



The Flynn Report

April 11, 2008

Greetings Friends, Constituents and Supporters:

I was honored to be a Joint Author with Chairman Warren Chisum on House Bill 1287 relating to public school elective courses providing the academic study of the Bible. This bill passed in the 80th Texas Legislature was signed into law by Governor Rick Perry is now under attack. Groups are working to apply pressure to the State Board of Education and local school boards to ban the freedom to choose this elective Bible course in our Texas public schools. These courses are electives and the only students taking them will be those who have chosen to. It is disturbing that groups want to restrict academic freedom and deprive students and schools the opportunity to excel. Approximately 40 states and over 400 school districts in the United States, including Texas, have chosen to offer an elective Bible course in our public schools.

There was testimony that an elective course in the history and literature of the bible would be one of the single greatest opportunities to increase college preparedness. Professors from Yale, Harvard, Stanford, Rice, University of Texas and Texas A & M, agreed that an educational advantage would exist.

There was additional testimony that the works of William Shakespeare have more than 1300 biblical references, and more than 60% of the allusions recommended for study for Advance Placement Literature and Composition exams are from the bible. The U.S. Supreme Court has said emphatically for over forty years that the Bible is worthy of study for its literary and historic qualities.

The Texas House and Senate voted 167-3 to approve the teaching of these elective courses in an overwhelming show of bipartisan support. The State Board of Education voted to approve these courses by a 13-2 vote. It is unfortunate that there are those that will attack this issue with such hostility. We will continue to monitor this issue as it is apparent that they will make every effort to take away this choice from our Texas students attending our public schools.

On a very positive front the state of Texas just received a ranking from the *Pew Center* on the "States Government Performance Project" naming us as the fourth best-run state in the nation. They reported that Texas state government spends less money per resident than any other state in the country. Texas spent \$3,638 per year for each

person in the state, according to the report -- less than one-third the amount of top spender Alaska's \$12,833.

The report also highlighted the states strength in our budget process, strategic workforce planning, managing employee performance, infrastructure maintenance, strategic direction, budgeting for performance, performance evaluation, and online services and information.

They stated in the report that "Texas' budget process leaves legislators with the tools they need to focus on performance," and went on to say, "The budget always passes on time, and the state's conservative revenue-estimating processes have resulted in sizable surpluses in recent years."

On another front, I would also like to provide an update on the Trans Texas Corridor (TTC) since the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) announced that they received permission to extend the Public Comment Period regarding the TTC. The request was granted by the Federal Highway Administration. TxDOT has received over 14,000 comments regarding this project, making it the most scrutinized infrastructure project in Texas history. Comments can be submitted online at <http://keptexasmoving.com/> or mailed to TTC, PO Box 14428, Austin, Texas 78761.

I voted for and support the moratorium on the project's funding, and I along with many of my colleagues in the legislator continue to encouraged public input and I am pleased that this extension will allow more Texans to voice their comments.

The Texas Conservative Coalition (TCC) sent a letter to TxDOT expressing our deep concerns regarding the future of transportation policies in Texas. As a board member I supported this letter and I am pleased that we received a response from the Department's Executive Director and we are in the process of scheduling a meeting with the Director to discuss the concerns of the TTC expressed by our constituents as well as the appropriate ways to meet the transportation needs of Texas.

The proposed plan has flaws and demonstrates a basic abuse of eminent domain and governmental authority. While I support the maintenance and improvement of our highways in East Texas, I will continue to work with fellow legislators to stop any and all abusive projects and yet continue to meet the legitimate transportation needs without any massive land-grabs that would be unacceptable.

Finally, I am happy to report that the University Interscholastic League (U.I.L.) announced that the steroid testing program mandated by Senate Bill 8, is finally underway. Up to 50,000 public school athletes statewide will be chosen for testing.

The first phase of the program is in full swing, and starting in February drug testing teams began arriving on high school campuses across Texas. Senate Bill 8, that I authored and passed during the 80th Legislature directed the U.I.L. to implement a statewide steroid testing program. The program will randomly select between 40,000 to 50,000 athletes, regardless of gender, in grades 9-12 to be tested.

This accounts for roughly 30% of all U.I.L. member high schools that will be tested for anabolic steroids. The dates of the testing will be unannounced, in keeping with the nature of the random steroid testing process.

I was very pleased that the number of Texas public schools that will and have implemented testing for steroids has nearly doubled since 2002. A recent Texas A&M University study shows that steroid use among Texas students in grades 7-12 decreased from 2 percent in 2004 to 1.5 percent in 2006. We believe many students fear testing positive for steroid use will exclude them from participating in extracurricular sports. This is what we believed would happen and why we felt it was so important to pass this bill.

It remains my pleasure and honor to represent all the people of House District 2. My staff and I continue to welcome your input and your questions. Contact our office located in the Capitol extension: E1.302. Mailing address: P. O. Box 2910, Austin, TX 78768. Email District2.Flynn@house.state.tx.us. Toll free number 1-800-734-9515.

May God bless you and our great state of Texas,

Dan Flynn
State Representative, District 2