
2020 REPORT TO THE PEOPLE OF TEXAS



“We are called upon by the people of this great state to dare greatly.”

GOVERNOR GREG ABBOTT





Governor Abbott celebrated the groundbreaking of a new fishing pier in the coastal community of Fulton in August, marking two years of continuing rebuilding efforts after Hurricane Harvey's devastation. Joined by Sen. Lois Kolkhorst, Reps. Todd Hunter and Geanie Morrison, Fulton Mayor Jimmy Kendrick, Rockport Mayor Pat Rios and other state and local leaders, Governor Abbott also signed two [disaster relief and preparedness bills](#) into law.

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Letter from the Governor

At the start of the 86th Legislative Session last year, we were called upon by the people of this great state to dare greatly, to address the challenges Texans could not solve themselves, to make Texas even freer, stronger, safer and smarter.



Governor Abbott convened the first Texas Safety Commission meeting in August with lawmakers, educators, experts and community leaders to identify strategies to promote community healing and [combat hate and extremism](#). Shown above (l-r) with Reps. Joe Moody, César Blanco, Mary González and Art Fierro. A larger bipartisan contingent from the Texas House and Senate, along with leadership, also attended the four-hour session.

My message to my partners in the Texas House and Senate was simple. All of this we can do. All of this we must do. Because we live in the greatest state in America, and we have an obligation to make it even better.

Now in looking back over a year of historic triumphs and heartbreaking tragedy, I am reminded of the amazing resilience and optimism of the people of Texas.

As we have seen in years past, when touched by acts of evil or the destructive force of nature, Texans come together to grieve, to comfort

neighbors and then to act with calm resolve to help prevent other families from experiencing such devastating loss.

Driven by that fervent faith in the future and blessed with the freedom to aspire, Texans today have built an even bigger, better tomorrow. Families are growing here, jobs are growing here and, best yet, opportunity is growing here. That is why we remain the envy of the nation.

In the year ahead, I look forward to working by your side each and every day to build an even broader path to prosperity for all Texas families.

As always, it is a blessing to have the fabulous First Lady of Texas with me on this journey. With her soft strength and steady grace, Cecilia is a powerful advocate for Texas; I am so proud of all that she is doing, especially for the children of this state.

As we look to the horizon and see opportunity unbounded, I invite you to look back at 2019 and all that we accomplished together. There is a recurring theme in the pages ahead:

Texas is exceptional because of you. ■



PROPERTY
TAXES
REDUCED



PER STUDENT
FUNDING
INCREASED

SESSION SUMMARY

PROPERTY
TAX RATES
CAPPED

SCHOOL
FUNDING
INCREASED

RECAPTURE
REDUCED

TEACHER PAY
INCREASED

SESSION SUMMARY: Promises made, promises kept

Landmark legislation passed in the 86th Legislative Session included all of the priorities I challenged my partners in the Texas House and Senate to address.

Other notable successes included ensuring medical care for babies born alive after attempted abortions, protecting free speech on campus, banning red light cameras and more. And all of this we accomplished in a 140-day session noted for its bold ideas and collaboration.

☑ Tax reforms that put Texans first

Texans rightly demanded property tax reform last session. To keep Texas the economic engine of America, we must rein in a property tax system that punishes families and businesses and prevents young Texans from achieving homeownership.

Senate Bill 2 authored by Sen. Paul Bettencourt and Rep. Dustin Burrows was signed into law, capping property tax increases and improving transparency.

- **Property tax rates are reduced (House Bill 3)**
- **Cities and counties cannot raise property tax revenues by more than 3.5 percent without the consent of voters**
- **Schools cannot raise tax revenues by more than 2.5 percent without the consent of voters**

☑ School finance reforms that put our students first

Texans also demanded bold action to fix our broken school finance system. Our students deserve better. Our teachers deserve better. Our taxpayers deserve better.

House Bill 3 authored by Rep. Dan Huberty and Sen. Larry Taylor was signed into law, reforming school finance and focusing funding on student outcomes. (See page 14.)

- **Prioritizing student success**
- **Increasing teacher pay, rewarding excellence**
- **Adding career, college and military readiness bonuses for school districts**

- **Creating a student-focused funding formula**
- **Providing funding for full-day pre-K for eligible students**
- **Buying down property taxes**

☑ Keeping our students safe

Following the tragic shooting at Santa Fe High School in 2018, I convened a series of roundtables with legislators, educators, administrators, law enforcement, advocates, parents and students to find solutions to ensure the safety of our students.

With their input, I then unveiled a **School Safety Action Plan** and named school safety an emergency item for the legislative session. As a result, I signed **several critical bills** into law authored by Sens. Brandon Creighton, Kirk Watson and Larry Taylor, and Reps. Greg Bonnen, Cole Hefner and Four Price. (See page 18.)

- **Strengthening emergency preparedness and response**
- **Improving school facilities standards**
- **Improving protocols to assess potential threats and prevent violence**
- **Providing schools more funding for school safety efforts**



Governor Abbott signed landmark school finance reforms into law at Parmer Lane Elementary School in Pflugerville ISD. Members shown with Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick and Speaker Dennis Bonnen: bill authors Sen. Larry Taylor and Rep. Dan Huberty; Sens. Paul Bettencourt, Donna Campbell, Jane Nelson, Beverly Powell and Royce West; Reps. Alma Allen and Diego Bernal. A larger bipartisan legislative contingent also attended.

✓ Improving disaster preparedness

As rebuilding continued following Hurricane Harvey's devastation, I declared disaster preparedness and relief as legislative priorities, resulting in [several bills](#) to better prepare the state to mitigate damage from, respond to and rebuild after natural disasters. (See more page 27.)

- **Creating training for emergency management teams**
- **Developing a catastrophic debris management plan**
- **Creating a community disaster recovery loan program**
- **Creating an infrastructure fund for flood mitigation**
- **Appropriating \$3.5 billion for Harvey relief**

✓ Combatting trafficking, delivering justice

To ensure Texas remains hostile territory for those who seek to profit from modern-day slavery and to deliver justice for the victims of sexual assault, [legislation was signed into law](#):

- **Enhancing tools to fight online sex trafficking**
- **Increasing penalties for buyers**
- **Directing forfeited proceeds to victim services**
- **Requiring an audit of untested evidence kits, establishing timelines and extending the statute of limitations**



Governor Abbott signed disaster preparedness bills into law at Gallery Furniture in Houston, which served as a shelter after Hurricane Harvey. Among members attending as shown: Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick and Speaker Dennis Bonnen; bill authors Sens. Brandon Creighton, Joan Huffman and Lois Kolkhorst, and Rep. Dade Phelan; along with Sen. Carol Alvarado, and Reps. Dwayne Bohac, Jarvis Johnson, Sam Harless, Shawn Thierry and Valoree Swanson. Not pictured: bill author Rep. Geanie Morrison.

- **Creating a Sexual Assault Survivors' Task Force to coordinate efforts across the state**
- **Adding telehealth access to Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners**

Bill authors included: Sens. Joan Huffman, Jane Nelson and Kirk Watson; and Reps. John Frullo, Donna Howard, Victoria Neave and Senfronia Thompson.

✓ Balancing the budget

We are challenged each legislative session to address difficult funding issues, enact meaningful reforms and make prudent and necessary investments to ensure continuing prosperity for Texans of today and tomorrow.

The 2020-2021 State Budget addresses priorities that are simultaneously limited, lofty and achievable.

Within the \$248.3 billion two-year budget, \$5 billion is dedicated to reining in skyrocketing property taxes while also introducing lasting property tax reforms and significantly reducing recapture payments.

Along with House Bill 3, the budget provides additional funding for public education that prioritizes learning in our classrooms, pays our teachers more and focuses on the needs of students.

It also makes our schools safer by allocating funds for the hardening of campus facilities and for expanded student access to mental health resources and other support.

The budget funds work to combat human trafficking and clear the existing rape-kit backlog. It also creates a fund to assist communities after natural disasters.

And the budget does so much more to address challenges Texans cannot themselves resolve.

This is not only a balanced budget, it also limits the growth of spending in the upcoming biennium to less than population and inflation growth when adjusting for the cost of property tax relief.

As a result, I am confident that Texas will remain the best state to live, work and raise a family for years to come. ■



TOYOTA



“Made in Texas” is a powerful global brand.

Businesses continue to grow jobs and invest in Texas at a record rate because of our greatest natural resource—the hardworking people of this great state.



