



VICKI TRUITT

STATE REPRESENTATIVE ★ DISTRICT 98

INTERIM CAPITOL REPORT SUMMER 2008

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES



VICKI TRUITT
DISTRICT 98

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Dear Friends,

What a year! I sincerely hope that you and your family are having a fun and safe summer, in spite of the heat, electricity rates and high fuel prices. (We are all feeling the pain of the pinch.) I regret that the electricity reform bill was killed during the final days of the last legislative session. Although the next legislative session does not begin until January, 2009, my office is already working on legislation to introduce, which could improve the situation for consumers.

We've had a busy year thus far. In March, I hosted a Transportation Briefing at Alliance Airport. Chairman of the Texas House Committee on Appropriations, Representative Warren Chisum, and the Chairman of the Sunset Advisory Commission, Representative Carl Isett, traveled here at my request to meet with local leaders and receive an overview of Tarrant County's transportation issues and challenges. These influential legislative members now understand how crucial transportation funding is for our growing region. And currently I am working with local leaders in the process of the Sunset review for the Texas Department of Transportation. The department is under scrutiny and we anticipate a re-vamping of their operations. It is essential for us to be fully engaged in this matter to ensure that the interests of North Texans are understood and accommodated by policy makers.

On April 8, we held the first meeting of my Property Appraisal Working Group, in Southlake. The two-hour meeting was quite informative, and included my invited guests, Rep. John Otto, from the Houston area and a leader on property tax reform in the Texas House, as well as Mr. John Marshall, Tarrant County's Chief Appraiser, and Mr. Tim Wooten, Area Manager, Property Tax Division, Office of the Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts. We had quite a few interested citizens attend the meeting in addition to the members of the Working Group, itself. The Working Group is comprised of one representative from each of my district's taxing entity categories, e.g. schools, municipalities, county, etc., as well as an equal number of public members who have issues or concerns with the current appraisal process. The purpose of this ad hoc committee is to clearly define the problems that need to be addressed, and to identify legislative remedies. This information will help prepare me to address these matters during the next legislative session. I offer a great message of thanks to all those who are volunteering their time to serve on this important committee.

Please remember that I welcome and need your input, so please never hesitate to share your thoughts with me. Until next time, we continue to work for you - serving our constituents by making state government agencies responsive to the needs of the people of the 98th Texas House District, and looking for ways to improve state law to make a better Texas for you and our children and grandchildren. As always, thank you very much for the privilege of allowing me to serve you.

Sincerely yours,

State Representative
District 98



Representative Truitt Hosts North Texas Transportation Meeting

People living and working in Northeast Tarrant County are well aware of the rapidly growing needs for improved transportation infrastructure in the Metroplex. Because these needs are especially acute due to funding and organizational issues at the Texas Department of Transportation, transportation is sure to be a primary focus during the 81st Session of the Texas Legislature, which convenes in January, 2009.

On Tuesday, March 25th, Representative Truitt hosted a transportation briefing for the Chairman of the House Appropriations Committee, Representative Warren Chisum and the Chairman of the Sunset Advisory Commission, Representative Carl Isett, at Alliance Airport.

The purpose of the meeting was to provide these men, who hold key leadership positions in the

Texas Legislature, with an overview and detailed update of the transportation needs in North Texas. Michael Morris, Director of Transportation for the North Central Texas Council of Governments, gave an extensive PowerPoint presentation that effectively communicated the deepening traffic problems here in Tarrant County.

"I am confident from talking to our guests after we adjourned that our meeting provided these key leaders with good information, understanding and perspective about our transportation and mobility needs here in North Texas. This was very important to set the stage for our work in Austin in the coming months," said Truitt.

The meeting was attended by Tarrant County leaders, local mayors and city managers, as well as area transportation and business leaders.

State Representative Vicki Truitt's Annual District 98 Coffee Tour

Representative Truitt kicked off her annual District 98 Coffee Tour this summer to offer constituents the opportunity to visit with their Representative about any issues and concerns they wanted to share.

"Constituent communication has always been a top priority for me. I don't want my constituents to have to come looking for me. The coffee tour makes it convenient for my constituents to have access to their state representative," said Truitt.

Representative Truitt held these coffees over the summer months of May thru July at local establishments in Grapevine, Colleyville, Southlake, Keller, Trophy Club, and in Fort Worth.

If you were unable to make the coffees but have an issue or concern you would like to share with Representative Truitt, please feel free to contact her by e-mail, Vicki.Truitt@House.State.TX.US, or by contacting the capitol or district offices by using the contact information listed on the back of the newsletter.



