

# Senator Judith Zaffirini



## Reports to the Families of District 21

### Dear Friends:

Serving in the Texas Senate is even more challenging and inspiring today than it was when I was first elected in 1986. Ranked fourth in seniority in the 31-member Texas Senate, I am grateful that Lt. Governor David Dewhurst appointed me to key positions from which to influence not only legislation, but also funding.

Each day is an opportunity to make a difference in the lives of the hard working men, women and children who live in Senatorial District 21. As Vice Chair of the Senate Finance Committee and a member of the Legislative Budget Board, the Appropriations Conference Committee that writes the state's budget, and the Senate Committees on Education, Health and Human Services, and International Trade and Relations, I work with my colleagues to address the issues that are most important to SD 21.

Our district is diverse and expansive, a microcosm of Texas. It comprises almost 700,000 persons in 17 counties, namely, Atascosa, Bee, northeast Bexar, Dimmit, Duval, Frio, Jim Hogg, Karnes, LaSalle, Live Oak, McMullen, San Patricio, Starr, Webb, Wilson, Zapata and Zavala. In both rural and metropolitan areas, our communities generally prioritize education and a rich variety of issues that impact our families, particularly the very old and the very young.

During the 79th Legislative Session I was proud to author legislation and secure funding to increase access to excellent education for students of all ages, expand quality health and human services, improve public safety and



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– Senator Judith Zaffirini

then public service and business. My strategy is consistent and unwavering—to pray to the Lord for inspiration and guidance in representing the families of SD 21. May He continue to bless us all and strengthen us to do what is best.

*Judith Zaffirini*

**Judith Zaffirini**

**State Senator, District 21**

transportation, protect our environment, foster economic development, promote agricultural and business interests and create jobs. Although we have accomplished so much together, numerous challenges lie ahead.

Each year it is my pleasure to distribute *Senator Judith Zaffirini Reports to the Families of District 21*. This newsletter serves not only as a progress report about our activities, but also as a challenge to build stronger communities while interacting with governmental officials and institutions. The information presented herein is intended to serve as a foundation from which we can define new goals and strive for greater success. The interim at hand affords us countless opportunities to plan for the next legislative session.

As the senator for SD 21, I will continue to protect the social and economic security of our families and to balance their needs and interests with those of our great state. In doing so I also will continue to prioritize faith and family,



**SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENTS (L-R) Alton Fields, Pleasanton ISD; Paul Clore, Gregory-Portland ISD; and Reece Blincoe, Stockdale ISD, discuss school finance legislation and the needs of their students with Senator Judith Zaffirini, a member of the education and finance committees that hear testimony on related bills.**



**HUMAN SERVICES ADVOCATE Stephanie Thomas greets Senator Judith Zaffirini at an appreciation reception for those who helped her secure an additional \$6 billion for health and human services.**

## Zaffirini is One of Texas' Top Budget Writers

As Vice Chair of the Senate Finance Committee and a member of the Appropriations Conference Committee that wrote the state's current \$139 billion budget, Senator Judith Zaffirini prioritized the citizens of Senate District 21 during the 79th Legislative Session by securing funds that will improve our public education, higher education and health and human services systems.

"My goals included undoing many of the cuts from the previous session," Senator Zaffirini said.

Through her relentless efforts as chair of the Appropriations Conference Committee Article II Workgroup for Health and Human Services, Senator Zaffirini successfully restored mental health, chiropractic, hospice, podiatry, hearing aid and vision benefits to both the Children's Health Insurance Program and Medicaid, in addition to

securing more than \$248.1 million for Child Protective Services reform.

Her most important work resulted in reducing waiting lists for persons with disabilities to receive community-based services. Some persons have been on waiting lists for health and human services for more than 10 years.

Services needed include physical and occupational therapy, mental health counseling, respite care for families taking full-time care of a loved one with a disability, home modifications, emergency alert systems and meal preparation.

Without one or more of these services, persons with disabilities who choose to remain in the community may be forced to enter a nursing home or other institution. Senator Zaffirini secured \$162.9 million to move 11,789 persons from the waiting lists to pro-

grams and implement a proposal to provide services for all who need them, thereby eliminating waiting lists completely within 20 years. Her goal, however, is to do so in 10 years.

In the area of higher education Senator Zaffirini and her colleagues on the Appropriations Conference Committee increased funding for financial aid by \$18 million, for two-year institutions by \$136.3 million, for general academic institutions by \$229.8 million and for health-related institutions by \$408.1 million. This will provide thousands of South Texans new opportunities to pursue undergraduate and graduate degrees.

"This year's budget was a good starting point, but we can and must do more for Texans in the areas of education and health and human services," Senator Zaffirini said.

### Where to Contact Senator Judith Zaffirini

#### Southern District Office

1407 Washington  
P.O. Box 627  
Laredo, Texas 78042-0627  
956/722-2293  
Telefax: 956/722-8586

Email: [judith.zaffirini@senate.state.tx.us](mailto:judith.zaffirini@senate.state.tx.us)



#### Capitol Office

P.O. Box 12068  
Austin, Texas 78711  
512/463-0121  
800/851-1568  
Telefax: 512/475-3738  
Dial 711 for relay calls



#### Northern District Office

12702 Toepperwein  
Suite 214  
San Antonio, Texas 78233  
210/657-0095  
Telefax: 210/657-0262  
[www.zaffirini.senate.state.tx.us](http://www.zaffirini.senate.state.tx.us)

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# Lieutenant Governor David Dewhurst Reviews Senate's Accomplishments

By David Dewhurst  
Lieutenant Governor of Texas

The 79th Legislative Session was a successful one. Looking back, I'm proud to say that in the Texas Senate we accomplished many of the goals we set out to achieve. We passed a budget that focuses on the most important areas of government—public education, higher education and services for the most vulnerable—without increasing the overall tax burden on hardworking Texans. We increased funding for public schools, while also providing essential resources to improve our health and human services system.

A priority of mine this session was to provide essential services for the children, the elderly and the frail by restoring hearing, dental and vision benefits for children on CHIP and restoring mental health, podiatry services, hearing aids and vision services for Medicaid adults. In addition, we significantly reduced waiting lists for these services. Many of the bills we passed this session, from Child Protective Services reform to the budget, a common thread weaved its way throughout—standing strong for society's most vulnerable.

Protecting the children of this great state is one of my top responsibilities as Lieutenant Governor, which is why I began this session by rebuilding our protective services

agencies. When 500 children have died in fewer than three years—one quarter visited by Child Protective caseworkers—our system is obviously broken. To help us better detect and prevent child abuse, we increased the number of CPS caseworkers and



**CAPITOL MEDIA representatives interact with Lieutenant Governor David Dewhurst daily during legislative sessions. Sharing information with Texans is a hallmark of his leadership style as he works with Capitol, statewide and local media to keep constituents informed about legislative issues and priorities.**

decreased their individual workloads, while strengthening the role of law enforcement in investigations.

One of the opportunities Senator Judith Zaffirini and I addressed this session was how to make higher education more affordable for Texas students. That's why the Senate budget increases funding for universities, which decreases the need for raising tuition costs and fees. I'm proud to say that our work in the Legislature this session helps Texas universities remain more affordable and more accessible to all students.

Thanks to the work of Senator Zaffirini and other members on the

Senate Finance Committee's Interim Subcommittee on State Contracting Practices, the Senate also passed legislation that requires stricter agency oversight of contracting practices and increases accountability for the use of taxpayer dollars. Texans deserve to

know that their hard-earned money is being spent wisely and that state contractors are being held accountable for the money they spend. I want the people of Texas to have an open window to state government and know that the businesses we contract with are helping our government operate more efficiently.

We accomplished a lot this session. As Lieutenant Governor, I set my goals high, and with the help of so many colleagues in the Legislature, we achieved many of them. This session, we

worked hard to pursue policies that will improve our overall quality of life, and I'm proud to say that the future of Texas is looking bright.

**Lieutenant Governor David Dewhurst is the President of the Texas Senate. He is recognized statewide for his success in building strong bipartisan support for otherwise divisive issues.**

**Also known for his negotiation skills, he is the key leader responsible for the Senate's passage of priority bills, including those related to water, tort reform, eminent domain, judicial pay and child protective services.**

# Senator Judith Zaffirini's Bills Enhance the Lives of Texas Families

Senator Judith Zaffirini has passed 514 bills since her election to the Texas Senate in 1986, including 57 bills during the 79th Legislative Session.

"The well-being of all Texans is my concern, with education, health and safety being my highest priorities," she remarked. She passed four bills



**BEE COUNTY JUDGE Jimmy Martinez** accepts Senate Resolution 145 authored by Senator Judith Zaffirini honoring Bee County Day at the Texas Capitol.

that encourage students to be graduated timely. Her Senate Bill 30, sponsored in the House of Representatives by Rep. Fred Brown, R-College Station, establishes a pilot project that would allow students to contract with institutions to ensure timely graduation.