ECONOMIC INDICATORS

NEARLY
**1.2 MILLION
JOBS**

added in Texas over the last 5 years

**10th LARGEST
ECONOMY**

when compared to the

NATIONS

of the world

**BEST STATE
FOR BUSINESS**

**15
YEARS**

RECORD LOW

3.4%

UNEMPLOYMENT

June–November 2019

**TOP STATE:
POPULATION
GROWTH**

over the year & over the decade

**FASTEST
ECONOMIC
EXPANSION**

IN THE NATION

EXPANDING ECONOMIC FREEDOM: A brighter tomorrow for all

The Texas economy is booming. Jobs are growing here, businesses are investing here and wages are rising here. All because of you.

Even with our record population growth—and even as the “stickiest” state in the nation with more than 8 in 10 who are born here staying here—the unemployment rate in Texas hit a historic low as Texas employers in 2019 **added 342,800 new jobs, the most of any state.** And job growth is widespread, across industries and regions of this great state.



Businesses grow jobs where the workforce is ready. Thanks to an unrivaled and diverse workforce, more than 14 million strong, Texas continues to shine as America’s jobs leader.

To broaden the path to prosperity for more Texas families, our focus remains on **unleashing innovation, ending senseless overregulation at all levels of government and expanding economic freedom** to support homegrown businesses and attract new business investments.

That is why we are further aligning curriculum in our classrooms to meet industry demands, including reforms passed this session prioritizing student success.

That is why we are investing in infrastructure and our transportation network and in innovative skills-training programs.

And that is why we are investing in economic development programs that help to create even more good jobs in communities large and small across Texas.

In the News

- Texas [Dominates the Decade](#) for Economic Development
- Governor Abbott Attends [Groundbreaking in Cibolo](#)
- Texas Leads the Nation in [Manufacturing Job Growth](#)
- Governor Abbott Announces Retail [Upskilling Grant](#)
- Governor Abbott Welcomes [Tech Investment in El Paso](#)

On page 7:

Governor Abbott toured two Toyota assembly plants in Japan and met with Toyota President Akio Toyoda to discuss strategies to expand the company’s Texas footprint during the [September trade mission](#).

Welcoming new jobs to East Texas, Governor Abbott celebrated the grand opening of a Sterling manufacturing facility in Lufkin.

Supporting small business growth in Texas

Small businesses are big in Texas, with more than 2.7 million small businesses representing 9 in 10 of all businesses in the Lone Star State and employing nearly half of the Texas workforce.

The principal advocate for small business owners in Texas, the [Office of Small Business Assistance](#) within my Economic Development and Tourism Division, hosts forums and workshops across the state throughout the year, connecting

aspiring entrepreneurs and small business owners with subject-matter experts, resource providers and networking opportunities. With input from partnering agencies, educational institutions and area workforce boards, these events are tailored to address local and regional needs. Community hosts this past year included: **Addison, Alpine, Amarillo, Bastrop, Edinburg, El Paso, Houston, League City, Nacogdoches, Paris, Pflugerville, Plainview and Weatherford.**



Texas is ranked as the Best State for Women Entrepreneurs like these attendees at the Governor's Small Business Forum for Women cohosted by the Governor's Commission for Women last year in **Houston**. Check online for [2020 small business events](#).

Attracting major new investments and jobs

The **Texas Enterprise Fund (TEF)** is part of the Lone Star State's incredible job-creation success story.

Administered within the [Economic Development and Tourism Division](#) in my office, TEF is a competitive incentive for new projects promising significant high-wage job creation and capital investment where one Texas site is competing with other viable out-of-state sites.

In the past two years alone, TEF helped to **attract over \$6.3 billion in new capital investments and led to the creation of 13,125 new direct jobs**, plus thousands more indirect jobs at existing local and small businesses across Texas.

The \$85.8 million invested in job creation also helped to close the deal on the **headquarters relocations** of The PGA of America and CORE West, Inc., a **major expansion** by Apple Inc. and other **job-creating business investments** listed below.

With TEF fully funded for 2020–2021, we will continue helping local communities to diversify our booming economy and attract even more good-paying jobs all across Texas.

2018-2019 TEF Projected Return on Investment

- **Baytown:** \$250 million capital investment by JSW Steel (USA) Inc.; 500 new direct jobs
- **Dallas:** More than \$84 million capital investment by Vistaprint Manufacturing Texas LLC; 144 new direct jobs
- **Dallas:** More than \$75 million capital investment by Uber Technologies, Inc.; 3,000 new direct jobs
- **Fort Worth:** More than \$29 million capital investment by Smith & Nephew, Inc.; 100 new direct jobs
- **Frisco:** \$30 million capital investment by The PGA of America; 150 new direct jobs
- **Frisco:** \$4 million capital investment by CORE West, Inc.; 97 new direct jobs
- **Grapevine:** More than \$1.6 million capital investment by Waterlogic USA, Inc.; 164 new direct jobs
- **Irving:** \$11 million capital investment by Allstate Insurance Company; 1,300 new direct jobs
- **Johnson County:** More than \$29 million capital investment by Louis Vuitton U.S. Manufacturing, Inc.; 204 new direct jobs
- **Kyle:** More than \$36 million capital investment by Access Dental Lab TX, LLC; 442 new direct jobs
- **Lewisville:** \$134 million capital investment by Ericsson, Inc.; 410 new direct jobs
- **Lufkin:** \$30 million capital investment by Sterling Lumber Company, LLC; 150 new direct jobs
- **Paris:** More than \$91 million capital investment by American SpiralWeld Pipe Company, LLC; 60 new direct jobs
- **Richardson:** More than \$3.1 billion capital investment by Texas Instruments Incorporated; 488 new direct jobs
- **Richardson:** More than \$12 million capital investment by Infosys Limited; 500 new direct jobs
- **San Antonio:** More than \$48 million capital investment by Pentagon Federal Credit Union; 571 new direct jobs
- **Sinton:** More than \$1.8 billion capital investment by Steel Dynamics Southwest, LLC; 592 new direct jobs
- **Temple:** More than \$106 million capital investment by East Penn Manufacturing Co.; 253 new direct jobs
- **Williamson County:** \$400 million capital investment by Apple Inc.; 4,000 new direct jobs



Governor Abbott accepted the Governor's Cup award again in March 2019 on behalf of community economic development teams around the Lone Star State. The award recognizes Texas for a record-breaking seventh year in a row as the top-ranking state for attracting business investments and jobs.

Connecting Texans to higher-paying jobs

To connect more Texans to in-demand skills training for higher-paying jobs and faster career advancement, the [Texas Workforce Investment Council](#) within my office assists with strategic planning and evaluation of the Texas workforce development system. The 19 members of the system represent business, organized labor, education, community-based service providers and state agencies.

Through this collaboration last year:

- **More than 4.5 million Texans took advantage of workforce development services** through 23 programs, 28 local workforce development boards and eight state agencies.
- **Students earned more than 125,000 industry-based certifications** in our public high schools, community and technical colleges and the Windham School District, and through training administered by local workforce boards.
- **More than 15,000 adult education and literacy students participated in distance learning programs** in 2018-2019.

- **More than 2,700 students participated in the Summer Earn and Learn program** providing work-readiness training and paid work experience for students with disabilities.

In 2019, I was proud to award more than **\$5 million in Texas Talent Connection competitive grants** for innovative education and workforce skills-training programs leading to successful job placement, increased wages and improved job retention as well as programs serving populations with special needs.

After this past session, I also signed a bill into law establishing the **Texas Industry-Recognized Apprenticeship Grant Program** enabling businesses to establish earn-while-you-learn training programs that ensure employees have the necessary knowledge, skills and abilities to advance, and that create a career pathway for unemployed and underemployed Texans.

And in addition to **validating business demand for 244 industry-based certifications**, system partners are continuing to align curriculum in our high schools, community colleges and technical schools to meet current and future workforce needs, and to ensure course credits transfer between institutions within certificate and degree programs.

Skills-Training Resources:

- For job seekers: [Work In Texas](#)
- For employers: [Skills Development Fund](#)
- For students: [Jobs Y'all](#)

Promoting Texas tourism, growing Texas jobs

The multi-billion dollar travel industry is a vital part of the state and local economies. In fact, **travel and tourism activity currently accounts for roughly 1 in 10 Texas jobs** across multiple industries and in every region.

