

From the office of  
Texas State Representative Dan Flynn

## **THE FLYNN REPORT**

Legislative Newsletter  
April 18, 2003

Greetings Constituents, Friends and Supporters:

This week the media continued to portray those who are for big government as heroes in their news reports rather than portray the reality that to continue to spend at the current levels would require tax increases of nearly \$1 000.00 per individual this year. Media loses credibility when it doesn't know or worse, ignores the facts. Taxpayers have asked that government limit entitlements. The legislature must listen and limit the growth of government. Therefore, this week the People's Chamber passed House Bill 1.

As the \$117 billion budget was debated this week, there were those who never accepted the 'no new taxes' reality and tried to redefine the debate. They sought to focus attention on poor children (defined as families with \$50 000.00 or less annual income), losing health coverage, free measles shots, disabled Texans losing attendant services and grants that help them buy wheelchairs, public sector workers losing benefits and health care for children and teachers. The reality is with this budget no one with a real need goes unmet.

Many liberal State Representatives were on the attack as they attempted to force fiscally responsible Republican and Democrat colleagues into choosing funding programs for children, the elderly and disabled persons and raising taxes. Most of the media outlets have joined in their cause by wondering aloud why the Legislature would choose to be so "mean spirited." Instead of following Governor Perry's mandate for strong and sustainable economic development, a small band of lawmakers wanted to raid the state's rainy day fund to lessen the inevitable reductions in spending to their preferred programs rather than find ways to spur our economy. What next, a state income tax?

The battle centered on the fight for funds between welfare and education, recognizing that educational opportunities for our children today will translate into economic benefits for our state tomorrow. Republicans, along with some like-minded Democrats, have taken measures to put \$1.9 billion back into House Bill 1 for the specific purpose of assisting in the purchase of textbooks, improving classroom and student development.

We must remember the budget making process is multi-faceted. Once a budget is passed in the House and the Senate it then goes to conference committee where representatives from the House and Senate will meet to combine their respective proposals for submission to the Governor. If no agreement is met then a Special Session will begin almost immediately after the Regular Session adjourns. I am confident we will be able to

work with all parties concerned to present a budget that is acceptable to the citizens of Texas. Even though deliberation is expected to continue throughout the week, rules require that the total budget cannot be increased on the House floor.

In a recent National Federation of Independent Business study it states that spending has gone up 48% since 1985 to 1998. Over the last decade, our budget has increased 125% while our population has only increased 27%. This expansion of state government at taxpayers expense is unacceptable, as many small businesses around the state are having to lay off people or close up shop altogether. The claims that this legislature is “mean and irresponsible” are wrong. The budget has been balanced on the backs of Texas taxpayers for decades. We in the House could have taken the politically easier route and pushed for more spending and higher taxes, then blame it on circumstances or politics. Instead, we reduced spending by \$3.4 billion. I trust that it will be said of this session that the voice of the taxpayer has finally been heard. I do not believe it is possible for government to spend its way into prosperity.

This budget includes a **\$2.1 billion increase for health and human services**. Texans who are most in need will continue to have those needs met. Education is also a priority in the proposed budget with 58 cents of every tax dollar going to education and \$1.2 billion new dollars going to school districts.

Public education will be the next major issue before the house and it is hoped that the major newspapers across the state will not either knowingly, or through ignorance distort the facts. Nobody’s interest is served when they do that.

School finance is always on the forefront of House deliberations. Even Lieutenant Governor Dewhurst has floated an idea that would raise and extend the sales tax, cut local property taxes in half and end the recapture component of school finance, also known as Robin Hood. The idea has merit, but needs to continue on in the legislative process. Many taxpayer groups have encouraged the legislature to hold the line on spending. Many of us in the legislature believe there are a significant number of citizens that support limiting government.

A school choice pilot program (no doubt a debatable piece of legislation) for 11 school districts in the state will be coming to the House floor. In fact, it was voted out of committee on April 3. One of the major newspapers referred to the vote as a “sneaky move.” This was incorrect. No rules were suspended to allow the committee to vote on this bill. There was no secret meeting. It was done precisely as House rules specify. In fact, during the last legislative session, 27 percent (or 721) of all bills passed out of House committees were done so in the very same process. In fact, reporters were there to cover the story and this is not the end of the public process.

The Defense of Marriage Act is due for a vote within the next week or so and now that the Senate has heard its version, I am confident of its eventual passage. An important bill dealing with parental notification of an abortion by a minor has recently been passed out of committee and should also be on the House Floor soon. There are also major Sunset

(state agencies mandated by the Legislature to be phased out or re-authorized by a specified time) and re-codification (legislation that streamlines government statutes) bills currently making their way through the process. My floor amendment on House Bill 1 to eliminate funding for the Human Rights Commission was excepted by the full House allowing nearly \$4 million savings to the budget of an agency that has been a failure for 20 years.

As we move towards the home stretch of this session there are other issues and bills that are of interest. If you have questions on bills of which you are interested please feel free to contact our office.

Government must focus on the things only it can do and leave the rest to the private sector, individuals and churches. The government cannot and should not do everything. A government that expands to meet every need loses sight of its priorities.

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**.