Her SB 151 provides at-risk students the opportunity to participate in college-level courses while completing their high school diplomas. The bill was sponsored by Rep. Geanie Morrison, R-Victoria, in the House of Representatives.

House Bill 1172 by Senator Zaffirini and Rep. Brown streamlines the state's financial aid programs to ensure that students are graduated timely. The bill requires students who receive either a TEXAS Grant or a Tuition Equalization Grant to maintain a 2.5 grade point average and to complete at least 24 semester credit hours in a calendar year.

Senator Zaffirini continued her fight to improve the quality of education for young children by passing SB 23 and HB 283. SB 23, sponsored by Rep. Lois Kolkhorst, R-Brenham, in the House of Representatives, expands the Texas Early Education Model established by Senator Zaffirini in 2003 to ensure children receive quality early education through coordinated efforts among child care, Head Start, Early Head Start, prekindergarten and after-school programs.

SB 23 also develops streamlined enrollment and simplified eligibility for children entering the early care and education system; includes a program evaluation component to strengthen standards, enhance quality, increase access and expand professional development opportunities; and implements a voluntary School Readiness Certification System to inform parents of the effectiveness of early care and education programs.

HB 283 by Rep. Ruben Hope Jr., R-Conroe, and Senator Zaffirini protects children from bullying by requiring school districts to update their discipline management program to provide for the prevention of and education concerning bullying in schools and requires school boards, on the request of a parent or guardian of a student who is a victim of bullying, to transfer the student to certain other educational settings.

Senator Zaffirini and Rep. Norma Chavez, D-El Paso, collaborated to pass HB 2421, which created a new program that will help communities and private companies create economic development opportunities. Grant funds will be awarded competitively to companies based on each application's anticipated economic impact.

A longtime leader in improving the living conditions for residents of colonias,

Senator Zaffirini passed SB 827, which creates a system for tracking the progress of state-funded projects that benefit colonias. The bill's objective is to present a report card to the legislature, using a comprehensive classification system to demonstrate the state's progress in bringing water/wastewater, paved roads and other assistance to colonias. By identifying the colonias with the least resources, the state can prioritize its funding and target the colonias that have the most critical need.

Rep. Ryan Guillen, D-Rio Grande City, sponsored SB 827 in the House of Representatives.

An advocate for stricter Driving While Intoxicated (DWI) laws, Senator Zaffirini authored SB 26, which evolved into HB 51 by Rep. Todd Smith, R-Euless, and Zaffirini. This new law enhances penalties for offenders with a blood alcohol content of at least .15 and for repeat offenders by requiring an ignition interlock device installed on any vehicle operated by a convicted drunk driver.

Recognized by the *Century Council* as a "Champion in the Fight Against Drunk Driving," Senator Zaffirini vows to continue her efforts to make Texas highways and roads safer.

SB 325 by Senator Zaffirini and Reps. Elliott Naishtat, D-Austin, and Suzanna Hupp, R-Lampasas, prohibits the use of injurious

restraints upon residents of health and human services facilities. The bill is receiving national attention as states, providers and advocates work to preclude injuries that result from the improper use of restraints and seclusion that can lead to unnecessary deaths.

Senator Zaffirini will continue to work closely with the agencies and stakeholders that comprise the SB 325 work group to develop further recommendations to reduce the use of restraints and seclusion in health care facilities and other locations.



**HIGHER EDUCATION** access for all Texans is a priority for Senators Judith Zaffirini and Royce West, who serve together on four Senate committees.



**MISS LIVE OAK COUNTY, Kyndra Gaither,** and her court present Senator Judith Zaffirini flowers during Live Oak County Day at the Capitol. Also celebrating the day's events are Weston Huff (lower left), the senator's Godson, and local leaders.



**MCMULLEN COUNTY JUDGE Linda Lee Henry** and (L-R) local leaders Donald Haynes, Dorairene Garza, Paul Koonce and Angel Bostwick meet to discuss legislative issues with Senator Judith Zaffirini at the Capitol during McMullen County Day.



**ZAPATA COUNTY LEADERS (L-R) Commissioner Angel Garza, Auditor Doroteo Garza and Commissioner Norberto Garza** meet with Senator Judith Zaffirini outside the Senate Chamber to review legislation that impacts their mutual constituents.

# Senator Zaffirini's Goal: Good Health for all Texans

Promoting good health and a high quality of life for Texans is the primary purpose of several bills passed by Senator Judith Zaffirini in 2005.

Working to prevent serious illnesses with Rep. Ryan Guillen, D-Rio Grande City, Senator Zaffirini passed House Bill 1252 to require the early screening, diagnosis and treatment of chronic kidney disease. Currently, chronic kidney disease affects more than 44,000 men and women in Texas. Assisting patients who have diabetes, hypertension and other such indicators will help remedy

and often prevent long-term kidney problems.

Senator Zaffirini and Rep. Patrick Rose, D-Dripping Springs, passed her Senate Bill 187, which protects funding for the rehabilitation of brain and spinal cord injury victims. This funding is essential to supporting health care providers who ensure victims of trauma receive proper treatment immediately following an accident, when rehabilitation is the most effective.

She also worked with Rep. John Davis, R-Houston, passing SB 626

to ensure that people with disabilities have the choice of community-based care, even when their services become more expensive than the individual cost caps allowed by community programs.

Senator Zaffirini's legislative accomplishments demonstrate her holistic approach to addressing health care needs. She encourages prevention, emphasizes rapid response preparedness and supports long term care. Such promotion of the entire continuum of health care is what leads to good health—and better quality of life—for all Texans.

## Legislation Improves Quality of Care

As a member and former chair of the Health and Human Services Committee, Senator Judith Zaffirini continues to champion the health care needs of her constituents and craft solutions that benefit a variety of stakeholders.

Senate Bill 1525 by Zaffirini, for example, sponsored in the House of Representatives by Rep. Dianne Delisi, R-Temple, will improve safe patient handling practices. The senator worked with a broad coalition of health care providers to pass this legislation to encourage hospitals and nursing homes to supply lifting devices and other sup-

ports to nurses as they work with patients. The safety of both nurses and patients will be enhanced as health care providers implement this bill.

Senator Zaffirini also worked closely with transplant physicians and organ recipients in authoring SB 24, which evolved into House Bill 120 by Rep. Glenda Dawson, R-Pearland, and Zaffirini. The bill created an organ donor registry to help connect willing organ donors with the more than 5,600 Texans waiting for lifesaving transplants. She ensured the continuance of a funding source for Intermediate Care Facilities

for the Mentally Retarded, or ICFMRs, via SB 1830 by Zaffirini and Rep. Vilma Luna, D-Corpus Christi. The bill also includes a venue for new funding for community services providers. The senator was an integral leader in the fight to give providers a larger role in managing patient care. This resulted in an Integrated Care Management model of care being included in the state budget for the next biennium.

The senator realizes the importance of supporting health care recipients and providers to ensure that Texans have access to quality health and human services.



**WATER TREATMENT** facility groundbreaking ceremonies highlight the water needs of residents of Webb County colonias. Senator Judith Zaffirini joins (L-R) Mayor Elizabeth Flores, Senator Steve Ogden, County Judge Louis H. Bruni and Commissioner Judith Gutierrez.



**JIM HOGG COUNTY OFFICIALS** participate in a ribbon-cutting ceremony for sewer projects that will provide residents of Colonia Las Lomitas, Section B with basic sanitation. Joining Senator Judith Zaffirini are (L-R) Humberto D. Martinez, U.S. Department of Agriculture area director; Jim Hogg County Water District Board Members Jesus Salazar and Frank Soliz; County Judge Agapito "Cuate" Molina; and former Secretary of State Geoffrey Connor.



**STEM CELL EXPERTS** participate in a stem cell research forum organized and hosted by Senator Judith Zaffirini. Panel members (L-R) Dr. John Mendelsohn and Robert Klein address the ethics, future and costs of stem cell research with Chair Zaffirini and State Representatives Rick Hardcastle and Mark Homer. Internationally known proponents and opponents joined Texans at the educational forum.

## The Stem Cell Debate: Texas Must Find a Solution

To facilitate and promote educated decisions about stem cell research during the 79th Legislative Session, Senator Judith Zaffirini organized and chaired a forum at the Texas Capitol to address its scientific, moral and economic aspects. The purpose was to provide legislators and other stakeholders with an educational opportunity to engage in open discussions to address both the opportunities and concerns regarding the issue. The event featured panels of experts from across the nation.

“While no consensus emerged regarding what role Texas should play in this important area of research, the proceedings highlighted the issue’s complex nature,” Senator Zaffirini said. “Many continue to advocate extreme positions on either side of the debate. Some, for example, claim that scientific progress should continue irrespective of any moral concerns, while others believe that certain areas of scientific research should be criminalized.”

Important considerations brought to light by the expert panelists, however, convinced many participants that neither of these options regarding stem cell research would be good for Texas. Stem cell research, including embryon-

ic stem cells, is considered an important sector of the biotechnology industry that potentially could pump billions of dollars into the Texas economy. As one panelist noted, banning research would send the wrong message that Texas is not a friendly environment for the biotech industry.

Participants learned that stem cells are of considerable interest to scientists because they possess two important properties: They are self-renewing for long periods of time, and they can be induced to become cells with spe-



**SENATOR JUDITH ZAFFIRINI CHAIRS the Appropriations Conference Committee Article II Work Group for Health and Human Services that writes the state’s \$139 billion budget. Numerous advocates and agency representatives participate in the complex and challenging process.**

cialized functions, such as insulin-producing pancreatic cells. Many experts testified that experimentation on stem cells would enable scientists to understand the fundamental mechanisms responsible for aging, birth defects and cancer. In addition, stem cell research potentially could deliver many promising therapies to treat conditions such as diabetes, Alzheimer’s disease and Parkinson’s disease.

The forum also highlighted ethical concerns regarding stem cell research. Some opposed embryonic stem cell research on the grounds that it would result in the destruction of human embryos. Others argued that research could be continued within strict ethical guidelines.

In light of her consistent pro-life voting record, Senator Zaffirini believes the ultimate pro-life position is one that allows for research into life-saving treatments for diseases. “Other valid moral principles must be considered, including one’s duty to alleviate suffering and death,” she said. “Legislators have an obligation to promote scientific research and protect the economic welfare of our state without abandoning our responsibility to alleviate suffering.”



## Senator Zaffirini Honored for Outstanding Leadership

Throughout her life and 19 years in the Texas Senate, Senator Judith Zaffirini has adhered to a core set of principles and values that guide her unwavering commitment to public service. First elected in 1986, Senator Zaffirini was the first Hispanic woman senator in Texas and also the first to serve as President Pro Tempore and as Governor for a Day.

Prior to holding public office, Judith Zaffirini displayed the personal and professional drive that distinguishes her legislative service. As

a married college student at The University of Texas at Austin, she worked as many as three part-time jobs at one time to work her way through college, earning BS, MA and PhD degrees, each with a 3.9 GPA. As a state senator, she continues to use her experiences as a student and former educator to promote and provide access to higher education for deserving students.

Senator Zaffirini's legendary work ethic is reflected in her 100 percent perfect attendance record in the Texas Senate since 1987, except for breaking quorum deliberately during the 2003 special sessions to prevent an untimely redistricting effort that hurt her district. From 1987



**CELEBRATING SWEARING-IN Ceremonies for the 79th Legislative Session with Senator Judith Zaffirini are (L-R) her husband, Carlos Zaffirini Sr.; Congressman Henry Bonilla, R-San Antonio; and Carlos Jr., a third-year UT law student.**

through the 2005 special sessions she also maintained her 100 percent voting record, casting almost 34,000 consecutive votes. Her record is unique not only in Texas, but also nationwide.

As a result of her trademark work ethic, Senator Zaffirini has received more than 525 business, community and legislative awards from her peers, advocates and constituents. She was named one of *Texas Monthly's* "10 Best Legislators" for 1997, 2001 and 2005 and the "2005 Legislator of the Year" by numerous organizations, including the Coalition of Texans with Disabilities, the Brain Injury Association of Texas, the Texas Association for the Education of Young Children and the Texas Orga-

nization of Residential Care Homes.

Senator Zaffirini also was recognized as a UT Distinguished Alumna and as Mr. South Texas by the Washington's Birthday Celebration Association.

The South Texas Press Association honored Senator Zaffirini for her distinguished career in journalism and public service, and the Texas Public Relations Association awarded her Best of Texas Awards for her Governor for a Day event and her publication,

*20 Dozen Tips for Better Communication and Leadership Skills*. During their 2005 Communication Contest, the Press Women of Texas presented First, Second and Third Place Awards, as well as an Honorable Mention for several of Senator Zaffirini's speeches and her 2004-2005 edition of *Senator Judith Zaffirini Reports to the Families of District 21*.

She has been married to Carlos Zaffirini for 40 years, and together they share an office in Laredo where he practices law, and she owns an award-winning communications firm, Zaffirini Communications. Their son, Carlos Jr., is a graduate of the UT McCombs School of Business and a third-year student at the UT School of Law.