



STATE REPRESENTATIVE

Ernest Bailes

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

Volume 1, Issue 5

85th Legislative Session

March 28, 2017

Dear Neighbors,

On my cluttered desk in Shepherd sits a plaque which reads, "if you chase 2 rabbits both will escape." In Austin, there is no such thing as only chasing 2 at a time. It is more like 200 at a time!

I have always admired people who successfully multi-task at high levels. Fortunately, I learned from the best because this job requires serious multi-tasking.

I am thankful to have knowledgeable people in my corner who don't tire of my endless questions. Their advice and guidance is more valuable than they will ever know.

But at the end of the day, it is my staff that helps me do what I do. They are awesome!

We hope you find this newsletter relevant. Our goal is to keep you informed. If you have questions or concerns, give us a call, we want to hear from you.

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



Bailes Joins Efforts to Reform Public School Finance

In 2016, the Texas Supreme Court found the State's school finance system to be constitutional, deeming it "Lawful but Awful."

Representative Bailes agrees with that characterization, saying, "deciding who gets what when it comes to public school finance is a nightmare."

The 'Robin Hood' recapture mechanism, put into effect in 1993, attempted to level the playing field and remains in effect today.

Under 'Robin Hood', equal students should be equally funded, regardless of the location of their desk be it in a property rich district or in a property poor district.

Currently, legislators are working on proposals to address public school funding with House Bill (HB) 21 at front and center.

Of the 1,200 school districts in Texas, eleven are in HD 18 and not all of them

will fair well under the current language of HB 21.

Representative Bailes has joined other legislators on HB 1390 which will help create a level playing field for small districts by eliminating some of the inequities.



Representative Bailes is working with Public Education Chairman Huberty on issues surrounding public school finance. Knowing there will be winners and losers as new school finance laws are written, he is working to make sure HD 18 school districts and taxpayers get a fair shake.

Electrical Power Generated in HD 18

Most people in HD 18 have never heard of East Texas Electric Cooperative (ETEC). However, they are the driving force behind power generated in San Jacinto County.

The first project, the San Jacinto County Peaking Facility, came on line in July 2009. The facility produces 150,000 mega watts from 2 turbines which run on natural gas. ETEC operates this facility in conjunction with Sam Houston

Electric Coop. (SHECO). SHECO provides service in all three counties in HD 18.

In 2015, ETEC, in conjunction with The Trinity River Authority of Texas, broke ground on another HD 18 project at the Lake Livingston Dam.

This plant, scheduled to be completed in 2019, will produce hydroelectric power. With three 8 MW turbines, the facility should produce enough power to serve 10,000+ homes.

In addition to generating power, the project will also offset carbon dioxide emis-

sions from fossil fuel power generating plants all without impacting the level of the lake, either during construction or during operation of the project.

"As HD 18 grows, our need for safe, reliable, affordable power will grow. We are fortunate to have a proven power provider such as ETEC invest in our district. Their partnerships with SHECO and TRA not only provide for our power needs, they also employ local residents. It is a win-win for HD 18," said Representative Bailes.

A Quick Glimpse...

Update on Constable Justin Johnston

Great News!!! Liberty County Precinct 1 Constable Justin Johnston came home on March 18.

He has made remarkable progress since he was critically injured last month. With family, friends, and fellow law-enforcement personnel by his side, he 'rang the bell' at Memorial Herman and walked out of the hospital ready to complete his rehab as an out-patient.

We are thankful for his progress, and wish him the best as he completes his recovery.

CSHB 1469 Presented

On Monday, March 20th, Rep. Bailes presented CSHB 1469 to the Public Education subcommittee on Educator Quality. The bill was presented to Representative Bailes by Dale Underwood, Superintendent of Gulf Coast Trades Center in Walker County and Will Gollihar, Principal of Thomas Buzbee Vocational High School. The school is a court-adjudicated open-enrollment charter school that focuses on providing vocational training and education to juvenile offenders so that they may successfully transition back into our communities.

What this bill addresses is that non-core vocational instructors at

such court adjudicated programs may couple extensive work experience with an alternative certification. This bill would allow the Buzbee Vocational High School to retain and hire teachers that demonstrate subject matter expertise, professional work experience, hold a relevant industry certification, and have received at least 20 hours of classroom management training.

For professionals that have worked in a specific trade for over ten years, such as horticulture, masonry, or culinary arts, this bill is a step in the right direction.

Since its founding in 1971, the school has had countless positive impacts in our State, including over 28,000 youth completing the program, a recidivism rate of 12%, and a job placement rate of over 75%. We would like to thank Superintendent Underwood and Principal Gollihar for coming to Austin to testify in support of the bill. Representative Bailes looks forward to the bill moving through the legislative process.

Teacher Retirement

Due to concerns that the current retirement program will not sustain itself, legislation has been filed which would move the Teacher Retirement System of Texas (TRS) to a defined contribution (401K style) or

hybrid plan for new and future education employees.

Although changes for new and future education employees will need to be addressed, Representative Bailes supports a strong teacher retirement program and supports the current 'Defined Benefits Program' which guarantees a certain level of benefits to TRS members at retirement.

HB 300 Decreases fees to Carry a Handgun

Committee Substitute House Bill 300 will decrease current fee for an original or renewed license to carry a handgun.

Currently, there is a \$140 application fee for a handgun license and the \$70 renewal fee.

HB 300 would lessen the burden on individuals by reducing the original and renewal fee to \$40 for the general public.

Property Taxes: Relief and Reform

There are many tax relief and reform bills under consideration and revisions will most likely be made before coming to a vote on the House floor.

We will keep you informed as progress is made.



