

State Senator

JEFF WENTWORTH**LEGISLATIVE REPORT & QUESTIONNAIRE****Dear Fellow Texans,**

When the fourth special session of the 78th Texas Legislature convened on April 20, my fellow senators elected me president pro tem of the Senate, making me second in the line of succession to be Governor of Texas. I serve as acting governor whenever both the governor and lieutenant governor are out of state at the same time.

In addition, I will be sworn in as Governor for a Day on Saturday, November 20, in keeping with a long-standing Senate tradition. The Governor for a Day celebration is an opportunity for Texans, particularly those who live in Senate District 25, to come to the Capitol in Austin for inaugural events and a celebration.

Congressional district lines were finally adopted during the third special session of the 78th Texas Legislature which adjourned last year on October 12. While

the new congressional districts will produce a Texas delegation in the United States Congress that will better reflect the votes of the majority of Texans, I have to say in all honesty I was disappointed that we Republicans did not draw a fairer and more balanced map.

After complaining for years about how unfair the Democrats were to Republicans when Democrats were in the majority and controlled the redistricting process (we even hired lawyers and sued in federal court), we turned right around and did essentially the same thing to the Democrats when we got a majority.

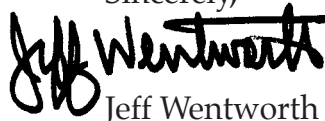
The solution to this divisive wrangling every 10 years – which is expensive, time-consuming and counter-productive to passing legislation which is more important to most Texans – is the creation of an independent, bipartisan citizens' redistricting commission made up of an equal number of Democrats and Republicans.

While the three special legislative sessions devoted to redistricting received a great deal of media attention, the regular legislative session saw us dealing with many issues of importance to Texans: education funding, property taxes, homeowners' insurance, the rising cost of health insurance, public safety and transportation, to name but a few.

During the regular legislative session I authored or sponsored 125 bills, including 27 Senate and 30 House bills which passed. Many of those were the result of your suggestions.

I encourage you to continue sharing your thoughts with me on state issues that are important to you. My staff and I are here to represent you and work for you.

Sincerely,



Jeff Wentworth

**HOW TO CONTACT SENATOR WENTWORTH****Austin Office**

State Capitol, Room 1E.9
P. O. Box 12068
Austin, Texas 78711
(512) 463-0125
Fax (512) 463-7794

Toll-free (888) 824-6984
Dial 711 For Relay Calls
Internet E-Mail Address:
jeff.wentworth@senate.state.tx.us

San Antonio Office

925 North Frost Center
1250 N.E. Loop 410
San Antonio, Texas 78209
(210) 826-7800
Fax (210) 826-0571

LEGISLATIVE REPORT

Budget

The 78th Texas Legislature faced the most significant budget challenge Texas has ever seen -- a \$9.9 billion budget shortfall -- when we convened in January of 2003.

For the first time in my 17 years in the Texas Legislature, I voted against the state's two-year budget. To balance the budget, we made deep spending cuts including reduced health services to children, reduced home health care to seniors, cut in half the school employee health insurance supplement, reduced the Medicaid reimbursement rate paid to health care providers, allowed unelected boards of regents to set college tuition rates, and reduced the number of Texas college students who could receive a TEXAS Grant.

I am concerned that these cuts will, among other things, merely shift some of the tax burden to county governments and hospital districts as they are forced to absorb costs without being reimbursed by state programs.

I would have preferred an increase of \$1 per pack of cigarettes, which would have brought in \$1.5 billion to the state's coffers, in order not to have to make cuts that I believe disproportionately hurt children, teachers, college students and the elderly.



Discussing issues in the Senate Chamber with Texas Land Commissioner Jerry Patterson.

Homeland Security

Eternal vigilance is indeed the price of liberty, as Wendell Phillips said, which is one reason why I filed Senate Bills 647 and 872. These bills protect us from enemies who attack from within.

As a longtime advocate for open government, I believe that government should conduct its business in the sunshine for all to see. There is, however, a point when too much exposure becomes helpful to our enemies and dangerous to us.

My Senate Bill 647, which passed as part of House Bill 9, the Homeland Security bill, will help protect our infrastructure from terrorist attack by exempting studies and reports on the vulnerability of our water supplies and our utilities from the Texas Public Information Act.

Senate Bill 872 also became part of House Bill 9. That bill permits a governmental body to meet in executive session to discuss tactical, security or



Talking over the merits of a bill with Senator Kyle Janek.

emergency procedures in case of a terrorist attack. We do not need to give copies of our play book as it is being written to those who would attack us.

In addition to filing these security-related bills, I also serve on the Senate Committee on Infrastructure Development and Security, which considers homeland security legislation.

