



John Zerwas M.D.

State Representative

District 28

January 2011



Dear Friends:

The November 2010 elections saw a dramatic change in legislative bodies at the state and federal levels. Voters expressed the need for leaders that would show fiscal responsibility and limit the role of government. With the start of the 82nd Legislature, Texas faces considerable hurdles in addressing a significant budget shortfall and maintaining the state's rights under the 10th amendment.

The Texas Constitution mandates that the legislature pass a balanced budget. For this biennium, we are facing a budget shortfall that must be balanced without raising taxes. This shortfall allows us the opportunity to find areas where potential savings can be made and a resources can be used more effectively. Although some budget cuts are unpopular, they must be made in order for our state to remain a leader. The 2010-2011 general revenue budget passed by the 81st Legislature was comprised of \$88.5 billion. The newly proposed 2012-2013 general revenue budget is \$79.3 billion, creating a reduction of \$9.2 billion. In terms of All Funds, the 2010-2011 budget was comprised of \$187.5 billion. The newly proposed 2012-2013 All Funds budget is \$156.4 billion creating, a reduction of \$31.1 billion. The current budget proposed by the Legislative Budget Board comes within the comptroller's revenue estimates.

Federal health care reform, or The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act will bring significant health care changes to Texas. This act mandates that each state establish its own independent health insurance exchange or allow the federal government to establish and administer an exchange. We have an opportunity to create a state-run exchange that has the capability to best suit the needs of Texans. We must also do what is best for Texas and protect our state from encroachment by the federal government. I have filed House Bill 636 creating the Texas Health Insurance Connector to serve as the insurance exchange for Texas. This exchange will provide coverage that allows the consumer to find a policy that meets their needs and budget. The Texas Connector is designed to supplement the current health care market, but not replace it. Organizations like The Texas Association of Business, Texas Hospital Association, Texas Association of Health Plans, Texas Medical Association, Texas Conservative Coalition Research Institute, Texas Association of Life and Health Insurers, and the Texas Restaurant Association have given their endorsement to the provisions outlined in HB 636. Because the health care reform act states that these exchanges must be fully operational by 2014, this legislation should be a priority for the 82nd legislature. Texas should continue to protect our tenth amendment rights, maintain control of our healthcare infrastructure and continue to be a leader in the delivery of healthcare.

On Monday, January 26th, the Senate passed legislation requiring every individual wishing to vote in an election to show proof of identification. I support this legislation as it provides greater voting transparency I will continue to follow it as it navigates through the legislative process.

Each legislative session provides an incredible opportunity for the constituents of District 28 to become involved with the legislative process. The Honorary Page Program at the Capitol is a great way for youth to see the legislature in action. Your child must be between the ages of 8 and 18. To participate, please contact my office Austin office at 512-463-0657 to inquire about the application process. The Honorary Page will be able to follow a House Sergeant on the House floor as they assist them in their duties. They will have the opportunity to meet members of the legislature as well as participate in the business of the House.

Last week, I was humbled and honored to have been recognized by the Life Gift organization for my commitment to saving lives through organ donation. During the 81st legislative session, I authored House Bill 2027 which expands the list of those wishing to make an anatomical gift donation on the donor's behalf.

As the legislative session progresses, I will be providing updates on the events of the House through Twitter and Facebook. If you would like to receive my newsletter, please go to www.house.state.tx.us and follow the link to my House web page.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John Zerwas".

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