With \$80.3 billion in total direct travel spending in the Lone Star State, the travel industry creates **697,200 direct jobs and as many as 524,500 indirect jobs in communities across Texas.**

Working in partnership with Texas communities and the travel and tourism industry to attract visitors from outside the state and around the world, the [Travel Texas](#) program in my Economic Development and Tourism Division launched the new “Let’s Texas” branding and advertising campaign in February 2019.



Based on consumer research, marketing trends and insights gleaned from Travel Texas and its partners, a new campaign needed to work harder, work smarter and be more engaging for today’s prospective domestic and international traveler.

“Let’s Texas” is an invitation, a friendly challenge to explore all the state has to offer. Authentic slices of the state are showcased through a [series of video ads](#) and numerous digital ads for a completely integrated “Let’s Texas” campaign.

Also in February 2019, Travel Texas launched an award-winning redesign of the [TravelTexas.com](#) website.

Travel Texas milestones for fiscal year 2019 include:

- The investment in Travel Texas advertising **influenced an estimated \$2.5 billion in travel spending** and \$156.6 million in state tax revenues from leisure travelers from outside the state.

- This travel generated 1.6 million trips, 4.3 million hotel room nights and **supported 25,000 local Texas jobs.**

Finally, Travel Texas partnered with other state agencies to assist Texas communities, both large and small, with tourism development initiatives.

Recent participants in the Community Tourism Assessment program include **Gonzales, Greenville, Mineral Wells, Palestine and Stephenville.**

Promoting Texas music, growing local jobs

The music industry in Texas, including music businesses and music education, creates almost **97,000 direct permanent jobs with \$4.1 billion in annual earnings**, and generates over \$9.6 billion in annual economic activity, up 12 percent over the previous year.

The ripple effects associated with the direct injection related to music businesses and music education bring the total impact, including the direct effects, to **more than 209,000 permanent jobs, \$6.5 billion in earnings** and \$23.4 billion in annual economic activity. Texas also realized approximately \$390 million in tax revenue from these impacts.

The [Texas Music Office](#) within my Economic Development and Tourism Division continued expansion of the [Music Friendly Communities](#) program this past year to foster best practices among music communities, to create a more interconnected music industry and to grow local jobs in Texas. **Abilene, Conroe, Nacogdoches, San Angelo and Stephenville** were certified in 2019 after months of collaboration with the office.



Lyle Lovett is a big fan of the Texas Music Office [Music Education and Community Grant Program](#), which in 2019 awarded \$9,000 to Texas Folklife Resources, to City Center of Amarillo via High Plains Public Radio and to the Fredericksburg Community Orchestra, helping to create Texas music experiences in under-served communities.



Governor Abbott welcomed Broadcast Music, Inc. (BMI) to Texas

at a March press conference. The Texas Music Office played an integral role in BMI's decision to open its first office in Texas, the company's first expansion outside of Nashville in 20 years.

Other events of note for the Texas Music Office:

- Co-hosted with Visit Fort Worth **the first annual Texas Sounds & Cities Conference** designed for communities interested in becoming music-friendly certified by the Texas Music Office
- Secured a grant from the Cain Foundation and partnered with Kessler Presents to **promote Texas music business opportunities nationwide at events** such as Americana Fest, Folk Alliance International in Montreal and Canada, South by Southwest (SXSW), Key West Songwriters Festival and Newport Folk Festival
- Participated in **multiple events at the annual South by Southwest Music Conference** in Austin, including a SoundExchange Producer's Road Show created for Texas producers, audio engineers and studio owners to discuss the benefits of the recently passed Music Modernization and AMP Acts
- Joined with the City of Austin in **hosting the first "Music Friendly Communities" official SXSW showcase**; free and open to the public, the showcase featured Texas-based artists from Music Friendly Communities across the state

Promoting production in Texas, growing local jobs

The **Texas Film Commission** in my Economic Development and Tourism Division promotes Texas as the premier destination for film, television, commercial, animation, visual effects, video game and extended reality production.

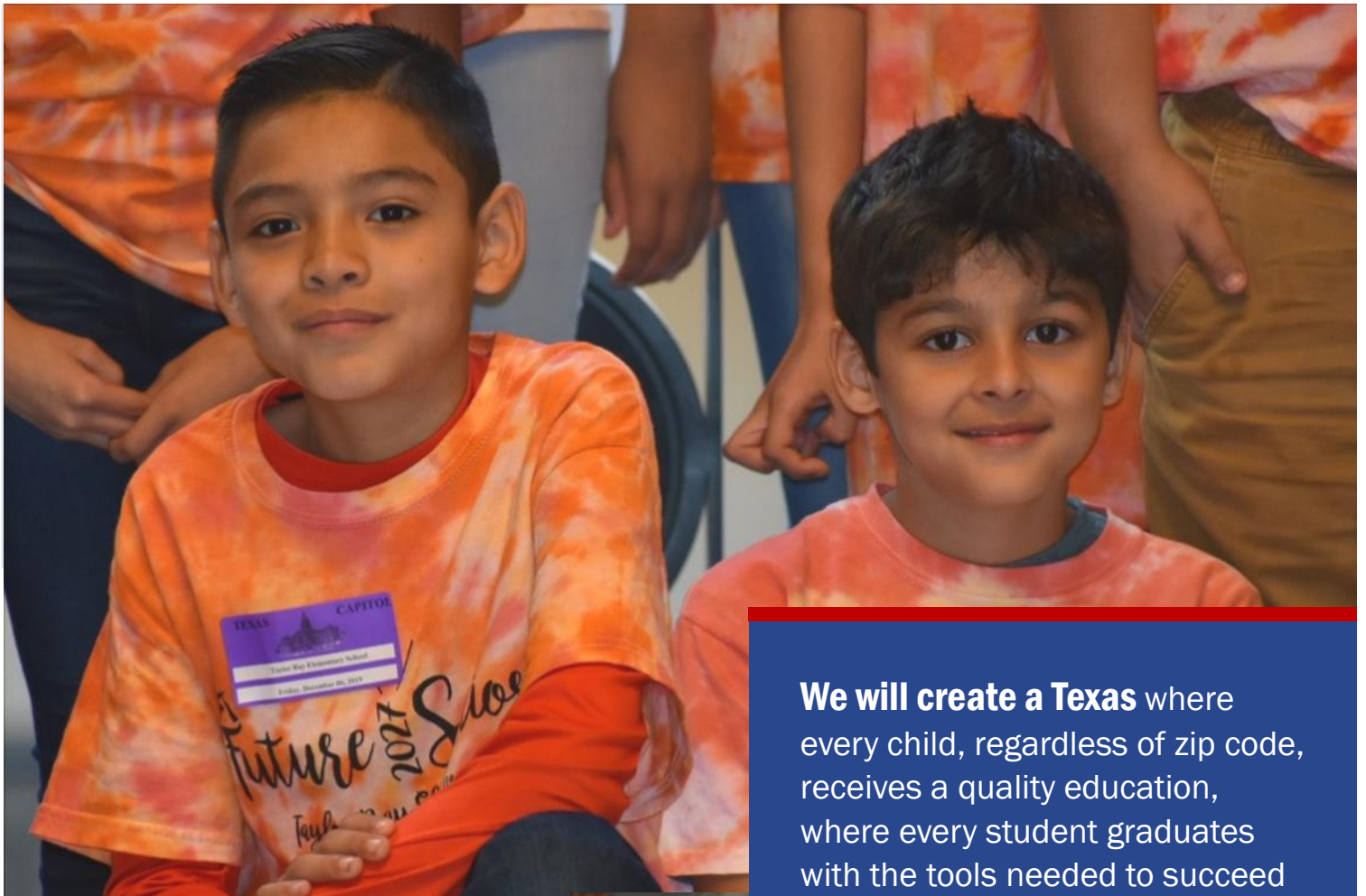
The **Film Friendly Texas** program connects media industry professionals with skilled community liaisons to provide local expertise and production support. Joining more than 130 already-certified communities last year were **Bluff Dale, Canadian, Clairette, Conroe, Granbury, McKinney, Mineral Wells, Morgan Mill, Pearland, Stephenville, Victoria and Wimberley.**

A snapshot of job-creating successes last year:

- The **Texas Moving Image Industry Incentive Program created 3,819 local jobs and generated approximately \$110 million of in-state spending** through 21 projects. To qualify for grant funds on eligible expenses, 70 percent of paid cast, crew and extras must be Texas residents and 60 percent of production days must be in Texas.
- With the support of the Texas Film Commission, AMC Networks filmed "Fear the Walking Dead" (Season 5) in **Austin, Bastrop, Elgin, Georgetown, Johnson City, Lago Vista, Lockhart, New Braunfels, Taylor and Wimberley.** The series constructed several major sets in rural communities and remote locations, and created more than 1,500 local cast and crew jobs yielding approximately 1,800 nights in Texas hotels. **Total estimated in-state spending by the production was \$44 million over seven months.**
- The Texas Film Commission listed 147 projects on its **job hotline**, for another 954 new local jobs in 2019.
- And while major metro areas see steady production activity, Film Friendly Communities across Texas including **Corpus Christi, Del Rio, Granbury, Hillsboro, Marfa, Mineral Wells, Palestine, Texarkana and Victoria** hosted a range of 2019 productions.



