

State Senator

# JEFF WENTWORTH

## LEGISLATIVE REPORT

**Dear Fellow Texans,**

History was made in the Texas Senate during the recent legislative session. As Texas' Governor Bush was promoted from the Governor's Mansion to the White House, Lt. Governor Rick Perry became Governor. For the first time in history, Texas Senators elected one of our own to be the new Lt. Governor.

We elected Senator Bill Ratliff, R-Mt. Pleasant, as Lt. Governor, an office that also serves as president of the Texas Senate. Whether it was a testing of the waters under a new Lt. Governor and Governor, or whether it was the specter of drawing new state Senate and House of Representatives boundary lines in the redistricting process, the 77<sup>th</sup> Legislature was the most partisan since I came to the Senate in 1993.

I have always been proud of the fact that the Texas Legislature does not work along party lines, as the U.S. Congress does. We generally put partisanship aside for 140 days so that we can work together, find common ground, and do what is best for Texans. I sincerely hope that when the Legislature convenes in January of 2003, we will regain our spirit of bipartisan cooperation that has guided our efforts in the past.

I was honored to be appointed chairman of the Senate Redistricting Committee for 2001. That committee is responsible for drawing district boundary lines for the Texas Senate, Texas House of Representatives, U.S. Congress and State Board of Education every 10 years after the census is conducted.

Almost 10,000 of you from all 17 counties shared with me your thoughts on a variety of issues through letters, faxes, e-mail, personal visits, and phone calls. Your participation during the session was absolutely vital to me.

This session I authored or sponsored 94 bills, including 17 Senate and 29 House bills, which passed. Many of those were the result of your suggestions.

A total of 5,712 bills were filed during the session this year. Of those, 1,601 passed both the Texas Senate and House of Representatives. Eighty-two will not become law, due to Governor Perry's vetoes.

I encourage you to continue to share your thoughts with me during the 19 months between sessions as well, so I may be fully informed before the beginning of the 2003 legislative session. My staff and I are here to represent you and work for you.



*Addressing the Texas Senate during a legislative debate on the Senate floor.*

Sincerely,

Jeff Wentworth

## HOW TO CONTACT SENATOR WENTWORTH

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# LEGISLATIVE PROGRAM



## Budget

In spite of the demands of a growing population of nearly 21 million Texans, a tight economy and rising health care costs, the legislature passed a budget for 2002-2003 without raising taxes.

The budget focused on the priorities of public education, health and human services, state employee pay raises, school employee health insurance and higher education.

The \$113.8 billion budget, which includes federal funds, is an 11.6% increase over the current budget.



## Redistricting

The Texas Senate's failure to pass a redistricting bill further strengthened my belief that the process should be taken out of the hands of the Legislature and delegated to a bipartisan citizens' commission.

A group of Republican senators elected to block debate on the redistricting bill and place that responsibility in the hands of the Legislative Redistricting Board rather than debate the plan approved 7-1 by the Senate Committee on Redistricting.

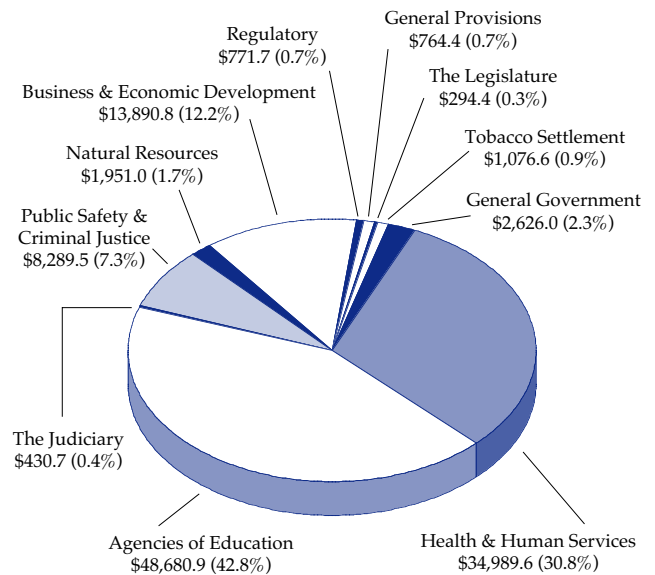
As chairman of the Senate Redistricting Committee, I am proud of the work done by the four Republicans and four Democrats on the committee. We worked very hard to draft a plan we believed was fair, bipartisan and could be successfully defended in court.