Throughout HD 18, people came together to celebrate St. Patrick's Day. The parishioners at St. Stephen's Episcopal Church, Liberty (Liberty Co.), celebrated in style. Under the direction of choirmaster and composer Mr. Jim Sterling, everyone enjoyed the special musical talents of "Canterbury Choral" and "The Downpatrick Weavers Celtic Strings."



To better serve their citizens, San Jacinto County is a member of the Deep East Texas Council of Governments (DETCOG). Shepherd Mayor, Earl Brown, welcomed DETCOG to his town last week.



Representative Bailes visited with ROSEN representatives at Texas Energy Day at the Capitol concerning advanced pipeline diagnostics. The new technology is important in insuring operational confidence in transmission lines, many of which run through HD 18.

GREAT FUTURES START **HERE.**



Boys and Girls Club
of Walker County



Happy Kids, Smiling Faces!
Our youth are our future.

Thanks to those who make this organization a reality.

HD 18 SPOTLIGHT of SERVICE—WE SALUTE *Boys and Girls Club of Walker County*

When you walk through the doors at the Boys and Girls Club of Walker County, you know good things are happening! You will find a safe, fun, learning environment for kids.

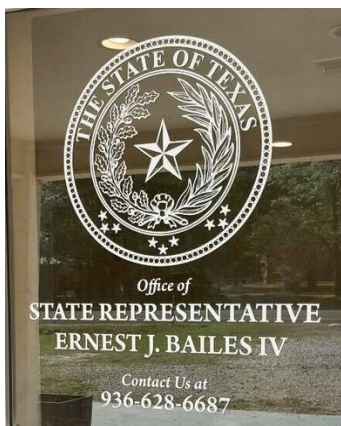
Currently, the organization has two locations used to serve about 300 kids annually. They are working to build a new facility which would allow even more kids to participate.

Kids learn and experience new activities such as a favorite, the golf class with the SHSU golf team. Another fun activity is the “weird animals class” which teaches kids about more obscure and interesting animals. Not only are there fun learning activities, there is also help with homework.

The club is always looking for volunteers and will gladly accept donations. If you have a few hours to help with homework or even help out in the office, check them out! Helping others is a great way to give back to your community. For more information call 936-291-6054.

We applaud those that give back to the kids of Walker County through the Boys and Girls Club.

Are you involved with a group or organization that does great things in our communities in HD 18? If so, we want to hear from you and would be honored to salute you in our SPOTLIGHT OF SERVICE. Give us call at 936-628-6687 and share the great things your group is doing. We have a lot to be proud of in HD 18!



Signage is finally in place at Representative Bailes’ District Office. Located in Shepherd (San Jacinto Co.), the center of HD 18, the office is open Monday-Friday, 8-5, unless Sadie, the District Director, is out of the office attending functions or meetings in the district.

Office remodeling is almost complete and soon a date will be announced for an open house. We hope you will be able to join us!



Representative Bailes enjoyed the opportunity to join the men and women of the Hull-Daisetta VFD (Liberty Co.) at their recent event to raise needed funds for their organization. It was good to be with hard working people who volunteer to serve our communities whenever they are called upon. To all the VFD’s in HD 18—Thank You!



It is always a pleasure to welcome young people to their Capitol. Earlier this month, Miss Nadia Fry served as an Honorary Page for the Day. Nadia is pictured with Representative Bailes and Representative Flynn.



“As I walked to work this morning I thought about the business we would conduct, the significance of the flags flying, the people back home, and prayed for His blessings on this beautiful day. Thankful.” eb4

STAFF CONTACT

Nick Raymond-Chief of Staff

nick.raymond@house.texas.gov

Roel Benavides-Legislative Director

roel.benavides@house.texas.gov

Sadie McLaughlin-District Director

sadie.mclaughlin@house.texas.gov

Jordyn Senkirik-Legislative Aide

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



**Jordyn Senkirik,
Legislative Aide**

If you call Representative Bailes' Austin office, you will most likely have the pleasure of speaking with Jordyn.

As his Legislative Aide, Jordyn assists Representative Bailes with the day to day operations in the office, conducts research, and does all the scheduling.

In May 2016, Jordyn graduated Cum Laude from Texas A&M University with a Bachelor of Science in Agricultural Leadership and Development, and is currently pursuing a Master's of Science from Texas A&M.

Jordyn spent this past summer interning in Washington, D.C. for a Texas Congressman. Her time in D.C. sparked her interest in public policy. Although this is her first Texas Legislative Session, she handles her duties like a pro!

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!

Eminent Domain and Condemnation Power

Representative Bailes believes economic prosperity and continued growth are important to Texas's future. He is also a strong proponent of private property rights and is anxious to take up the issues of eminent domain and condemnation power.

Eminent domain is the power to take private property for public use by a state, municipality, or private person or corporation, following the payment of just compensation to the owner of the property.

Condemnation power is the legal process by which a governmental body exercises its right of "eminent

domain" to acquire private property for public uses (highways, schools, redevelopment, etc.).

Throughout HD 18, there are private landowners who have found themselves facing the issues of eminent domain or condemnation.

Be it for road construction, pipeline right of ways, school expansions, or even canals to transport water to neighboring municipalities, the common denominator is land.

The right to take a person's private property for public purposes is not explicitly granted to the federal government but is considered, "essential to a sovereign government."

The Texas Constitution guarantees property owners "adequate compensation" when their property is "taken,

damaged, or destroyed" for public use.

Even if the process of taking land for the good of society starts out relatively cordial, it often turns into a bitter battle over fair market value offers and the declaration of what is considered just cause. Often, the battles result in costly litigation.

"This session several pieces of legislation have been filed which address eminent domain. We must consider all parties involved as we work through the legislation--the landowner, the tax payer, and the public. The key is to insure we are following Texas Constitution," said Representative Bailes.