Finally, Texas is a premier destination for digital media industries **creating jobs in animation, video game and extended reality production.** With more than 250 video game company headquarters in Texas and 44 college programs dedicated to digital media curriculum, digital media artists in Texas are developing video game titles and animated series such as "Star Wars: The Old Republic" and "Castlevania." ■



We will create a Texas where every child, regardless of zip code, receives a quality education, where every student graduates with the tools needed to succeed in college, the military or a career.



ELEVATING EDUCATION: Opening the door to opportunity

Texas leads all states in growing tomorrow's workforce today, with one of the highest birth rates in the nation, the strongest population growth overall and the largest rising population under 18.

Texas schools educate more than 1 in 10 of all elementary and secondary public school students in the nation and nearly 1.5 million students in our public institutions of higher education. The gains we make here matter not only for our children's future but also for the nation's.

- Today, more of our students are graduating than ever before. **Our public high school graduation rate is at a record high of 89.7 percent**, tied for third highest in the nation.
- And the number of certificates and associate, bachelor's and master's **degrees awarded at our public colleges and universities is rising.**
- Texas fourth graders outpaced the national average yet again on the 2019 national math assessment. African American, Hispanic and Anglo students in Texas performed in the top 10 nationally, with African American students ranking first among their peers in all states.
- In 2019, **26 public schools in Texas were named National Blue Ribbon schools.**
- The Texas Education Agency released accountability ratings for 1,200 districts and charter schools. New in 2019 were A-F ratings for individual schools. **Hundreds of schools and districts improved their overall ratings.**
- Along with **four of the top 30 STEM schools in the nation**, Texas is home to nine Tier One research universities, 37 public four-year universities, six public university systems and 50 community college districts.
- With some of the top schools for business, law, petroleum engineering and undergraduate research, Texas is also a leading state for biotech, engineering and electrical engineering doctorates.

Even as we are seeing gains in classrooms across the state, we have more work to do to ensure **every child in Texas has the opportunity to learn more—and earn more.**



In the News

- Governor Abbott Announces STEM [Summer Merit Program](#)
- Governor Abbott [Followed Through on Promises](#)
- Education Leaders [Praise School Finance Reforms](#)
- Governor Abbott Proclaims [School Choice Week](#)

On previous page and above:

Thousands of young students visit the Texas Capitol every year, traveling on school trips, participating in civic events or visiting with their families. The Texas we create today is the brighter Texas they will inherit tomorrow.

Celebrating teaching excellence

The First Lady of Texas is a former teacher, so I know that teaching is a skilled, demanding profession, and that Texas is blessed with some of the best:

- **Krystal Contreras**, a fourth-grade writing teacher at Dr. C.M. Cash Elementary School in **San Benito**, was presented with a Milken Educator Award, the “Oscars of Teaching,” in February.
- **Karen Sams**, a third-grade teacher from David Crockett Elementary in **Weatherford**, was named the 2020 Texas Elementary Teacher of the Year in October by the Texas Association of School Administrators.
- **Michelle Sandoval**, an eighth-grade math teacher from Parkland Middle School in **El Paso**, was also named the 2020 Texas Secondary Teacher of the Year.

Celebrating student achievement

The U.S. Department of Education announced in September that 26 public schools in Texas with an economically disadvantaged population of 30.9 percent or greater received National Blue Ribbon honors for 2019.

Exemplary High-Performing Schools

| | |
|--------------------------|--|
| Brownsville ISD | Putegnat Elementary School |
| Caddo Mills ISD | Kathryn Griffis Elementary School |
| Dallas ISD | Judge Barefoot Sanders Law Magnet School |
| | Walnut Hill Elementary School |
| Dublin ISD | Dublin Elementary School |
| George West ISD | George West Primary School |
| Grand Prairie ISD | Grand Prairie Fine Arts Academy |
| Houston ISD | Field Elementary School |
| | Project Chrysalis Middle School |
| McAllen ISD | Sam Houston Elementary School |
| Rice CISD | Garwood Elementary School |
| Roma ISD | Emma Vera Elementary School |
| Valley View ISD | Wilbur E. Lucas Elementary School |

Exemplary Achievement-Gap-Closing Schools

| | |
|------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Brownsville ISD | Hubert R. Hudson Elementary School |
| Dallas ISD | Jack Lowe Sr. Elementary School |
| Hawkins ISD | Hawkins Elementary School |
| Hidalgo ISD | Hidalgo Park Elementary School |



Students from the Blue Ribbon-winning Wilbur E. Lucas Elementary School: “Learners Today, Leaders Tomorrow.”

| | |
|----------------------------|---|
| Idea Public Schools | Idea Quest College Preparatory School |
| La Joya ISD | Elodia R. Chapa Elementary School |
| Laredo ISD | H. B. Zachry Elementary School |
| | Anita T. Dovalina Elementary School |
| | Michael S. Ryan Elementary School |
| | J. C. Martin Jr. Elementary School |
| Mission CISD | Hilda C. Escobar / Alicia C. Rios Elementary School |
| United ISD | Judith Zaffirini Elementary School |
| Valley View ISD | Valley View North Elementary School |

Investing more in more student success

There has never been a more critical time to prioritize the needs of our students. That is why **directing more funding to the classroom and keeping the best teachers in the most challenging classrooms** were among the top priorities identified in reforming our public school finance system.

Parents, students, educators and taxpayers have reason to cheer. Thanks to the hard work of legislators in the House and Senate and members of the school finance commission, House Bill 3 signed into law this last session will lead to the **most significant educational transformation in this state in decades**.

These sweeping changes **increase funding in each classroom:**

- **Prioritizing early literacy and mathematics proficiency**
- **Funding expanded learning opportunities**
- **Increasing teacher pay, rewarding teacher excellence and prioritizing high-need areas**
- Providing high-quality professional development for teachers and principals
- Adding career, college and military readiness bonuses for school districts
- Providing funding for full-day pre-K for eligible students
- **Creating a student-focused funding formula**

In addition to these classroom reforms, House Bill 3 **reduces recapture, ensuring more local tax dollars stay in the district.**

SOURCE: [Texas Comptroller](#)

\$11.6B
INCREASE
IN STATE FUNDING

\$5B
DECREASE
IN PROPERTY TAXES

IMPACT OF HOUSE BILL 3 FOR 2020-2021

\$6.5B
INCREASE
IN TOTAL FUNDING
FOR SCHOOL OPERATIONS

\$3.5B
REDUCTION
IN RECAPTURE
PROJECTED

Opening the doors to higher degrees of success

A skilled, educated workforce creates a competitive advantage. To ensure more students are graduating with a certificate or an associate or bachelor's degree—and are prepared to compete—I signed legislation this session:

- **Improving credit transfers and further aligning coursework and degree requirements** to help students complete their degrees more quickly with less debt
- Increasing funding to support increasing enrollments
- Increasing research funding
- Increasing grant funding for the Cancer Prevention and Research Institute of Texas
- Creating the Texas Child Mental Health Care Consortium
- Approving two new medical schools at **Sam Houston State University** and the **University of Houston**

Consistent with those goals, in 2015 I launched the [Governor's University Research Initiative](#) to bring more of the world's best and brightest researchers to our top-ranked public universities. The initiative provides up to \$5 million in matching funds per researcher to assist in recruiting distinguished scholars, National Academy members and Nobel Laureates who will serve as economic catalysts to the state's economy for years to come. Researchers welcomed in 2019 include:

- **Kenneth Ramos, M.D., Ph.D., PharmB**, an accomplished physician-scientist, joined [Texas A&M University Health Science Center](#) to lead the Institute of Biosciences and Technology in Houston and serve as assistant vice chancellor for health services for the A&M System
- **Surendra Shah, Ph.D.**, a preeminent civil engineering and materials science expert, joined the [University of Texas at Arlington](#) as director of the Center for Advanced Construction Materials and is a Presidential Distinguished Professor in the College of Engineering

Keeping our students safe in school

As we improve our schools, it is not enough to give our students a quality education. We must create a learning environment that is safe.

No student should ever be afraid to go to school. No parent should ever be fearful when dropping their child off at school.

After the horrific shooting at Santa Fe High School in 2018, I held several roundtable discussions with parents, students, educators, law enforcement and mental health experts to find solutions to ensure the safety and security of our students.



With their input, I then unveiled a 40-point **School Safety Action Plan** and named school safety an emergency item for the legislative session in January 2019.

With strong bipartisan support, **several critical school safety bills were signed into law:**

- Strengthening emergency preparedness and response protocols, improving school facilities standards, improving protocols to assess threats and prevent violence, and providing schools more funding for school safety efforts
- Establishing the Texas Child Mental Health Care Consortium to leverage higher education expertise in the state to improve mental health systems for our children
- Increasing mental health training for educators and other school professionals to aid in early identification and intervention, emphasizing the importance of mental health education for students, and improving access to mental and behavior health services through school-based mental health centers and the hiring of mental health professionals
- Removing the cap on the number of trained school marshals that may be appointed per campus

The budget for the biennium allocates \$100 million to harden campus facilities and another \$100 million to fund expanded access to mental health resources and other support.

I thank members from both chambers as well as the many stakeholders who worked tirelessly to get these bills to my desk. More details can be found in the post-session update, [Improving School Safety in Texas](#). ■



No Texan should feel unsafe in their home, school, business or neighborhood. That is why public safety and security will always be my top priority as governor.



ENSURING PUBLIC SAFETY: Protecting our communities

That evil exists there is no doubt. And we saw its sickening reach into our communities last year in El Paso, in Midland-Odessa and in a church in White Settlement. But the cowardice of these evil actors is no match for the courage of the people of Texas. We remain united—as one family.



Governor Abbott met in El Paso with legislators, local officials, families and the media following the August shooting. In addition to immediately deploying state resources, including DPS troopers, special agents, Texas Rangers, tactical teams and aircraft to assist local efforts, the Governor formed a [Domestic Terrorism Task Force](#) of experts to advise on strategies to maximize law enforcement's ability to protect against acts of domestic terrorism.

On previous page:

Governor Abbott delivered remarks in Sutherland Springs at the [First Baptist Church](#) dedication in March and spoke of the strength and resilience of the congregation following the 2017 shooting that claimed the lives of 26 church members.

Fallen firefighters from across the state were also honored at a memorial service in March at the Texas Capitol.

In the face of threats both known and unknown, we are forever grateful for the service and sacrifice of our law enforcement officers, first responders and those who serve to keep our border secure. We are also thankful for all who work so tirelessly to deliver justice and to help those who have been victimized to find hope and healing.

It is my intent to continue to make Texas hostile territory for those who seek to prey upon the vulnerable or commit such heinous crimes as human trafficking, child sex trafficking and acts of violent extremism.

That is why my [Public Safety Office](#) is charged with helping communities to improve public safety, support victims of crime, prevent terrorism and prepare for threats and hazards posing the greatest risks. In fiscal year 2019, this

office administered **more than \$390 million in federal and state funding** to support that critical mission.

Preventing crime, supporting victims

From state and federal funds, **\$282 million** was awarded by the [Criminal Justice Division](#) within my Public Safety Office to programs:

- Providing services to victims of crime
- Addressing violence against women
- Supporting law enforcement and improving the criminal justice system
- Preventing and intervening in juvenile delinquency
- Supporting Crime Stoppers organizations

Among those grants, \$220 million was dedicated to programs contributing to a **comprehensive victim assistance network**

in Texas, providing for prevention, public awareness, crisis services, criminal justice support and advocacy, law enforcement response and mental health services to nearly 300,000 victims of crime in Texas. This included:

- Days after the **El Paso** shooting, the Criminal Justice Division made available **\$5.5 million in financial assistance** to law enforcement and responding agencies; **\$6 million in added costs** have now been identified. In response to the tragedy later that month in **Midland-Odessa**, the division committed **\$1.2 million**. Eligible reimbursements included:
 - Overtime and extraordinary law enforcement and investigative costs
 - Psychological first aid through local mental health authorities at no cost to survivors
 - Disaster Behavioral Health Services through the Health and Human Services Commission
 - County reimbursement for prosecution costs
 - School-based mental health services
 - Establishment of a Family Resiliency Center as a focal point for community services
 - Post Critical Incident Seminars for first responders
- The Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS) received **\$1.25 million for rifle-resistant body armor** in FY19, with additional grants going to local law enforcement in FY20.
- In addition to other neighborhood and community safety programs, **\$1 million was awarded to distribute over 600,000 firearm safety kits** to communities across Texas.
- The division awarded **more than \$821,000 to help reduce the backlog in sexual assault evidence testing**.

Additionally, Texas has 150 certified Crime Stoppers community and campus organizations formed by dedicated citizens, law enforcement and media. **Financial assistance was provided to 39 local Crime Stoppers Organizations** in 2019.

At the state level, the Texas Crime Stoppers team partnered with the DPS “Most Wanted” program, which offers rewards for the capture of fugitives and wanted sex offenders. My office paid \$18,675 in rewards **leading to the successful capture of three of the 10 Most Wanted**.



Combatting child sex trafficking

The mission of the **Child Sex Trafficking Team** (CSTT) in my Public Safety Office is to support Texas communities in:

- Protecting children and youth from sexual exploitation
- Helping the public recognize sexual exploitation
- Recovering victims with protective and empowering collaborative responses

- Supporting healing of survivors through a variety of trauma-informed and responsive services and supports
- Bringing justice for survivors by holding exploiters accountable

My office received **\$7 million in state appropriations** for the 2018-2019 biennium to operate CSTT, implement its strategies and make grants to government agencies and nonprofit groups to address commercial sexual exploitation.

CSTT also leveraged federal funding administered by the Criminal Justice Division, including the Victims of Crime Act and Justice Assistance Act Grants, to fund **more than \$12 million in trafficking-related projects**.

In addition to **training over 5,000 individuals** through outreach events, among many CSTT initiatives this past year:

- Providing funding to the Texas Alliance of Boys & Girls Clubs for **trafficking prevention and awareness programs** for at-risk children
- Supporting implementation of the Commercial Sexual Exploitation-Identification Tool (CSE-IT) in child-serving organizations to **help screen, assess and provide intervention services** for high-risk youth



- Partnering with First Lady Cecilia Abbott, A21 and the Outdoor Advertising Association of Texas to launch the statewide **“Can You See Me?” trafficking awareness campaign** featuring billboards, radio spots and social media to educate the public about trafficking and urge reporting to the **National Human Trafficking Hotline: 1-888-373-7888**
- Partnering with **Children’s Advocacy Centers** to implement multi-disciplinary care coordination for young victims in **Harris, Dallas and Tarrant Counties**; care coordination is

now also available in **Comal County** and in FY 2020 will be in **Bell, Bexar, Collin, Denton, Jefferson, Kerr, McClennan, Montgomery and Travis counties**

- **Supporting the expansion of the continuum of care** across the state:
 - For youth survivors: six drop-in centers, three emergency shelters, eight long-term residential providers and five juvenile justice-based programs
 - For adult survivors: seven residential providers and seven community-based case management programs
- Funding **specialized investigators, prosecutors and support positions** in Dallas County, Harris County and the Office of the Attorney General, where CSTT is also funding dedicated personnel to investigate sextortion cases
- Partnering with the Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute to develop a **Roadmap for Texas Communities to Address Child Sex Trafficking**

Keeping communities secure

The **Homeland Security Grants Division** in my Public Safety Office partners with other state agencies and the 24 regional Councils of Government in Texas to identify terrorism threats and hazards, and to address gaps in regional preparedness.