Redistricting Commission

I witnessed firsthand the divisiveness of the redistricting process when I chaired the Senate Redistricting Committee in 2001 and again in June of 2003 when I attended congressional redistricting hearings around the state. Because I believe there is a better and fairer way to redistrict, I again filed a bill during the regular, and the first, second and third special sessions that would take redistricting out of the hands of legislators and delegate it to an independent, bipartisan citizens' redistricting commission.

My bill proposed a nine-member citizens' redistricting commission comprised of four Republicans, four Democrats and a nonvoting presiding officer selected by the commission members. Senate Republicans and Senate Democrats would select two commission members each, and Republicans and Democrats in the House of Representatives would do the same. Commission members may not have served in public office or in a party leadership post during the previous two years.

This bill did not pass, but it is sound public policy, and I will file it again when the Legislature convenes in regular session in 2005.



Conferring with Lt. Governor David Dewhurst.

Public Education

One of the most talked-about changes when students returned to school last year was the result of my Senate Bill 83. School districts are now required to set aside a time each school day for students to recite the pledges of allegiance to the United States flag and the Texas flag and then observe one minute of silence when students reflect, pray, meditate or engage in any other silent activity that is not likely to interfere with or distract another student.

Previous law allowed for a moment of silence, but the exclusion of the word "pray" had been a burr under the saddle of millions of Texans since the United States Supreme Court ruled in 1962 that prayer in public schools was unconstitutional. When the U.S. Supreme Court in 2002 did not strike down a Virginia state law that mandates one minute of silence for reflection, meditation or prayer in Virginia public schools, I believed it was time to file my bill.

Many Texans also mistakenly believed that students recited the pledge of allegiance each day as they did when they attended school. This was often no longer the case.



Introducing Senate Page Justin Tanton of Dripping Springs.

Higher Education

At the request of Southwest Texas State University's Associated Student Government, I filed Senate Bill 1942, changing the university's name to Texas State University -- San Marcos. The Legislature passed my bill.

I believe that the sixth largest university in Texas with more than 25,000 students needed to move away from a name that implied a small and regional university, when it is neither. The cost of the name change was underwritten by private donations. No taxpayer dollars were used.

My bill to change the "Top 10% Law" was not so fortunate. Students who graduate in the top 10 percent of their high school class are guaranteed automatic admission to Texas public colleges and universities. Some students who take the minimum curriculum in order to graduate in the top 10 percent are unprepared for college.

Senate Bill 86 required students to take the recommended curriculum of college prep courses to be eligible for automatic admission.

The Senate and the House of Representatives

passed the bill but a Senator who disagreed with a House amendment filibustered the bill until the deadline for passing bills had passed.

A recent United States Supreme Court ruling that allows race and ethnicity to be used as factors in college admissions makes the top 10 percent law obsolete, in my opinion. I will file a bill to repeal the top 10 percent law when the Legislature convenes in 2005.

Paying for Public Education

School finance and property tax reform generate many calls from Texans. Senate Joint Resolution 1, a proposed constitutional amendment relating to school finance and tax reform, passed the Senate, but died in the House of Representatives, during last year's regular legislative session.

This plan would have cut school property taxes in half for most Texans, increased the state sales tax by one cent, increased the state motor vehicle sales and use tax rate, and expanded the sales tax on all currently exempt services except medical.

It would have abolished the school maintenance and operations tax and authorized a state property tax of 75¢ instead of the current \$1.50. The plan would have provided almost immediate tax relief to property owners and would have done away with the current share-the-wealth school funding system, both of which the majority of you say you favor.

During the special session that began April 20, we could not reach a consensus on how to replace the money for public education lost if property taxes were reduced. Lowering the school property tax rate from a maximum of \$1.50 per \$100 valuation to 75¢ produces a net property tax reduction of \$7.4 billion which must be made up through other taxes.

Other Good Bills

Some of the bills I authored were local bills impacting only one county. Others, filed at the request of county officials, had statewide implications.

My Senate Bill 984 allows certain governmental bodies to discuss a patient's medical history in closed session. This bill benefits state, county and city employees who believe, as I do, that their private medical histories should not be public information.

One bill filed for Travis County could impact jury selection statewide. House Bill 2188, which I sponsored in the Senate, permits counties to use an Internet program to streamline jury selection.



Calling staff from the Senate floor for more information before voting on a bill.

Senate Bill 1017 allows a county to sue or be sued on a construction contract.

QUESTIONNAIRE



Budget and Taxes

- | | Voter 1 | | Voter 2 | |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| | Yes | No | Yes | No |
| 1. The Legislature convened in special session on April 20 to find a way to provide homeowners relief from rising property taxes. Although no consensus was reached, many options were proposed. Which of the following options would you support to fund public education if local school property taxes were reduced by 1/3 to 1/2? | | | | |
| A. a statewide property tax | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| B. an increased sales tax | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| C. reform of the franchise tax to include limited liability corporations and partnerships as well as business corporations | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| D. a sales tax on <i>services</i> such as advertising and legal fees | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| E. a 1% or 2% tax on business activity to replace the corporate franchise tax | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| F. an additional fee of \$1 per pack on cigarettes | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| G. allowing video lottery terminals at race tracks | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| H. other: _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. In spite of a \$9.9 billion shortfall, the Legislature balanced the state budget in 2003 by making cuts that impacted children, elderly, teachers, college students and state employees. Although I do not expect such a large shortfall in 2005, what areas of the budget would you recommend cutting, if cutting is necessary? | | | | |
| A. Environmental protection | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| B. Health and human services | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| C. Higher education | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| D. Highways and public transportation | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| E. Mental health and mental retardation | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| F. Prisons | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| G. Public education | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| H. Public safety | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| I. State parks | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| J. None of the above | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |



Government

- | | | | | |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 3. Currently, about half of the bills legislators consider each session pass or fail on a voice vote, resulting in there being no record of how individual legislators voted. Do you favor requiring a record vote on every bill the Legislature considers and making that record available on the Internet? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. Do you favor removing from the Legislature the power to draw state legislative and federal congressional district boundaries and establishing an independent, bipartisan Texas Redistricting Commission comprised of citizens who are not elected officials or officials of any political party? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. Texas primary elections where political parties select nominees are currently conducted in March, leaving eight months before the general election in November. Do you favor moving the primary elections back to May, or even later, to lengthen the primary election season and shorten the time before the general election in November? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6. County governments lack authority to correct the problems of sub-standard developments in the unincorporated areas of counties. Do you favor a bill that would authorize a county commissioners court, after approval by local voters, to regulate land development in the unincorporated area of the county? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |



Education

- | | | | | |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 7. Do you favor consolidation of your independent school district resulting in a larger district but fewer superintendents and administrative staff? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 8. Do you favor a pilot voucher system for students who are at risk of dropping out of public school, whereby the state would pay a specified amount of money per student to any accredited public or private school selected by the parents? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 9. Do you favor repealing the law that grants automatic admission to the top 10 percent of Texas high school graduates to the state's public colleges and universities? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

QUESTIONNAIRE



Court system

10. Some states allow the governor to nominate judges with confirmation by the senate, then voters may vote to keep them or not keep them in office at a later election. Do you favor such gubernatorial nomination, senate confirmation, and retention elections by the voters for Texas judges?
11. Should life imprisonment without the possibility of parole be an alternative to the death penalty?
12. As a prerequisite to doing business, some companies now require consumers to use binding arbitration to settle disputes instead of using the court system. Do you favor legislation that guarantees citizens the right to have their disputes ultimately settled in court should they disagree with the outcome of arbitration?

Voter 1
Yes No

Voter 2
Yes No

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



Public safety

13. Do you favor restricting the use of cell phones by drivers in moving vehicles to only those which can be operated hands-free?
14. Do you favor a new law calling for the tarring and feathering of drivers who insist on driving in the far left lane on the interstate highways when that lane is, by law, for passing only?

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



Constituent Satisfaction

15. Have you ever contacted me or my office for assistance?
16. If so, were you treated courteously by me and my staff?
17. Were we able to help you?

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



Comments

Before mailing, please detach questionnaire along the dotted line, fold and tape so that the mailer panel is on the outside.



Austin, Texas 78711-2068
P.O. Box 12068

SENATOR JEFF WENTWORTH

PLACE
STAMP
HERE





The Senate of The State of Texas

Senator Jeff Wentworth

P.O. Box 12068
Austin, Texas 78711-2068

PRSR STD
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
PERMIT NO. 2468
AUSTIN, TEXAS

Legislative Report and Questionnaire



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
Area Agencies on Aging Information	1-800-252-9240
Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP).....	1-800-647-6558
Child Support Enforcement.....	1-800-252-8014
College Financial Aid Information	1-888-311-8881
Consumer Protection Hotline.....	1-800-621-0508
Crime Victim Clearinghouse	1-800-848-4284
Crime Stoppers	1-800-252-8477
Domestic Violence Hotline	1-800-799-SAFE
Governor's Citizens' Assistance Hotline	1-800-843-5789
HIV/ AIDS Hotline	1-800-342-2437
Insurance (TX Dept of) Consumer Service	1-800-252-3439
Nursing Homes Consumers' Information.....	1-800-252-8016
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.....	1-877-937-7848
Voter Registration/ Elections Information.....	1-800-252-8683
Workers' Compensation Commission	1-800-252-7031

COUNTIES IN SENATE DISTRICT 25

**Bexar (north)
Hays**

**Comal
Kendall**

**Guadalupe
Travis (south)**

