

NTCL 83rd Texas Legislature Newsletter



Connecting the Citizens of North Texas with their elected officials in Austin

April 29, 2013

Being Involved in Governance

By Dennis Scharp

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Have you ever wondered what it must have been like in the 1770's? What it must have felt like to have an actual say in how you were governed? Having the apprehension about bucking established rulers? Feeling the uncertainty of trying to change long established tradition? This is very similar to what we are dealing with today with our own government.

Becoming involved with the North Texas Citizens Lobby



has been exciting and rewarding. It is a giant step forward from being an activist standing on a street corner or attending a large rally in Washington D.C.

By actually participating in Texas State Government, we are making our voices heard in Washington!!! I am convinced that I experienced some of the same apprehension and uncertainty that our forefathers must have felt, as I stepped out of my comfort zone to actively participate in the legislative process in Texas. Granted, it isn't on the National scene, but where do we have the most impact? Correct, at the State and local levels of government; where the NTCL is focused.

I encourage every citizen in North Texas to experience the feeling of exhilaration you get by participating. There are several ways to get involved; calling & emailing your legislators, becoming a member of a bill research team, and (the most exhilarating) traveling to Austin in support of your legislators and witnessing the operation of your State government.

Join us and help make a difference in the governance of our state and our nation. What an awesome experience!

(Dennis Scharp leads the NTCL's legislative research team and frequently joins Lobbying trips to Austin.)

A "Gonzales Moment"

By Barbara Harless



The North Texas Citizens Lobby is made up of conservative citizens working together to lobby Texas State Senators, Representatives, and other elected officials to follow their oath of office and promote Constitutionally Limited Government, State and National Sovereignty, the Rule of Law, Fiscal Responsibility, and Personal Responsibility.

HB 80 would amend Texas law by making it a Class A misdemeanor, if as part of a search performed to grant access to a publicly accessible building or form of transportation, a person touches specifically named body parts in a manner that would be offensive to a reasonable person.

Additionally it creates an offense if a public servant removes a child from the

physical custody or control of the parent or guardian, or in any way harasses, delays, coerces, threatens, intimidates, denies, or conditions access to a person for refusing to consent to the search of their person or child.

Finally, it gives the Texas Attorney General concurrent jurisdiction with consenting local prosecutors to prosecute the offense.

WOW! This should get the attention of over zealous TSA agents.

HB 80 is authored by **Reps. Simpson & Hilderbran** and has **48 co-authors**. If you like this legislation, contact your Representative and **Chairman Byron Cook** (512-463-0730) of the **House State Affairs** committee and request he schedule the bill for an immediate committee vote.

Will our Freshmen Stand Strong?

By Mark Reid

By the time you read this, leadership may have successfully pressured our Freshmen legislators to vote to “raid” \$2 billion from the Rainy Day Fund (RDF) to fund the new state water plan **HB11**. The incentive is a promise to free-up other important legislation that is being held hostage by **Joe Straus** and his cronies.

Last time I checked, “conservatives” controlled the House, so they should be able to move good conservative legislation out of committee and to the House floor for a vote. Sadly, such legislation is again being held hostage

by RINO’s like **Joe Straus**, just as it was in the last legislative session.

Beyond the “politics” of the issue, reducing the RDF is bad policy. Representative Van Taylor of House District 66 addressed the State of Texas’ “Savings Account” in a recent op-ed, reprinted in this newsletter.

Texas has an outstanding AAA bond rating that it could easily lose, because of the apparent inability of our elected officials to control spending. What is going on in Austin, unfortunately sounds a whole lot like what we hear

coming out of Washington.

The North Texas Citizens Lobby urges our legislators to stand strong and keep their commitments to fiscal responsibility. Win or lose, you will be judged on your votes and how well these votes reflect the principles on which you were elected.

Leadership is the problem in Austin. Give us the ammunition we need to support you and defeat self serving leaders that would rather make deals with special interests, than look out for the citizens of Texas.

The Importance of Maintaining a Healthy State Savings Account

By Van Taylor

The *Austin American Statesman* recently ran the following op-ed, by **Van Taylor**, in which he makes the case for why Texas needs to maintain a healthy balance in our state savings account, the Economic Stabilization Fund: <http://tinyurl.com/d9xeys>.

