



John Zerwas, M.D.

State Representative

District 28

Capitol Update - April 4, 2011

Legislative Update

House Bill 4 and House Bill 275

HB 4 is the supplemental appropriations bill which makes adjustments to the appropriation of funds to state agencies over different time periods for the current budget year. This legislation was introduced in order to address revised revenue estimates and other needs before presenting the general appropriations act. HB 275 is the enabling legislation that would approve the use of \$3.2 billion from the state's Rainy Day Fund to address the revenue shortfall from the the previous biennium. Both pieces of legislation passed out of the House on third reading on April 1.

House Bill 1

House Bill 1, the General Appropriations Act, was passed out of the House on April 3. The floor debate included all articles of the bill and 371 filed amendments. After nearly 30 hours of debate, significant cuts were made in order to meet the state's constitutional requirement of passing a balanced budget. As Chair of Article II, Representative Zerwas took the lead on the debate over amendments affecting the Health and Human Services portion of the budget. There were 62 pre-filed amendments to Article II.

House Bill 1166

HB 1166, relating to tobacco cessation programs for certain public employees and their dependents and to the assessment of a fee on certain public employees who use tobacco, was heard before the Insurance Committee on March 29. Representative Zerwas authored this legislation to establish a smoking cessation program with the Employees Retirement System and apply a user surcharge for anyone that is a tobacco user. There are an estimated 77,000 ERS members that are smokers.



Madison Marshall and Emily Saxton of Pope John XXIII High School in Katy, Texas joined Representative Zerwas on the House floor as Honorary Pages on March 30th.

Around the Capitol

KXAN Interview

On Monday, Representatives Zerwas and Coleman filmed a segment for the Sunday morning Austin show, Session '11. They discussed issues relating to the appropriations bill, health care issues and Medicaid. Representative Coleman served as the Vice Chair to Chairman Zerwas on the Select Committee on Federal Legislation. The committee was established during the interim to review the impact that federal legislation had on the state with a specific emphasis on health care reform.

Pages for the Day

Young constituents Emily Saxton and Madison Marshall served as honorary pages in the Texas House on the afternoon of March 30. The young ladies were able to experience the legislative process up close from the House floor. Emily and Madison joined House Sergeants in assisting House members by delivering messages and listened to members debate. "It was cool seeing how government actually works," said Emily Saxton. "I got to watch as different representatives discussed and debated bills. I also got to see some of the Capitol and took pictures that I will treasure forever. It was a great experience, and I want to do it again!"

Legislative Resources

There are a multitude of resources available to the public that can help an individual follow the legislative process. From audio and video archives to a legislative bill search portal, the House website provides plenty of helpful links and information. Please visit www.house.state.tx.us for more information.

Capitol Visits

If you would like to set up a Capitol tour through Representative Zerwas's office, please send an email to caroline.dickerson@house.state.tx.us. Due to the amount of individuals visiting the Capitol during session, please give our office at least two weeks notice from when you would like to schedule the tour.

Honorary Page Program

The Honorary Page Program gives youth between the ages of eight and eighteen the opportunity to see the legislature in action. They will spend the day assisting House Sergeants on the House floor and around the Capitol. Please contact the Austin office at 512-463-0657 to inquire about the application process.

If you would like to view previous newsletters, please visit www.johnzerwas.com.