In 2019, the division **administered \$56.4 million in funding to sustain or enhance terrorism preparedness**. This included:

- **\$18.8 million for equipment and training** for SWAT, Bomb/EOD, HAZMAT and Search and Rescue teams
- **\$12 million to support state, regional and local planning efforts to increase preparedness** for our first responders and emergency management professionals
- **\$8.2 million to enhance interoperable emergency communications**



Governor Greg Abbott presented the 2019 Star of Texas Awards on September 11 to peace officers, firefighters and first responders from across Texas who demonstrated heroism in service to their communities and the Lone Star State. The Governor and First Lady offered comfort to family members of those who died in the line of duty.

Recent events, such as Hurricane Harvey and active shooter situations, have illustrated the need for interoperable communications. Funding has supported maintenance of large regional communications systems and the **purchase of \$3 million in subscriber radio equipment and repeaters.**

The Legislature approved new funding this past session that will be leveraged to address the ongoing priority for communications and interoperability, especially for rural areas of Texas.

- **\$4.3 million to support seven fusion centers across Texas** with technology, training, information-sharing tools, suspicious activity reporting, intelligence analysts and warning systems

As of August 13, an eighth fusion center in Fort Worth is in operation.

This fusion center network brings together partners at all government levels and the private sector to identify, collect, analyze and share data to help protect Texas and the nation.

The impact of these centers continues to grow, preventing tragedies in Texas. For example:

- On August 16: An individual in a foreign nation submitted a tip regarding a subject's **posts of mass shooting ideations:** "I always have a vivid image of me gunning down everyone in a hallway as people run and clench to the walls and some people jumping out of the windows to cling to their lives." The subject included his name in the posts and directed viewers to check out his other accounts. After meeting with the subject, Texas Rangers and local police placed him under arrest for terroristic threat.
 - On September 17: A social media user posted requests for suggestions on **conducting possible pre-operational surveillance on an ICE detention center in Texas.** A fusion center analyst discovered the post and sent the information to investigators, including federal partners. The analyst then worked with these partners to identify possible locations the poster might visit. Because of the quick response, federal partners were able to alert the facilities. When the individual arrived, staff quickly and calmly handled the situation.
- **\$4 million invested for projects supporting emergency operations centers** and incident management teams
 - **\$3.8 million invested in critical infrastructure protection**
 - **\$2.2 million in funding for nonprofit organizations at high risk** of terrorist threat

Securing the border: My Homeland Security Grants Division works with federal, state and local law enforcement partners to distribute funding to increase security along the Texas-Mexico and international water borders.

During 2019, the division awarded **more than \$35.7 million for interagency border law enforcement operations.** DPS Aviation, Marine Unit and Special Operations Groups accounted for a total of \$4.4 million in regional project support.

The outcomes of the grant programs included:

- **9,945 arrests made by law enforcement officers**
- **545,629 hours of overtime worked by officers supporting border operations**
- **Over 5 million miles logged by officers on patrol**

Also in 2019, the Homeland Security Grants Division awarded **\$3.3 million for maintenance of border helicopters** with total annual flight time of 6,869 hours.

Prosecuting border crime: In 2019, the Homeland Security Grants Division awarded **\$5.9 million to fund border prosecution resources for district and county attorneys** along the border and in counties significantly affected by border crime. These grants primarily fund salaries for prosecutors, paralegals and investigators as well as legal staffing for the Texas Anti-Gang Centers.

Outcomes for 2019 included:

- **6,241 border crime cases filed**
- **5,746 border crime cases prosecuted**
- **3,255 border cases resulted in convictions or community supervision**

Fighting gang violence: Grant funds totaling **\$5.9 million** were authorized in 2019 for the physical and operational infrastructure of the six Texas Anti-Gang Centers in Houston, North Richland Hills, San Antonio, McAllen, El Paso and Lubbock. Two additional centers in Waco and Tyler are expected to open in 2020.

These centers combat gang violence through coordinated prevention, intervention and suppression activities. In 2019, there were **more than 3,455 arrests and a total of 1,370 weapons seized.** ■



Texas exceptionalism springs from a legacy of liberty secured by the sweat, service and sacrifice of generations before us. Securing that freedom to aspire for Texans of tomorrow is the charge we will keep.



ENVISIONING A STRONGER TEXAS: Preserving life and liberty

This past legislative session, we took action to keep Texas the greatest state in America by safeguarding the legacy of liberty entrusted to us and ensuring an even brighter future for the generations yet to come.



We achieved this by supporting our veterans, military families and military communities, by developing better strategies to respond to and mitigate the impact of natural disasters, by protecting free speech and the sanctity of life, and by preserving the freedoms that make Texas a place of boundless opportunity.

Serving those who serve

As Americans, we owe our deepest respect and enduring gratitude to the men and women who have served in our U.S. Armed Forces, and to those who today stand ever ready both here and abroad.

In Texas, that tradition of military service runs deep. In addition to active duty service members, we are blessed to be home to **1.6 million veterans and their families**. And though we can never fully repay the debt, to honor all who have sacrificed and served on our behalf, I again proclaimed February 2 as Texas Military Heroes Day.

This past session, I also signed into law several bills supporting military members and their spouses:

- **Speeding admission for military children into the local public schools** by permitting residency to be established via a copy of the parent's transfer orders to the military installation within or adjacent to the school district
- **Expediting the issuance of Texas occupational licenses** to military service members, veterans and military spouses with already earned, substantially equivalent licensing
- **Permitting military spouses to practice for up to three years without obtaining a Texas occupational license** if they already hold a substantially equivalent license

The City of Abilene was again recognized among the best in the nation for the community's support of Dyess Air Force Base. (USAF photo by Staff Sgt. David Owsianka, welcome home at Dyess in March)

Previous page:

Governor Abbott and the Commission to Rebuild Texas presented the "Eye of the Storm" report at the end of 2018 that included disaster preparedness and relief recommendations acted on in 2019.

Texas veterans who served in Vietnam were honored in March at the Texas Capitol Vietnam Veterans Monument. Dedicated in 2014, the monument entombs 3,417 dog tags honoring Texans who died in the war or who are missing in action.

Resources for Veterans:

- The [Texas Veterans Portal](#) connects veterans, their families and caregivers to the benefits and services earned through their military service

Protecting the mission, securing jobs

Critical for the defense of our nation, the 15 major military installations in Texas add **\$101.6 billion to the state's economy** and support more than **220,000 uniformed and civilian jobs** in communities across this great state.

The **Texas Military Preparedness Commission** (TMPC) in my office advises on defense and military issues and on strategies to strengthen the position of those military installations in preparation for any future Base Realignment and Closure round or other actions by the Department of Defense.

The commission is composed of 13 members appointed by the Governor and serving six-year staggered terms, typically representing an installation in their community.

Under my administration, the TMPC has hosted four yearly **Texas Military Summits** to bring together military installations and defense communities in order to share best practices for supporting the installations and those who serve at them.

TMPC also administers the **Defense Economic Adjustment Assistance Grant Program** (DEAAG), an infrastructure grant program designed to assist defense communities. Over the last five years, **\$52 million in total funds** were awarded.

The past session, the Legislature approved **\$30 million in funding for this biennium** to invest in infrastructure projects and other initiatives to ensure that our military installations continue to add unmatched military value.

In October, **Arlington was named the future home of the National Medal of Honor Museum**. I was proud to participate in the competition for the museum that will showcase the valor and gallantry of our nation's Medal of Honor recipients.

And in December, Texas was recognized with a **2019 Army Community Partnership Award** for collaboration, cooperation and innovative solutions, along with the City of Austin and the University of Texas System, in support of the new **U.S. Army Futures Command** in Austin, charged with assessing the future operational environment, emerging threats and new technologies to protect tomorrow, today.



Governor Abbott recognized new Texas resident and Medal of Honor recipient U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Ty Carter (l-r) with an Honorary Texan certificate in March, joined by Sen. Kirk Watson, Bastrop business owner Brandon Hamrick and Rep. John Cyrier. The Medal of Honor is the nation's highest military award for conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of life above and beyond the call of duty.



Rockport was named one of the nation's Best Coastal Small Towns in 2019, just two years after Hurricane Harvey's devastation.

Prioritizing recovery, ensuring resilience

Hurricane Harvey, the most significant tropical cyclone rainfall event in U.S. history, struck the Coastal Bend region in August 2017, resulting in the costliest natural disaster in Texas history.

Even as rebuilding continued, my **Commission to Rebuild Texas** presented to the Texas Legislature in December 2018 a 178-page report, "**Eye of the Storm**," with recommendations to help Texas better prepare for future natural disasters.

