financial, physical and emotional problems. Suicide and other self-destructive behavior among pathological gamblers and their families is a critical problem.

No state has closed their budget gaps promised by expanding VLT's (slot machines). State budgets cannot be built on false projections, whims and chance but rather on sound strong economic growth. Surveys conducted show an overwhelming opposition to any expansion of gambling in Texas and in House District 2.

I was honored to host a large group from Hunt County to celebrate Hunt County Days in Austin. Due to the House being in session I was unable to enjoy the planned program. My staff attended and had a wonderful time meeting, visiting and discussing issues important to Hunt County and the State of Texas. It is always a joy to have groups from the District and I only hope it was as enjoyable and beneficial to you as it was to me.

Whatever position one took on the tragic events of the Terri Schiavo case there can be little doubt that Western Civilization is rapidly moving towards "euthanasia." European governments appear to be moving towards this embrace of death. The Dutch government has legalized euthanasia for some terminally ill people. Belgium quickly followed and France is knocking on the same door. The Dutch are now openly discussing when it is best to intentionally end the lives of infants, the mentally handicapped and the demented. Terri Schiavo was at the heart of this human tragedy that played out in our nation and watched by the world.

We have always believed that death by starvation and dehydration is a painful, even gruesome death. That is why we don't starve convicted criminals to death or animals.

Almost a year ago Pope John Paul II said, "The administration of food and water, even when provided by artificial means, always represents a natural means of preserving life, not a medical act." He said such feeding should be considered "morally obligatory" as long as it provides nourishment and alleviation of pain and suffering.

It is difficult to believe the court denied a plea even after the U. S. Congress passed and President George W. Bush signed a bill giving Schiavo's parents the right to be heard in Federal Court on the question of whether their daughter's legal rights were being violated. The Constitution guarantees all persons the right to equal protection and due process of law. Congress argued this; without access to a federal appeal, which death-row inmates have every day, Terri Schiavo was denied both.

It is my plan and understanding that the Attorney General of Texas along with various interested groups is looking into seeing that this cannot happen in Texas.

We continue to welcome your input and your questions. Contact our office located in the Capitol extension: E1.324. Mailing address: P. O. Box 2910, Austin, TX, and 78768 phone number 512-463-0880. Email: dan.flynn@house.state.tx.us.

God bless you and God bless Texas,

**Dan Flynn
State Representative, District - 2**

If your name is on this email list in error, please respond and say UNSUBSCRIBE