After careful consideration and the most open process ever used in redistricting, the committee approved a map in which the 31 Senate districts were more compact, each district was contiguous, no voter tabulation districts were split and only 12 counties, instead of 33 as was the case 10 years ago, were split.

The plan, which complied with all statutory and constitutional guidelines, became Senate Bill 499. It passed the committee by a seven to one vote, with one Democrat casting the only dissenting vote.

Senate Bill 499 provided for 16 solid Republican senate districts, 12 solid Democrat districts and three genuinely competitive "swing" districts, each of which has a majority Republican voting base as reflected in the 1998 state comptroller's race. This meant that Republicans could reasonably expect to win somewhere

Total = \$113,765.6 Million



NOTES: Excludes interagency contracts  
\*Totals may not add because of rounding  
SOURCE: Legislative Budget Board is the source for all figures and tables in this document.

between 16 and 19 seats in the 31-member Texas Senate and that Democrats could reasonably expect between 12 and 15.

Because the Legislative Redistricting Board includes four Republicans -- the lieutenant governor, attorney general, comptroller, and land commissioner -- and only one Democrat, the Speaker of the House, Democrat court challenges are a certainty. Several lawsuits in both state and federal courts have already been filed.

It appears that a lack of bipartisanship in the redistricting process will again result in lengthy and expensive court battles. The ones that occurred after the 1991 redistricting process took more than six years to complete and cost taxpayers more than \$5 million in attorneys' fees.



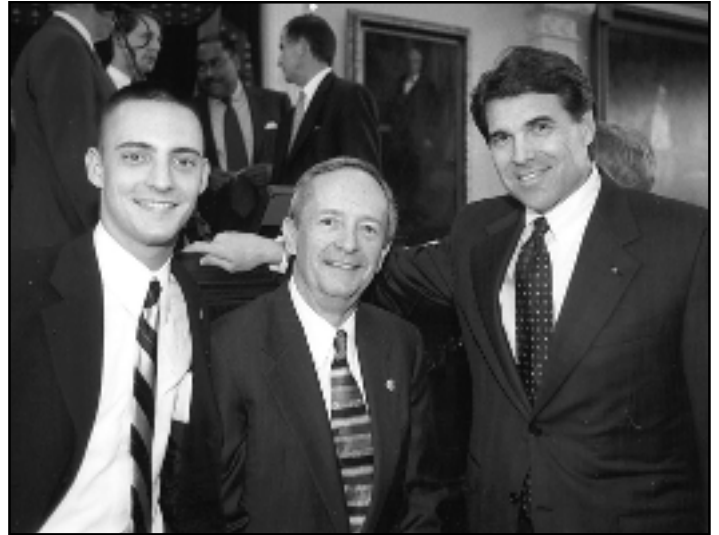
*My wife Karla and our sons, Jason and Matthew, join me on the Senate floor in January for the opening day of the 77th Texas Legislature.*

# LEGISLATIVE PROGRAM



## Higher Ed Coming to Hill Country

Thanks to the hard work of the grassroots Hill Country Higher Education Committee, the legislature earmarked \$1 million for a new Hill Country University Center. The plan, coordinated by Texas Tech University, will establish and connect multi-institutional teaching centers (MITC) in Fredericksburg and Junction. The MITC will allow for several colleges, universities and vocational institutions to lend their expertise to the curriculum. Teaching will take place on campus and via distance learning, and classes could begin as early as next summer.



*My son Jason and me with Governor Rick Perry on the floor of the Texas Senate. (Los Tres Aggies!)*



## Country Schools

Voters had an opportunity to save our country schools that were built and operated by Texans in the 1800s. Later donated to school districts, many of these schools are still in use as community centers throughout the Hill Country.

I appreciate the Friends of Gillespie County Country Schools, as well as Kendall County residents, for their hard work and dedication in their active support of this amendment.



## Local Governments and Taxpayers Benefit from Session

It is an honor to work with city, county and school district officials on local bills important to Texans in Senate District 25. Some of these bills that I either authored or sponsored are discussed below.