The fund was explicitly created by a “Constitutional amendment establishing an economic stabilization fund in the state treasury to be used to offset unforeseen shortfalls in revenue.”

The current biennial budget used a general revenue estimate of \$72.2 billion, whereas the next budget uses a \$96.2 billion estimate, a 33 percent increase — the biggest revenue increase in recent Texas history. Despite this substantial increase in revenue, a number of bills moving through the Texas Legislature aim to drain the State’s savings account for more government programs, which could hurt our credit and flexibility.

Rating agencies such as Fitch, Moody’s and S&P have told the governor’s office that Texas needs 7.5 percent of our general revenue in the fund to keep our AAA bond rating — anything less than \$7.2 billion imperils what has become a major state asset. Today Texas has \$7.9 billion in the fund.



Any way you look at it, that is not enough to both keep our AAA bond rating and handle an emergency.

Some legislators want to take \$6 billion out of the fund later this year, all but ensuring a credit downgrade and curtailing our ability to deal with a revenue shortfall, a natural disaster or a tough school finance case decision.

In short, the state must maintain a healthy balance in our savings account to maintain our credit rating, which equates to millions of dollars a year in lower borrowing costs, and to protect the state from unforeseen disasters or shortfalls in revenue.

As your state representative, my highest priority is being available to help you with any issues you are encountering with state government, as well as hearing your viewpoint on how to im-

prove our government.

Please use the contact information contained in this message to send me an email or call me to share your views, or to ask for assistance with a state agency. My most important office policy is to accommodate every constituent who requests a meeting with me as quickly as schedules allow.

Sincerely,

Van Taylor
State Representative
House District 66

District Office:
6301 Preston Road, Suite 700
Plano, TX 75024
972-398-9416

Capitol Office:
Room E1.302 Capitol Extension
P.O. Box 2910

Building Relationships

By Dennis Scharp

One of my objectives for our trip to Austin last week was to contact the members of the **House Federalism & Fiscal Responsibility, Select Committee** to urge that they report favorably on **HJR 48**. **HJR 48** supports the right to choose or decline to purchase Health Insurance Coverage.

Rep. Scott Turner is a member of this committee, so I took the opportunity to discuss the bill with him directly. He assured us that he was familiar with the bill and it will be reported on favorably. I also left him a copy of the latest NTCL Newsletter.

Ron asked if there was any legislation that he felt was important and how we could help him with the folks back home. (Building relationships with legislators is one of the goals of the NTCL and this is one of the ways the NTCL does that.)

Scott asked us if we could help get **HB 607** scheduled for a Public Hearing and out of the Ways & Means Committee. **HB 607** will phase-out and repeal the franchise tax. **Please contact the Chairman of the Ways & Means Committee, Rep. Harvey Hilder-**



bran and urge him to schedule HB 607 for an immediate Public Hearing. (512-463-0536, harvey.hilderbran@house.state.tx.us)

We also talked with **Rep. Scott Sanford's Chief of Staff, Katherine Munal** and asked if **Rep. Sanford** had any bills that needed our support. She gave us a white paper on **SB 346**, which would require corporations making aggregate political expenditures exceeding \$25,000.00 in a calendar year to file reports nearly identical to those filed by a regulated political committee. She asked that we read it and if we agreed that this was a bad bill to go to the John Reagan building and register against this legislation. We reviewed the white paper and after

consideration agreed to register our opposition to the bill.

We then went on to register **AGAINST: HB 2186** (Relating to the authority of certain facilities to temporarily detain a person with mental illness), **HB 2426** (Relating to certification and recertification requirements for emergency services personnel), **HB 62** (Relating to a justice or judge having an interest in a business entity that owns, manages, or operates a private correctional or rehabilitation facility), & **SB 492** (Relating to the licensing and regulation of prescribed pediatric extended care centers); and **FOR: HB 3731** (Relating to the date of a hearing on an application for an order to authorize psychoactive medication for a person receiving inpatient mental health services), **HB 63** (Relating to the creation of an Offense for use of a handheld wireless communication device for text-based communication while operating a motor vehicle), & **HB 64** (Relating to the liability of and the validation of certain acts of the Midland County Fresh Water Supply District No. 1.



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