



The Flynn Report

April 18, 2009

Greetings Friends, Constituents and Supporters:

Activity has certainly picked up in the House this week as committee agendas and bills began being passed off the House floor. A large number of bills were heard this week before committees and it is anticipated a large number will be heard on the House floor this coming week.

Friday, the Texas House did the constitutionally required process of passing a balanced budget for the state's 2010-2011 biennium. This session the Senate took up the budget first and passed out a \$182 Billion budget. The House version totals \$178 billion for all funds. That is approximately a 2.5% annual increase for the biennium, which is below the projected rates of inflation and population growth for Texas. The all-funds budget includes nearly \$80 billion in General Revenue and approximately \$11 billion in federal stimulus funds. The House budget reduces general revenue spending by less than 2.5% compared to the last biennial budget. We believe it uses the accepted federal stimulus dollars wisely ensuring that the funds spent are only on one time expenditure and will not result in ongoing programs to the state and leaves the Rainy Day Fund intact.

The products will now go to a conference committee of both House and Senate members that will convene to work out differences between the two versions. The conference committee members will make the appropriate and agreed adjustments to maintain the needs of the state and our taxpayers. The agreed version will then come back to both bodies for final approval and then sent to the Governor for his signature. The final budget will probably come in somewhere in the middle of those figures.

I believe the Texas House version provides a strong, fiscally conservative and responsible budget as we move into uncertain future of the financial downturn of the Texas, USA and world economy.

This week the House also approved House Bill 4586 a \$3.9 billion emergency spending bill that includes money for hurricane recovery, new school textbooks and repairing the fire destroyed Governor's Mansion. The bill provides almost \$700 million to deal with the aftermath of Hurricanes Ike, Gustav and Dolly, and includes funds that will

more than double the size of the destroyed University of Texas Medical Branch at Galveston.

Early in the year the talk was that \$16 billion or more would flow to Texas state government from the federal stimulus package. \$3.9 billion went into the above mentioned emergency spending bill to fill holes in the current two year budget. The balance of \$11 billion goes into helping to balance the next two year budget. Approximately \$858 million went to items like water projects that flow into the state but isn't accounted for in the budget bill itself, and then of course there's the \$556 million of unemployment insurance money that would require expansion of programs in Texas if accepted. It remains a very hot and unresolved issue. Those numbers add up to the \$16 billion federal stimulus package.

In other news, the House Committee on Elections heard testimony this week regarding House Bill 125, which would require a voter to present proof of identification. Since the committee has not voted the bill out I have not seen what they propose. The issue continues to be viewed as partisan. 90% of Texans support a photo identification to vote. Some continue to believe a photo ID will suppress minority voters, however, minority voter turnout actually increased in states that have already passed similar bills including Indiana and Georgia in the 2008 elections. The Supreme Court recently upheld a similar law in Indiana. Proponents of the bill believe most citizens already have a photo ID and it is very easy to obtaining one if needed. Of course we all know you need an ID to rent a movie, cash a check, apply for social services, turn on utilities, open a bank account, check out a book , to buy a home, get on an airplane or leave the country. You just simply bring your photo ID to vote. This issue will be coming before the full House for debate in the coming weeks.

The Committee on State Affairs has scheduled hearings this week for some important illegal immigration bills: specifically HB 266 - Similar to Oklahoma's successful anti-illegals law; HB 276 - Require state agencies to report costs related to illegals; HB 404 - Eliminate sanctuary cities in Texas; HB 622 - Suspend licenses of businesses that hire illegals; HB 1061 - Denies state licenses, permits and ID certificates to illegals. It is very disappointing that it will be very difficult for these bills to be heard, voted out of committee and sent to the full House for votes due to the limited time remaining in this 81st Legislative session.

The Chairman of the Licensing and Administrative Procedures Committee that has oversight of gambling issues said this week he believes he has strong support for legislation that would open the door for 17 casinos, slot machines at racetracks, and Indian gaming in Texas. He went on to say the omnibus gaming bill, which would let voters decide whether to allow gambling in Texas, probably won't be firmed up in his committee until next week. The number needed to put a constitutional amendment on the ballot in the House is 100 votes. Even if the bill makes it out of the House, the chances in the Senate are also slim. It would also need a two-thirds vote, and Lt. Gov. David Dewhurst has said he opposes expanding gambling. Speaker Joe Straus, has said he'll stay out of all gaming issues. The Chairman has said he believes he is within

10 percent of the votes needed to pass it and has also said unless he knows he has the votes it will not come to the floor for a vote.

In other news this week: It is disturbing to me that the current administration in Washington continues to go outside the United States and blames or apologizes for the woes of the world. Just this week in Mexico the United States is taking blame for much of Mexico's drug violence. Proposing a major congressional gun-control battle by calling on the Senate to ratify a treaty designed to track and cut the flow of guns to other countries. They will be asking to renew an old ban on some semi-automatic weapons and calling for the Senate to ratify a hemisphere wide treaty that would require nations to mark all weapons produced and track them to make sure no weapons were exported to countries where they were banned.

Equally disturbing was a Rasmussen Report by a national telephone survey that reported that only 53% of American adults believe capitalism is better than socialism. The survey also found that 20% disagree and say socialism is better. Twenty-seven percent (27%) are not sure which is better. I don't know which is more disturbing: That 53 percent say capitalism is better than socialism or that 27 percent aren't sure. Interestingly there is a partisan gap. Republicans - by an 11-to-1 margin - favor capitalism. Democrats are closely divided with just 39% saying capitalism is better while 30% prefer socialism. As for those not affiliated with either major political party, 48% say capitalism is best, and 21% opt for socialism. Sadly, we appear to be going the wrong direction when comparing the new results to an earlier survey that found 70% of Americans preferred a free-market economy.

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 feel free to contact me: 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