**New Braunfels ISD** should receive increased state funding as the result of HB 1532, which addressed its unique tax collection calendar. **Guadalupe County** residents could have improved hospital services under SB 739, which allows the hospital board of managers to issue revenue bonds for expansion. They will also benefit from a new county court at law under SB 797.

Under SB 1173, the Parks and Wildlife Commission may request the Texas Public Finance Authority to issue revenue bonds to finance the renovation and expansion of the Fleet Admiral Chester W. Nimitz Memorial Naval Museum in **Gillespie County**.

The **Kendall County** juvenile board will be expanded with the addition of the judge of the county court at law, under HB 1881. The jurisdiction of the Probate Court No. 1 of **Travis County** will be expanded under HB 2882, and HB 3192 will allow **Bexar County** district court judges to appoint associate judges to help clear up the backlog of pending cases.

**All county residents** could benefit from HB 1445. Prior to this legislative session, a subdivision in the extraterritorial jurisdiction (ETJ) of a municipality was subject to both municipal and county development regulations. This may have led to unnecessary expenses and delays for property owners because municipalities and counties have different standards, requirements, and levels of authority over subdivisions. HB 1445 provides for an agreement between the county and the municipality to regulate a subdivision in the ETJ of a municipality.



Patsy Spaw  
Secretary of the Senate

August 22, 2001

Senator Jeff Wentworth  
State Capitol, Room 1E.9  
Austin, Texas 78701

Dear Senator Wentworth:

The Texas State Senate has completed their official records for the 77th Legislative Session pertaining to attendance and record votes. During the recent 77th Session, which adjourned on May 28, 2001, you missed just two days of the 84 days the Texas Senate convened. Missing thirty record votes, you maintained a 99.22% voting record of the 3,866 total votes taken.

You are to be commended for your worthy record. Your reliable attendance and diligent voting record demonstrate an earnest commitment to your duties as a State Senator and to the people of the 25th Senatorial District. Congratulations on your respectful record of service.

Sincerely,

Patsy Spaw  
Secretary of the Senate

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# LEGISLATIVE PROGRAM



## Water

Texas continues to face many water challenges. In 1997 the legislature enacted a major water planning bill, SB 1. In 2001, SB 2 addressed the implementation and financing of the water strategies and recommendations identified in the last four years by Texas' 16 regional water planning groups.

This 244-page bill creates the Texas Water Advisory Council for guidance on state water policy initiatives and promotes managing surface and groundwater sources together.

HB 3286 allows government entities and school districts to enter into water conservation performance contracts in which a private company pays for improvements that will result in reduced water use. The company is reimbursed out of the agency's revenue stream based on conservation savings, thus allowing the conservation improvements to be made without incurring debt.

Other water measures include \$24 million for brush control studies and projects for water conservation; \$300,000 for the University of Texas at San Antonio Center for Water Research; and \$5 million for weather modification, or cloud seeding, to enhance agricultural production and depress property damage done by hailstorms.

Local efforts to conserve water will benefit from the passage of bills that ratified groundwater conservation districts created by the legislature in 1999. Voters still must approve the Cow Creek (**Kendall County**), Southeast Trinity (**Comal County**), Trinity Glen Rose (**Northern Bexar County**), and Headwaters (**Kerr County**) Underground Water Conservation Districts.



*I co-chaired a joint hearing of the Texas Senate and House of Representatives Redistricting Committees in April.*



## Education Funding

Lieutenant Governor Bill Ratliff and Speaker of the Texas House of Representatives Pete Laney plan to appoint a special joint committee to study education funding before the Legislature convenes again in January, 2003.

I agree with the majority of my constituents who have told me that Texans, especially those living on fixed incomes, need relief from school property taxes. At the same time that property taxes are at the breaking point, schools are cutting programs and struggling to offer a quality education to our children.

If the hearings are productive, the committee will make recommendations for changes in the way we fund public education. In my judgment, we need to overhaul education funding during the 2003 session of the Texas Legislature.



*Answering reporters' questions about Senate redistricting in the Lt. Governor's press room.*



*The Texas Senate honored Mrs. Betty King upon her retirement following 24 years as Secretary of the Senate and a total of 53 years as a legislative employee. She made each of us feel like we were her favorite senator. (Deep in my heart, I know I really am her favorite!)*

# LEGISLATIVE PROGRAM



## A Few Good Bills That Did Not Pass

My SB 974 would have required high school students who hope to gain automatic admission to a state college by being among the top 10% of their graduating class to take at least the recommended curriculum, which is the college preparatory curriculum. This bill passed the Texas Senate 26-4 but died in the House of Representatives.

