



STATE REPRESENTATIVE

# Ernest Bailes

Serving House District 18:  
Liberty, San Jacinto, and Walker Counties

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Dear Neighbors,

Things are busy in Austin! There is no shortage of issues to address.

March 10th was the unrestricted deadline for filing bills and joint resolutions other than local bills, emergency appropriations, and bills that Governor Abbot has declared an emergency.

My fellow legislators and I are currently hearing testimony on bills and working through legislation.

Things are not only busy in Austin, but also in HD 18. We've had really productive meetings in the district and more are on the schedule. Keep us informed about the issues important to you.

**God Bless You All  
and God Bless our  
Great State of Texas**



*Ernest*

P.S. By the way, for those of you following the feral hog poisoning issue, the use of Warafain has been put on hold for now. Happy Hunting!

## Bailes Files Bill to Address Public School Accountability

### Addressing A-F Rating

During the 84th Legislative Session, several bills were passed which addressed the changing needs of public education. These bills placed greater focus on vocational ed. and less on testing.

While Representative Bailes is fully supportive of the legislation, he feels it is important to readdress pieces of HB 2804, which created the "A-F" rating system designed to measure public school performance.

Representative Bailes and his staff have worked closely with school districts, stakeholders,



fellow legislators, and the Commissioner of Education, Mike Morath, to gather additional insight on ways to improve the rating system.

On March 8th, after extensive research and the recommendations of HD 18 school superintendents, Representative Bailes filed HB 3290, relating to the evaluation of public schools.

Representative Bailes will work with Representative Dan

Huberty, Chair of the House Committee on Public Education, and committee members on this legislation.

He feels it is important to have tools to meaningfully measure school performance and academic achievement. Believing everyone deserves to know if schools are doing their job, he will build on the strong parts of HB 2804, and work to shore up the weak areas.

## The Dayton Train

In HD 18, trains weave their way through our communities and go relatively unnoticed until they impact our ability to travel by automobile from one point to another without delay.

Many who travel US 90, out of Dayton, Liberty County, find themselves delayed by the train and are looking for solutions.

Earlier this month, Representative Bailes joined officials from Liberty County, Union Pacific Railroad, BNSF Railroad, Liberty County Rural Rail Transportation District, TxDOT, a railroad engineering firm and Congressman

Babin, to discuss options to address the train crossing in Dayton on US 90.

Representative Bailes came away from the meeting encouraged that they were moving in the right direction.

"While we would all like a quick fix, the issues are much bigger than simply building

an overpass. We finally have everyone at the table and are working together to find solutions. That is a positive. We just have to keep the issue front and center, and work to achieve answers that everyone can live with," said Representative Bailes.



## A Quick Glimpse...

### Update on Constable Justin Johnson

Liberty Co. Precinct 1 Constable Justin Johnson continues to improve from injuries he received on 02/15 while directing traffic. Hopefully, he will be able to come home soon. We are thankful for God's Plan and for all those that have been instrumental in his recovery!

### HB 2567 Filed

To protect ecological resources, enhance the health and maintenance of forests, promote stability of forest-using industries, ensure public safety, and conserve the ecosystem values of the forest, Representative Bailes has filed HB 2567.

Not only is HB 2567 important for HD 18, it is important for landowners throughout the state in their efforts to protect our valuable natural resources.

### General Sam Houston Celebrated

On 02/28, people from across the state gathered at the Bob Bullock Texas State History Museum in Austin to celebrate Sam Houston's 224th Birthday. Sam Houston State University (SHSU) President, Dana G. Hoyt, welcomed visitors to the

celebration. Mr. Gib Lewis, SHSU Class of 1956, was the featured speaker.

A few days later, the 36th Annual Texas Independence Day and General Sam Houston's Birthday celebration was held in Huntsville.

Representative Bailes was honored to be a part of both celebrations.

### Child Protective Services

Child Protective Services (CPS) in Texas is undergoing major changes. Representative Bailes was humbled to join fellow legislators in unanimously passing of HB 4 and HB 5.

Key points: HB 4 will provide monthly stipends/payments for foster parents who take in children they are related to. Hopefully, this will keep more family units intact.

HB 5 would classify the Department of Family Protective Services (DFPS), which houses CPS, an executive level agency, allowing DFPS to better manage its staff and streamline decision making.

### Daylight Savings Time

If you are one of the many who are struggling with the 'new' time and 'wish they would just leave it alone,' you are not the only one.

This session, like in the past, bills have been filed in both the Texas House and the Senate to end daylight saving time in Texas.

### HB 2172 and SB 977: High Speed Rail

Representative Bailes has joined House Representatives Trent Ashby and Matt Rinaldi, as well as Senator Charles Schwertner, on legislation which would prevent state money being spent on high-speed rail operated by private entities.

Those working on the Houston-to-Dallas bullet train project have indicated they would privately fund the project and not use state funds. HB 2172, and companion SB 977, would hold them to their word.

### Bailes Appointment to Subcommittee

Representative Bailes has been appointed to the Subcommittee on Small Business within the House Committee on Economic & Small Business Development. This new appointment allows him to work closely on issues surrounding federal, state, and local regulatory barriers or impediments impacting small businesses.

A very strong proponent of the free enterprise system, and a small business owner himself, Representative Bailes understands the challenges created by unnecessary regulation, and will work to foster an environment which allows small business owners to thrive and achieve success.



Huntsville ISD Superintendent, Dr. Howell Wright (Walker County), accompanied the Huntsville ISD Emerging Leaders Program to their State Capitol. Representative Bailes enjoyed hearing from program participants about ways they are preparing to serve their communities.



On March 3rd, family, friends, supporters, and officials came together in Coldspring (San Jacinto County), to witness the renaming of the Coldspring Post Office to the **E. Marie Youngblood Post Office Building**. (In 2013, Mrs. Youngblood, a beloved member of SJCo., was murdered while working her rural route.)



Representative Bailes appreciated the opportunity to work with Dr. Ann Smisko, Deputy Director of Policy and Programs, Raise Your Hand Texas, in his ongoing efforts to address the public education rating system.

**HD 18 SPOTLIGHT of SERVICE—WE SALUTE**

**Coldspring  
Quilts for Kids**

In 2015, a group of talented ladies came together in Coldspring, San Jacinto County, to do what they love... quilt. In two years, the group has made and donated more than 330 'Quilts for Kids'.

A recent post on their Facebook page said it best, "It is such an incredible feeling to know our quilts will be wrapping some little ones in love who are in major crisis in their lives and need comfort and security."

Ladies, we salute your service to others. You are awesome!



*Quilts for Kids* is a nationwide 501(c)3 non-profit organization. The Coldspring group welcomes donations so they may provide quilts for more kids. For information visit their facebook page: Coldspring Quilts for Kids.

**Fully Understanding the Issues:**

*Before I decide to support or oppose something, I want to fully understand the pros and cons. That is certainly the case surrounding the proposal for a Municipal Management District (MMD) in Plum Grove, Liberty County.*

*I want to preface my comments by saying, this is only my take and I have no intentions of judging other people on their choices. I am not in their shoes.*

*When it comes to the proposed Plum Grove MMD, I have heard from residents, business owners, past elected officials, current elected officials, developers, land owners, lawyers, experts on special use districts, tax advisors, and many others. Everyone has an opinion about the issue and their own take on how it would help or hurt.*

*While I sincerely appreciate their input and value their willingness to share their knowledge, I am really concerned*

*that the 'facts as presented' just don't add up for me. The first proposal was for a MUD and now it is for a MMD. They both involve new taxing entities, but they are very, very different things. The more I work on this, the more questions I have.*

*At the March meeting of the Liberty County Commissioner's Court, the court voted to offer a Resolution of Support for the proposed MMD. In an attempt to clearly understand what was presented, I have requested and received audio from the meeting. I am carefully reviewing the audio.*

*I have met with representatives seeking the MMD and have requested they provide, in writing, the facts about the MMD. They have agreed to do so.*

*This issue hasn't been easy for anyone involved. I will continue to give this issue my best effort, but will very firmly stand my ground until I know the facts. eb4*



It was an honor to welcome the junior and senior classes of Alpha Omega Academy, Huntsville (Walker County), to their State Capitol on 03/09. The students and staff had an opportunity to see first hand how the legislative process works and meet with Representative Bailes in the House Chamber. During the session, Alpha Omega was honored by House Resolution 780 on their 20th anniversary.



Every community in HD 18 is touched by the timber industry in some way. Recently, Representative Bailes met with representatives of the Texas Forestry Association to discuss issues impacting our area.



Off for Spring Break this week, Cinco and Rigby got to see TxDOT Flight Operations and learn about the Aircraft Maintenance Division. They were excited to see several of the helicopters up close.

## STAFF CONTACT

**Nick Raymond**-Chief of Staff  
[nick.raymond@house.texas.gov](mailto:nick.raymond@house.texas.gov)

**Roel Benavides**-Legislative Director  
[roel.benavides@house.texas.gov](mailto:roel.benavides@house.texas.gov)

**Sadie McLaughlin**-District Director  
[sadie.mclaughlin@house.texas.gov](mailto:sadie.mclaughlin@house.texas.gov)

**Jordyn Senkirik**-Legislative Aide  
[jordyn.senkirik@house.texas.gov](mailto:jordyn.senkirik@house.texas.gov)

### Capitol Office

#### **Physical Address**

1100 Congress Avenue, Room E1.316  
Austin, TX 78701

#### **Mailing Address**

P.O. Box 2910, Austin, TX 78768

512-463-0570-Phone

512-463-0315-Fax

### District Office

#### **Physical Address**

10501 Hwy 150, Shepherd, TX 77371

#### **Mailing Address**

P.O. Box 1116, Shepherd, TX 77371

936-628-6687- Phone

## **STAFF SPOTLIGHT**



**Roel Benavides,  
Legislative Director**

Representative Bailes is fortunate to have Roel as part of the team. He is hard-working and motivated to do his very best.

Graduating from the University of Houston in 2014, Roel paid his way through college, graduated Magna Cum Laude with a Bachelor of Science in Political Science and History, participated in Student Government, and worked full-time in his town's grocery store as a Customer Service Manager.

Roel has varied legislative experience. He worked in the 84th Texas Legislative Session in both a legislative and committee office, which helped provide a greater understanding of the dynamics of passing a bill. He then worked on a local campaign in his hometown of Friendswood, Texas.

Now, as Representative Bailes' Legislative Director, Roel oversees the legislation in the Capitol office and monitors the bills that are presented in committees and on the floor.

If you are coming to Austin, give us a call. We will be happy to show you around the Capitol. Or, if you have an issue you would like to sit down and discuss with Ernest, contact Jordyn.

She will get you on the schedule.

If you know someone ages 8-18, who is interested in serving in the Honorary Page program, email Nick and he can help get that arranged.

If something is going on in the District, or if we can help you with something, reach out to Sadie. She is always there to help!

## **Outside our District...**

Just outside HD 18, fifteen minutes east of Livingston, is home to the Alabama-Coushatta Tribe of Texas. They have occupied the area since the late 1700's, before Texas even became a state. In 1854, the Texas legislature approved the Tribe's petition for land to form a reservation.

In May, 2016, with the approval of the National Indian Gaming Commission, the Alabama-Coushatta Tribe of Texas opened Naskila Gaming, employing over 200 people.

This opening came 15 years after their last entertainment center, which only operated nine months, was shut down under federal court order.

The Tribe's future in gaming is again at stake. Soon, they will go back to federal court to defend what they be-

lieve are their rights to gaming.

The issue at hand is **The Restoration Act**, passed by Congress in 1987. As a caveat to the act, The Alabama-Coushatta Tribe made a 'compact' with the Texas state legislators at the time regarding gaming in order to obtain federal trust status.

So, why share the story of the Ala-

bama-Coushatta Tribe? Two Reasons: (1) I admire their willingness to fight for what they believe is right, and (2) to encourage thought.

Regardless of your position on gaming, I'm not sure anyone will come out of this litigation a clear winner.

Just my thoughts... eb4



**On February 15th, representatives from the Alabama-Coushatta Tribe of Texas were welcomed to their State Capitol and proudly shared their rich heritage.**