As recommended by the commission, the **Texas Division of Emergency Management** (TDEM) was integrated into the extensive emergency management functions currently performed by The Texas A&M University System, with the goal of improving the delivery of disaster assistance, emergency management, mitigation and preparedness planning, and emergency response.

Some recommendations in the commission's report will require the cooperation of Congress and federal agencies, including the creation of **a single intake form and an automated intake system** so disaster survivors do not have to fill out multiple applications for relief services.

But to ensure state-level recommendations were acted upon, I **declared disaster preparedness and relief as legislative priorities** at the start of the 2019 session.

I am grateful to the Legislature for stepping up and delivering—not only for those who suffered such deep losses but also for the entire state of Texas.

Now signed into law, these bills will provide greater relief to those affected by disasters in Texas and help our state to **mitigate against and respond to future disasters** by:

- Requiring TDEM to develop:
 - A **comprehensive disaster recovery guide** for local officials
 - A **training plan for emergency management personnel** at the state or local level
 - A **catastrophic debris management plan**, related training and a model debris removal contract for communities
 - A plan to **assist local communities in executing disaster services contracts**
 - A **disaster recovery loan program for communities** with significant infrastructure damage
 - A **task force to assist with long-term disaster recovery**
- Requiring my office to develop **a list of waivers** that could be implemented following a disaster
- **Appropriating \$3.5 billion for additional Hurricane Harvey relief** from the Rainy Day Fund, including **\$1.7 billion for**

flood mitigation through:

- A new Texas Infrastructure Resilience Fund for statewide flood planning and to meet disaster-related federal aid matching requirements
- A new Flood Infrastructure Fund for statewide projects

These and other disaster preparedness and mitigation bills I signed into law are a symbol of the unshakeable spirit of Texas as well as a sign of the State's **ongoing commitment to improve natural disaster response**.

Leading for life, protecting the born and unborn:

It is shocking. In some states, there are elected officials who support abortion until the last minute of pregnancy—even after a child is born.

Not in Texas: I proudly signed the **Born Alive Act** to make it illegal to kill a child who survives an abortion in Texas.

This law **defends the sanctity of life and creates civil and criminal penalties for infanticide in Texas**. It provides a baby who survives an abortion the full protection of the law in Texas. It also ensures that the baby receives appropriate medical care.

I am grateful to Rep. Jeff Leach and Sen. Lois Kolkhorst for their authorship as well as for the members of the House and Senate who worked tirelessly to get the bill to my desk.

Encouraging young entrepreneurs: Would you believe that in some municipalities in Texas it was against the law for kids to run a lemonade stand? In fact, a stand in East Texas was actually closed down by the local police. Talk about the heavy hand of government putting the squeeze on entrepreneurship.



That is why I **signed House Bill 234** into law, authored by Rep. Matt Krause and Sen. Jane Nelson, and passed unanimously in both chambers, to **prohibit cities and neighborhood associations from regulating the sale of lemonade by children** on private property.

Protecting free speech on campus: Although the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution guarantees free speech in America, some colleges in Texas were banning free speech on campus.

No more. I signed Senate Bill 18 by Sen. Joan Huffman and Rep. Charlie Geren into law to **protect free speech on Texas college campuses**.

Ending runaway regulations: In a major win for freedom and economic prosperity, I signed House Bill 1545 authored by Rep. Chris Paddie and Sen. Brian Birdwell into law to **end stifling regulation** on a Texas industry.

Though allowing beer-to-go sales from craft breweries may seem a less serious battle than others that are brewing, it is symptomatic of the burdensome regulations that hurt entrepreneurs, startups and small businesses.



That is why I signed Senate Bill 1995, also authored by Sen. Birdwell and Rep. Paddie, creating a **Regulatory Compliance Division** in my office to review proposed rules by state agencies that would create a barrier to market participation or would result in higher prices or reduced competition for occupational license holders in Texas. ■



The future of Texas grows brighter each day because of all who share their time and talent in service to their neighbors, their community and this great state.



TEXANS SERVING TEXANS: Building a brighter tomorrow together

Because ours is a representative citizen government, thousands of Texans volunteer each year to serve on boards, commissions and other local, regional and statewide oversight groups.

My [Appointments Office](#) is constantly seeking the most talented and qualified Texans to serve our state and share their expertise in business, economic development, healthcare, higher education, human services, law, natural resources, public safety, transportation, veterans affairs and more.

Most appointments are:

- State officials and members of state boards, commissions and councils that carry out the laws and direct the policies of state government activities
- Members of task forces that advise the Governor or executive agencies on specific issues and policies
- State elected and judicial offices when vacancies occur by resignation or death of the officeholder

More than 700 appointments were made in 2019. The majority of these are volunteer positions, and I am grateful to these outstanding Texans for their service.

Empowering women leaders

Since my first day in office in 2015, my goal has been for Texas to be No. 1 in the nation for women-owned businesses. **Texas is now ranked as the top state for women entrepreneurs**, with women-owned business in Texas growing at a faster rate than all businesses in the U.S. overall.

To help more Texas women access the resources needed to invest in themselves, my [Governor's Commission for Women](#)

Previous page:

Governor Abbott and First Lady Cecilia Abbott inducted Vikki Carr, Susan Dell (above) and five other women into the Texas Women's Hall of Fame at a ceremony in January 2019.

New appointees to state service attended an annual training seminar in October, where they were welcomed by Governor Abbott.

and Office of Small Business Assistance cohosted two Governor's Small Business Forums for Women, in Houston and Amarillo.

As they have for more than 50 years, the commission serves as a resource and champion for Texas women. The appointed commissioners, from across the state and representing diverse fields of expertise, participated in a number of events throughout the year, promoting women in business, STEM education, volunteerism, women and children's health, and women veterans and service members, including:

- Cohosting an event for women entrepreneurs seeking **advice on finding startup funding**
- Cohosting with my Texas Film Commission a panel discussion on women in animation and gaming
- Participating in **human trafficking awareness** events
- Cohosting a free breast cancer screening event
- Coordinating with state agencies to sponsor Christmas wish lists for children in Child Protective Services' care



The commission also highlights the accomplishments of notable Texas women. In January 2019, **the First Lady and I were proud to induct seven extraordinary women into the Texas Women's Hall of Fame:**

- Former First Lady Laura Bush, public service
- Senator Judith Zaffirini, public service
- Susan Dell, philanthropy
- Tammie Jo Shults, leadership
- Vikki Carr, the arts
- Simone Biles, athletics
- Sister Elizabeth Anne Sueltenfuss, education

Each honoree has changed the course of history, and Texas is better because of their contributions.

Ensuring equal access to opportunity

My [Governor's Committee on People with Disabilities](#) works to further opportunities for persons with disabilities to enjoy full and equal access to lives of independence, productivity and self-determination.

Of the 12 appointed committee members, seven are people with disabilities; six state agencies also serve as ex officio members.

The committee **makes recommendations on disability issues, advocates for compliance with disability-related laws** and promotes the work of local committees doing similar work.

The committee also [annually recognizes](#) employers for hiring and retaining employees with disabilities, and media professionals and students for positively depicting Texans with disabilities.

Members and staff also provide **technical assistance and referrals** related to access, communications, education, emergency management, health, housing, recreation, transportation, veterans affairs and workforce opportunities.

In 2019, the committee strengthened its outreach and partnerships with organizations serving Texans with an intellectual or developmental disability. Efforts included advocating for increased long-term supported employment services and **assisting with the implementation of the Samuel Allen Law** to help protect Texas drivers with high functioning Autism or other drivers who may have a communication barrier with law enforcement.

The committee also enhanced its partnership with the Arc of Texas and their local affiliates to provide **presentations on disability legislation and training**.

Resources for Texans with disabilities can be found on the [committee's webpage](#).

Staying connected

Serving the people of Texas is a high honor. Throughout this past year, whether traveling to communities all across this great state or working at the Texas Capitol, I've enjoyed the opportunity to meet so many of you, to shake your hands and to hear your ideas for the future of this great state.

In the last year alone, those conversations included nearly **320,000 calls, emails and letters** to my office and countless social media interactions.

Of course, the most popular social media posts seem to always involve Pancake and Peaches, the First Puppies of Texas and official greeters at the Texas Governor's Mansion.

For the latest updates, I invite you to follow me. On Twitter: @GovAbbott; on Facebook: @TexasGovernor; and on Instagram: @GovAbbott

Follow the First Lady. On Twitter: @TexasFLCA; on Facebook: @firstladyoftexas; on Instagram: @texasflca

Finally, for a virtual visit of the Texas Governor's Mansion or to make reservations for an in-person tour, we invite you to visit the [First Lady's page](#). ■



Governor Abbott was honored as Mr. South Texas 2019 in February as part of the 122nd Washington's Birthday Celebration in Laredo. "It is humbling to join the list of those who have received this honor for their incredible impact on this region. I will never stop working on behalf of the people of South Texas to chart a course toward an even brighter future."

FIRST LADY'S REPORT

Texas truly is a state like no other. The greatest riches grow here—not just from the bounty of our land, but also from the hearts and hands of Texans all across this great state.

Texanthropy Initiative

As the First Lady of Texas, my top priority is encouraging Texans to give back through volunteerism and service. I like to call it Texanthropy.

Texanthropy is the combination of the two things that I am most passionate about—Texas and philanthropy.

And while my husband always says that he has the best job, I'm pretty sure that I do. I get to travel all across this great state to meet with so many caring individuals and organizations who are making such a difference by serving others.

Service to others changes lives and saves lives. During floods, fires and hurricanes—or even in the challenges of daily life—we have seen again and again that no force of nature is more powerful than Texans helping Texans.

I encourage you to volunteer in your neighborhood, your community, your schools.

As Texans, the blessings we have are many. And they are multiplied when shared with others.



The First Lady hosted a listening session with faith leaders from across the state to discuss strategies to end child exploitation and sex trafficking in Texas. The session coincided with the launch of the [GRACE Initiative](#) to mobilize communities of faith in the fight against child sex trafficking. The First Lady also [invited all Texans by video](#) to join together in a Day of Prayer in support of victims and survivors.

Network of Nurture

Every child deserves the chance to succeed, and there are thousands of children in the state's care who are waiting for that chance.

We have been working hard to strengthen our foster care system in Texas, and there is good news to share—adoptions are up!

But providing the support that foster and adoptive children and families need is a bigger job than state government can do alone.

It requires what I call a **Network of Nurture**—a community of individuals and families, friends, local leaders, nonprofit organizations, businesses, faith communities and anyone willing to open their hands, their hearts or their homes to the children and families in the state's child welfare system.

The more than one thousand youth who age out of the Texas foster care system each year are especially vulnerable, and they need the support of this Network.

Click on the link above for resources and ways you may be able to help.

These children of Texas need you. And I invite you to get involved.

Honoring volunteers in Texas

As honorary chair of the 2019 **Governor's Volunteer Awards**, I was pleased to host a reception at the Governor's Mansion in January to honor the winners. In their 36th year, the awards presented in conjunction with OneStar Foundation honor individuals and organizations in Texas who have gone above and beyond to enrich the lives of those in their communities and across Texas through volunteerism and service.

I invite you to read about their [incredible service to others](#).



First Lady Cecilia Abbott was honored with the 2019 **ProtectHER Award** by New Friends New Life in Dallas for affecting social change on behalf of human trafficking survivors.

Celebrating community leaders

It is such a joy to travel around this state to see the good works of so many individuals and community groups. Here are just a few of this year's events I attended:

- The Texas Mentoring Summit at the **University of Texas at San Antonio** honoring outstanding mentors
- The **Children's Advocacy Centers of Texas** gala in Austin, where the Governor and I were honored to receive the 2019 [Partners in Courage Award](#)
- The **H. Boyd Hall Chapter of the NAACP** 100th anniversary dinner in Corpus Christi, where I was humbled to receive the Humanitarian Award
- **Families Count graduation**, a ministry in Austin for parents of children placed into the foster care system or at risk
- House and Senate recognition of the 40th anniversary of **Friends of the Governor's Mansion**, who preserve the historic collections, beautify the gardens and educate the public about the home and its history
- The **Heart Gallery of Texas** unveiling at the Capitol, promoting the joys of fostering
- **Providence Place / My Mariposa Home** opening in San Antonio for survivors of human trafficking, sexual assault and domestic violence
- **Brownsville Youth in Philanthropy** grant presentation

We remain, as always, grateful for your prayers and support, and for the privilege of serving you. May God bless you and your families. And may God forever bless Texas! ■

Fighting back against human trafficking

Sadly, Texas is not immune to the evils of human trafficking. Human traffickers hold men, women and children against their will, destroying their individuality, stripping away their dignity. Through force, fraud or coercion, these victims are made to work—many times in the sex industry—for little or no income. Some are just young girls and boys, sold as mere property, as modern-day slaves.

Texas has always been a national leader in the fight against this horrible cruelty, and this year I was honored to help launch the **statewide "Can You See Me?" campaign** featuring billboards, radio spots and social media to help raise awareness and urge reporting to the National Human Trafficking Hotline.

These victims are not invisible if we learn to look for the signs, if we learn how to report suspected abuse, exploitation and trafficking, and if we learn to say, yes, Texas sees you!

LOOKING AHEAD



Though the boundaries of this great state are fixed by latitude and longitude, Texas is more than just a place on a map. It is a state of boundless opportunity—where the compass points north, south, east, west and up.

Bounty springs from the fertile soil and hardscrabble land beneath us and from a deeply rooted tradition of hard work and perseverance.

We dare to dream, to innovate. We look to the possibilities, not for ourselves but for our children and their children.

Yet even as we continue to grow, we will keep Texas, Texas. And make it even bigger for the generations yet to come.

May God bless you and—forever—the great state of Texas. ■

On turning **bold ideas**
into reality:

**“All of this we can do.
All of this we must do.**

Because we live
in the greatest state
in America,
**and we have an obligation
to make it even better.”**

— Governor Greg Abbott, Inaugural Address, January 2019

2019 TOP TEXAS TOUTS: Because of you, Texas leads the nation

ECONOMY

- Best State for Business: 15 years
- Best State to Start a Business
- Best State for Women Entrepreneurs
- Top exporting state: 18 years
- Top tech exporting state: seven years
- Top state for corporate relocation/expansion: seven years
- Fastest-growing economy in the nation
- Faster personal income growth than the nation as a whole
- Wages are rising across every industry
- “Dominated the decade” for economic development
- 9 in 10 Texas businesses are small and employ nearly half of all working Texans
- 10th largest economy among the nations of the world

JOBS

- Texas added nearly 1.2 million jobs over the last five years
- Top state for jobs added in 2019
- Record low unemployment of 3.4 percent June–Nov. 2019
- Top state for jobs created by: African American business owners; African American women business owners; Hispanic women business owners; veteran business owners; veteran women business owners
- Among top states for overall small business job growth
- Top state for manufacturing jobs added

INDUSTRY

- Top state: Cattle, cotton, hay, sheep, goats and mohair; farms and ranches; women and minority farm operations
- Top state: Exports, tech exports
- Top state: oil and gas production; wind-power capacity
- A leading state for aerospace, cybersecurity, financial services, manufacturing, startups, tech, tourism and more
- Top cybersecurity industry ranking
- Home to world’s largest medical complex
- Home to 15+ major military installations
- Home to nearly 50 Fortune 500 HQs, hundreds of publicly traded firms and 2.7 million small businesses

INFRASTRUCTURE

- Gateway to global trade for the nation
- Top U.S. ports for trade and foreign waterborne tonnage
- 19 seaports, with 11 deep water ports
- 33 foreign trade zones
- Most miles of roadways, state highways and freight railways
- Most airports, two international airline HQs and a major hub for a third
- Third-leading location for data centers—in the world
- Lower operating, lower energy and lower land costs, plus fewer land-use restrictions
- 10-year, \$70+ billion commitment to state roadway projects

PEOPLE

- Skilled, growing and diverse workforce more than 14 million strong
- Among the youngest median ages in the nation
- Top state for population growth
- More than half of growth: Newborn Texans
- By far the “stickiest” state: 82 percent born here stay here
- Top state for attracting young adults, ages 25-34
- Top state for rising population under 18
- Population: 28.9+ million
- Veteran population: 1.58+ million

EDUCATION

- Texas educates 1 in 10 of all U.S. public school students
- 26 Blue Ribbon public schools; four Top 30 STEM schools
- High school graduation rate: Tied for third-highest rate in the nation; third for African American students; third for economically disadvantaged
- 37 public four-year universities; six public university systems; 50 community college districts
- Nine Tier-One research universities, plus top-ranked universities for business, engineering, value and more
- A leading state for biotech, engineering and electrical engineering doctorates