“The Bike Bill” that I filed in response to concerns voiced by some of my constituents who live in rural areas would have required bicyclists to ride single file to the right side of the road whenever within sight or hearing of a motor vehicle approaching from the rear of bicyclists.

SJR 35 would have removed the redistricting process from the regular session of the legislature and established a special session for the sole purpose of drawing new districts for the Texas Senate, Texas House of Representatives, and the U.S. Congress. This resolution passed the Texas Senate unanimously but died in the House of Representatives.

Two bills I filed would have helped Texans moving into the unincorporated areas of counties. County governments lack sufficient authority to provide protection for the purchaser of lots or homes in these subdivisions.

**S.B. 800** would have given commissioners courts the authority to require a plat for land that is subdivided into two or more lots, each of which is five acres or less, and intended for residential use.

The bill also would have required developers to build roads of a quality suited for the function of a particular roadway, required adequate right-of-way widths for roadways, and required developers to inform purchasers of lots when water, sewer, electricity, and gas services would be made available to the subdivision.

Counties do not have the authority to address and correct the problems of sub-standard developments in the unincorporated areas of counties. Another bill, **S.B. 1762**, would have authorized a county, after approval by local voters, to regulate, by order, land development in the unincorporated area of the county.



*At work at my desk on the Senate floor.*



## Rural Texans Fare Well

The legislature passed bills that will impact rural economic development, agricultural water use, and agricultural production.

A new Office of Rural Community Affairs was created as an executive branch state agency. That office will provide information to state agencies on how proposed policies affect rural areas and identify potential business opportunities for rural areas.

Financial assistance through the Texas Agricultural Finance Authority will be enhanced, including low-interest loans for non-agricultural rural businesses, agribusinesses, and water projects.

The Texas Department of Agriculture’s GO TEXAN program was given an additional \$1 million to promote our agricultural products. The Texas Wine Marketing Assistance Program, which will aid in marketing and shipping of Texas wines, should be of special interest to Senate District 25 grape growers.



*My friend and colleague Senator Bill Ratliff was elected acting Lt. Governor by his fellow Senators following Governor Bush’s resignation in order to become President and Lt. Governor Rick Perry’s being sworn in as Governor.*



# The Senate of The State of Texas

**Senator Jeff Wentworth**

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## *Legislative Report*



State Senator

# JEFF WENTWORTH

THE TEXAS SENATE IS AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER AND DOES NOT DISCRIMINATE ON THE BASIS OF RACE, COLOR, NATIONAL ORIGIN, SEX, RELIGION, AGE OR DISABILITY IN EMPLOYMENT OR THE PROVISION OF SERVICES.

### HELPFUL TOLL-FREE NUMBERS

Abuse Hotline (Children, Elderly, Disabled) .....	1-800-252-5400
Blind Commission and Services .....	1-800-252-5204
Child Find/Missing Children .....	1-800-426-5678
Child Support Enforcement .....	1-800-252-8014
Comptroller's "Beat Waste" Hotline .....	1-800-232-8927
Crime Victim Clearinghouse .....	1-800-848-4284
Crime Stoppers .....	1-800-252-8477
Drug Abuse Hotline .....	1-800-662-4357
Governor's Citizens' Assistance Hotline .....	1-800-843-5789
Governor's Citizens' Opinion Hotline .....	1-800-252-9600
HIV/AIDS Hotline .....	1-800-342-2437
Open Government Hotline .....	1-877-673-6839
Public Utility Commission Consumer Complaints .	1-888-782-8477
Runaway Hotline .....	1-888-580-HELP
State Tax Assistance Hotline .....	1-800-252-5555
Tobacco Cessation Hotline .....	1-877-YES-QUIT
Voter Registration/Elections Information .....	1-800-252-8683

### COUNTIES IN SENATE DISTRICT 25

Bandera	Llano (part)
Bexar (part)	Mason
Blanco	Medina (part)
Comal (part)	Schleicher
Gillespie	Sutton (part)
Guadalupe (part)	Tom Green (part)
Kendall	Travis (part)
Kerr	Williamson (part)
Kimble	