Rep. Truitt listens to constituents during annual "District 98 Coffee Tour" stop in Grapevine, on May 2.

CASA of Tarrant County Needs Volunteers

Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) are volunteers who assist children placed in foster care by the state to remove them from abusive or neglectful domestic situations. To learn more about this important program and how you can help, go to www.speakupforachild.org.



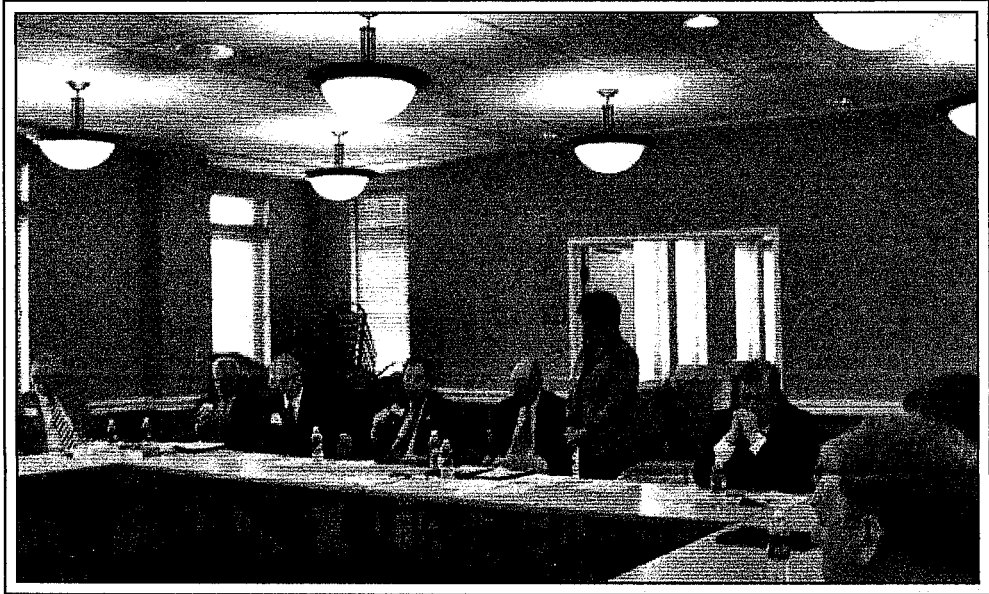
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REP. TRUITT'S PROPERTY APPRAISAL WORKING GROUP



On May 8, Representative Truitt hosted the first of a series of meetings designed to determine the best ways to reform the property appraisal process in Texas. The goal of the first meeting was to place a foundation of shared understanding about how the current system works and why. The working group, comprised of a representative from each type of property taxing entity and an equal number of citizens who have concerns about the current appraisal system, held its first meeting with 15 members in attendance. Another 20 or so constituents attended the meeting to listen and observe the proceedings.



Rep. Truitt's Property Appraisal Reform Working Group meets in Southlake on May 8.

Representative Truitt invited two expert guests from outside Tarrant County to address the group, Representative John Otto and Tim Wooten. Representative John Otto serves as the Chairman of the House Select Committee on Property Tax Relief and Appraisal Reform. He informed the group that Texas has long had an over-reliance on property taxes. Nearly half (46.4%) of all state and local government revenue collected in Texas comes from property taxes (\$33 billion annually). Representative Otto pointed out that property tax is the only tax not based on one's ability to pay.

Tim Wooten, a property tax expert from the Texas Comptroller's office, said that the state's property tax system was set up by the state to be run at the county level. "Historically there were a lot of inequities in Texas' property tax system leading to reform initiatives passed in 1979 that shaped the system we have today," he said. He indicated that the system in place today, while much criticized and needing improvement, is much stronger than the system in place before the reforms were enacted and is often held up as a model for other states to emulate.

Tarrant County Appraiser John Marshall also addressed the group at Representative Truitt's request. He emphasized that the Comptroller's Annual Ratio Study is a key driver of how the county appraisal districts (CADs) across the state operate. "We are forced to appraise to keep our values at market," he said. If a CAD falls outside five percent above or below the Comptroller's estimate of its market values then the state can take steps to correct those valuations. Representative Otto said he felt the Comptroller's Ratio Study was driving CAD appraisal activity too aggressively. Representative Truitt agrees.

Tarrant County Judge Glen Whitley reminded the group to take into account that Texas is the fifth lowest state in the United States in terms of per capita tax burden, and that our quality of life is very good in light of this. Tarrant County Tax Assessor and Collector Betsy Price added that Texas has historically had relatively low property values, which are now climbing rapidly and that there is also a great deal of misunderstanding about how our appraisal and property tax system works.

Other members of the working group asked questions of the speakers in order to gain a better understanding of their perspectives. They agreed to meet again in July to discuss various ideas on how the current process can be improved.

Recent Legislative Awards

- ★ Presented with bi-annual "Legislator's Award" by the Texas Police Chiefs Association, in recognition of assistance with critically important legislation to the business of law enforcement, June, 2008
- ★ Honored by the Texas Retired Teachers Association in recognition of outstanding advocacy on behalf of retired educators in Texas, April, 2008
- ★ SafeHaven Tarrant County "Katie Sherrod Advocacy Award" in recognition of outstanding advocacy on behalf of victims of domestic violence, February, 2008
- ★ Awarded "Legislator of the Year" by the ARC of Greater Tarrant County for tireless work and advocacy on behalf of people with intellectual disabilities, April, 2008
- ★ The "Fighter for Free Enterprise Award" from the Texas Association of Business, 2007
- ★ The "2007 Legislative Hall of Fame" by the Texas Association of Realtors
- ★ Honored by MHMR of Tarrant County for advocacy on behalf of persons with mental illness and intellectual disabilities, September, 2007
- ★ The "Legislative Star Award" by the Texas Classroom Teachers Association, 2007



TEXAS HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
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PENSIONS & INVESTMENTS, CHAIR
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC HEALTH
SELECT COMMITTEE FOR INDIVIDUALS ELIGIBLE FOR INTERMEDIATE CARE FACILITY SERVICES

Helpful Toll Free Numbers

Adoption & Foster Care	1-800-233-3405	Nursing Home Complaints & Info.....	1-800-252-8016
American Cancer Society	1-800-227-2345	Pardons & Paroles, Texas Victims	
Child, Disabled, & Elder Abuse	1-800-252-5400	Services Section.....	1-800-848-4284
Child Support Enforcement	1-800-252-8041	Parent's Anonymous/Abuse	
Consumer Protection	1-800-337-3928	Prevention Hotline	1-800-554-2323
Drug & Alcohol Abuse	1-800-252-6465	Runaway Hotline.....	1-800-392-3352
Income Asst., AFDC & Food Stamps.....	1-800-252-9330	State Tax & Lottery Info.....	1-800-252-5555
Housing & Community Affairs Hotline..	1-800-792-1119	State Bar of TX Legal Referral Serv.....	1-800-252-9690
Medicaid	1-800-442-2620	Stranded/Disabled Motorist DPS Help....	1-800-525-5555
Medicare	1-800-638-6833	Texas Crime Stoppers	1-800-893-8477
Missing Persons Clearinghouse	1-800-346-3243	Veteran's Land Board.....	1-800-252-8987
National AIDS Hotline.....	1-800-342-2437	Voter Registration/Eligibility/Elections....	1-800-252-8683
National Domestic Violence Hotline.....	1-800-799-7233	Women's Advocacy (Legal Assistance) ..	1-800-777-3247
		Worker's Compensation Commission	1-800-252-7031

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DISTRICT 98 QUESTIONNAIRE



Please check your response, cut on dotted line, fold and mail back to Rep. Truitt.

VOTER 1 VOTER 2

- | | | |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Which do you think are the biggest problems facing Texans today? (please check three) | | |
| Jobs and the economy | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Electricity rates | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Crime and drugs | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Property taxes | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Traffic congestion | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| The cost of gasoline | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Illegal immigration and border control | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Water shortages | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| The uninsured | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| The quality of education in our public schools | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Air quality and the environment | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Other: _____ | | |
| 2. What else should Texas do to better control its border with Mexico and reduce illegal immigration? (check all that apply) | | |
| Require proof of citizenship for government services to be offered | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Construct a physical barrier on the border, using federal and state funding | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Increased National Guard presence at the border | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Other: _____ | | |
| 3. Do you favor or oppose increasing state funding for Texas Homeland Security and DPS troopers to help patrol the Texas-Mexico border? | | |
| Favor | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Oppose | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Undecided | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 4. Do you feel the Tarrant Appraisal District has fairly appraised the property tax value of your home? (check one) | | |
| Yes | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| No | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Undecided | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 5. Do you think Texas is adequately funding its public schools? (check one) | | |
| Yes | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| No | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Undecided | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 6. Do you believe deregulation of electricity in Texas has been good for consumers? (check one) | | |
| Yes | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| No | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Undecided | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 7. Do you support or oppose holding a regional election to consider a half-cent increase in sales tax to build a seamless regional rail system to serve north Texas? (check one) | | |
| Favor | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Oppose | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Undecided | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |