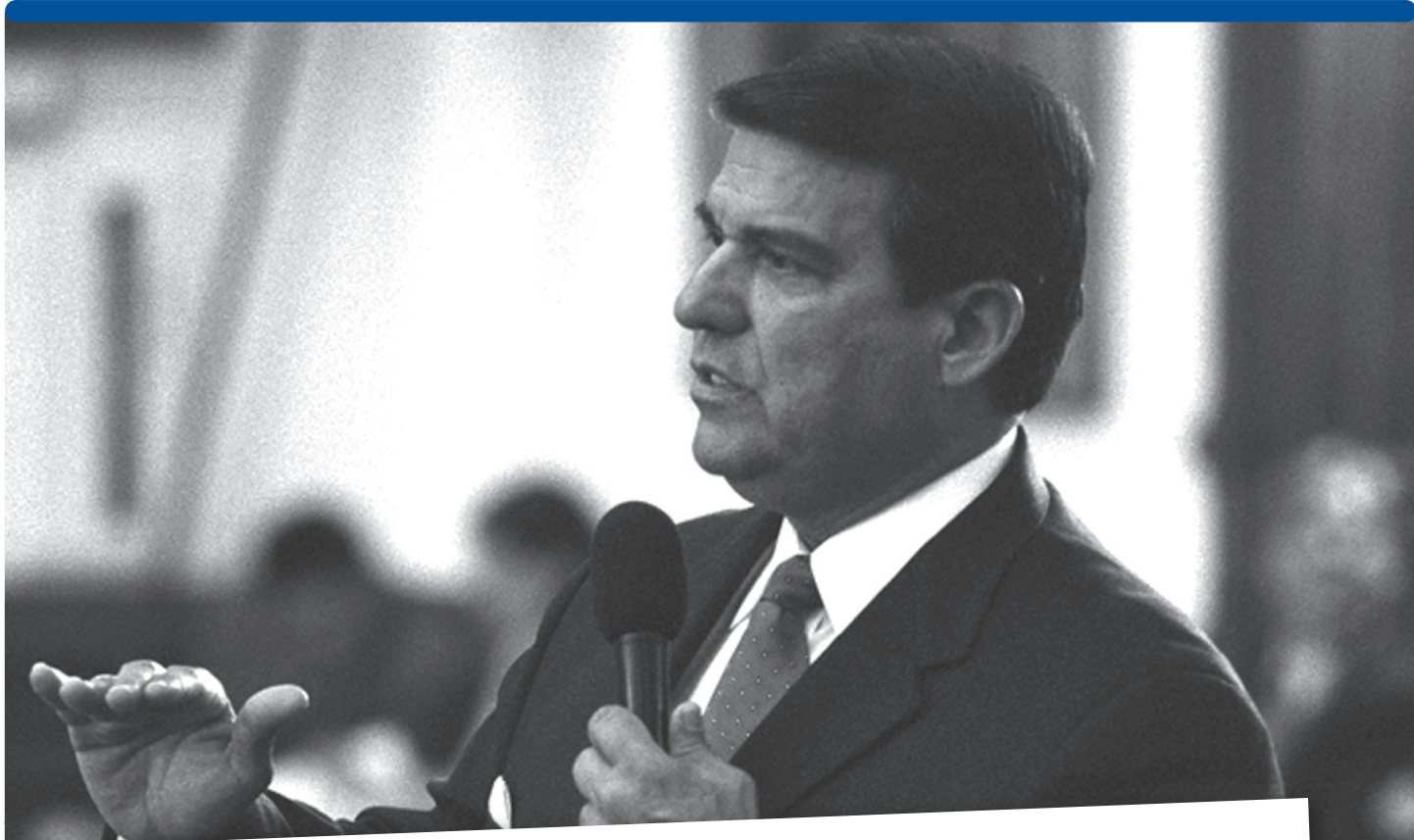


SENATOR EDDIE LUCIO, JR.

CAPITOL

update

2005-2006



Mis Amigos,

This momentous year finds us facing a court-mandated June 1 deadline to reform the public school finance system. We've reached a crisis level when it comes to public education. Children will be shortchanged if funding is inequitable and facilities are inadequate.

My primary goal as a member of the Senate Select Committee on Education Reform and Public School Finance is ensuring that every Texas child receives a quality education. To accomplish this, I need your help. Included in this newsletter is a brief survey. Please take a few minutes to fill it out and mail to me, along with any comment you would like to include. Your participation will prove invaluable as I work with my colleagues to find a solution to funding our schools, raising teacher salaries, and lowering property taxes.

Looking back, some of the laws we enacted in the 79th Legislature impact the residents of South Texas. You will read about some of these laws in the pages of this newsletter. My focus for South Texas, in addition to improving educational opportunities for our children, includes establishing professional schools; raising wages and finding methods to attract employers to our area; increasing funding for skills programs for our workers; preserving and seeking water resources; expanding health care services; and ensuring that our varied needs are fully addressed in Austin.

As I begin my thirtieth year of public service—fifteenth in the Senate—I reflect on the love and support of my family. My wife, Minnie, and I grew up in the Rio Grande Valley and raised our family here. We are now the proud grandparents of two handsome boys and a beautiful little girl. I feel God has blessed my life richly with a loving and supportive family, with hundreds of special friends and with the fortitude to do what I love best—represent the people of South Texas.

The past year has seen us fighting on foreign soil, paying higher prices at the pumps, and assisting the victims of two devastating hurricanes. We've had our hands full nationally and at the state level. Our limited budget must meet the needs of a growing population that requires housing, education, public services, and jobs. Tuition at our colleges and universities continues to rise, and our state has endured devastating wildfires. Poverty and uncontrolled immigration continue to affect our region. But these challenges should not discourage us. We're Texans. We will band together and support each other so that we overcome these obstacles and provide a future brighter than our own for our children.

Este año nuevo los invito a hacer todo lo posible para apoyar iniciativas que pueden mejorar sus vidas y las de sus familias. Hay pocos fondos estatales y la necesidad es grave, pero debemos seguir luchando para atraer mejores empleos, mejores servicios médicos, mejor educación pública y mejor infraestructura en nuestras comunidades. Les agradezco mucho sus sacrificios, y adelante puede haber más. Pero les aseguro que seguiré luchando en Austin por su bienestar y les pido que me incluyan en sus oraciones.

Sincerely,

Eddie Lucio, Jr.



Senator Lucio Continues to Focus on Quality Public Education

Senator Lucio, appointed by Lt. Governor David Dewhurst to the **Senate Select Committee on Education Reform and Public School Finance**, is pushing for equitable funding of school programs and facilities, real education reforms that focus on preparing students for success in college and the workforce, meaningful pay increases for educators, as well as, greater accountability from our schools.

He continues to build on his efforts from last year, which was a turning point for public education. Legislators realized that our public school system must be reformed to create true educational success for our school children and that increasing dependence on property taxes to pay for it has become extremely burdensome. While a public school finance bill did not pass in 2005, Senator Lucio pushed his most comprehensive package of education legislation to benefit school children, teachers, counselors, and school districts. He also helped lead efforts to defeat proposals that would have cut programs and funding levels for schools and students in South Texas.

“Educational issues have always been my top priority. I come from a family of educators and teaching was my first profession. That experience has given me a unique perspective that I draw upon when debating education legislation—you have to be passionate and persistent to protect the gains we’ve made for our public schools—like the current share-the-wealth school finance system,” said Senator Lucio.

There were several attempts to pass a major school finance bill during the Regular Session and two Special Sessions in 2005; however, the proposals lacked consensus among legislators, especially when it came to the topic of how to fund our public schools.

“I will not compromise the future of our children,” stated Senator Lucio. “Public education must be funded to allow all school children to perform at an exemplary level.”

It is the duty of the Legislature to adequately fund education and raise the overall achievement of all students. Texas must increase educational equity for all students, no matter where they live or whether they have special learning needs. This would level the playing field and ensure greater academic success for all Texas children.

During 2005, Senator Lucio promoted a public school legislative package aimed at improving public school facilities; expanding benefits for educators, including retired

teachers; allowing school counselors to spend more time counseling school children; and increasing stability for school districts.

I WILL NOT COMPROMISE the future of our children. Public education must be funded to allow all school children to perform at an exemplary level.

Senate Bill 798 would have provided teachers with a cost-of-living-adjustment to their salaries. School teachers have not received a state increase since 1999. Senator Lucio’s legislation would have provided a small, but important, annual increase to educator salaries.

Senate Bill 797 would have increased funding for aged and overpopulated school facilities in property-poor districts. The current public school system inadequately funds school facilities in low-wealth districts. The goal of this legislation was to equalize facilities across the state.

As a result of the recent Texas Supreme Court ruling on public school finance, which set a June 2006 deadline, the Legislature will meet again this spring in special session to address this vital issue.



Students from Stell Middle School in Brownsville (above) visit with Senator Lucio in the Senate Chamber. Senator Lucio meets with students at Memorial Elementary school in Weslaco (below).



Building a Better Future for Our Children

Serving the young people of Texas has always been a top priority for Senator Lucio. Last session, he pioneered and championed numerous initiatives to improve the safety and well-being of Texas children. In the past year alone, Senator Lucio's work on behalf of children and youth has addressed child abuse, education, and health care.

Childhood Obesity and Diabetes

Recent studies indicate that unless major changes in nutrition and fitness are made, half of all Latino children born in the year 2000 will become diabetic during their lifetime. In an effort to curb this growing problem, Senator Lucio authored legislation to help identify children at-risk for diabetes so they are able to make the lifestyle changes necessary to prevent onset. Senator Lucio also created



Victoria Herrera, a student at Dr. Cash Elementary in San Benito, and her family visit the Texas Senate where Senator Lucio honors her for overcoming diabetes through diet and exercise.

legislation to increase the state's role in diabetes prevention through the formation of an interagency council to address and prevent obesity.

Preventing Shaken Baby Syndrome

Senator Lucio worked with constituents and experts on child abuse to design a major piece of legislation ensuring that all new parents are educated about the dangers of shaking a baby. Senator Lucio's bill will prevent child and infant injuries and deaths across the state, provide parents with information for coping with crying babies, and cut health care costs by decreasing the number of Shaken Baby Syndrome victims.

Child Protective Services

One of the major accomplishments of the legislative session was the overhaul of Child Protective Services (CPS). Senator Lucio joined his colleagues in the Senate to pass a bill that will lead to the hiring of 2,500 more caseworkers, decrease per worker caseloads, improve reaction time for abuse cases, and create health care passports for children in the foster care system.

Children's Health

In 2003, the Legislature drastically cut benefits and beneficiaries of the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP). Senator Lucio has always opposed cuts to children's programs and worked hard in 2005 to successfully restore dental, vision, hospice, and mental health care for all eligible kids.

crime victims

Fighting for Victims of Violent Crime

During the last session of the Legislature, Senator Lucio authored and passed landmark legislation creating a Life Without Parole penalty in capital murder cases. For years, Senator Lucio had heard from the families of murder victims, jurors, and average Texans, asking why a "life" sentence in Texas did not mean the full life of a murderer. Over the past 20 years and prior to the passage of Senate Bill 60, a life sentence has meant anything from 20-years to most recently 40-years before a murderer could be eligible for parole. Now, those who commit heinous crimes, like violent murder, and do not receive the death penalty will stay in prison for the remainder of their natural lives — no early parole, no good-time credits, never to walk the streets again.

"This bill has put truth in sentencing back in the Texas courtroom and shows respect for Texas jurors. No longer will jurors find out after making a very difficult life and death decision that a violent predator might someday be released back to society," said Senator Lucio.

"Most importantly, Life Without Parole brings certainty to the families of victims. It is certain punishment; there are no concerns about a future Supreme Court ruling abolishing the death penalty, and there are no concerns about parole hearings or early release," noted Senator Lucio.

"Unfortunately, the '40-year life' sentence brought no solace to the families of victims. Although it is unlikely that a capital murderer will be released after

Sen. Lucio is honored as "Best of the Texas Senate, 79th Legislature", presented by Charley Wilkison, Legislative Director of the Combined Law Enforcement Association of Texas (CLEAT).



40 years, the families of victims should not have to repeatedly relive the crime by testifying before parole boards, and suffer through a process that may eventually see a murderer released. What we often forget is that the families of victims will still feel the pain of the crime against their loved ones and deal with the criminal justice system for decades after the offender is sentenced to prison," he added.

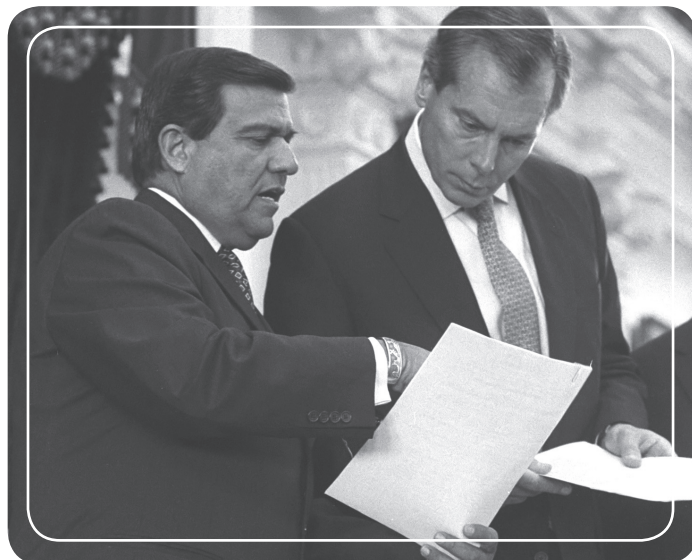
To further recruit and retain top-notch law enforcement and corrections officers, Senator Lucio also sponsored and passed a bill to offer low-interest home loans to officers buying their first homes.

"We owe this to our brave law enforcement and corrections officers who put their lives at risk to increase safety in our neighborhoods and communities," stated Senator Lucio. "We need to do everything we can to find and keep the highest quality people for this difficult job. It is important that they too have a stake in our communities and stay with us to make our lives safer."

key border issues

During this legislative period, a number of initiatives either proposed or initiated by the Senate Committee on International Relations and Trade were passed that will assist trade and infrastructure along the Border region. Senator Lucio worked diligently with other committees and members from the House to pass measures aimed at increasing the quality of life throughout the Border. Some of the initiatives that passed include, but are not limited to:

- ★ Addressing the water and wastewater needs of distressed communities by strengthening, expanding, and improving the Economically Distressed Areas Program (EDAP) statewide;
- ★ Improving the coordination among agencies in their efforts to address the needs of colonia residents by requiring mandatory coordination of colonia initiatives;
- ★ Enhancing the use of colonia-related infrastructure funds through the sharing of data and information among agencies to improve the Border Activity Tracker (BAT) database;



Senator Lucio and Lt. Governor David Dewhurst confer over legislation on water rights.



Chief of Staff Paul Cowen discusses Border issues with Senator Lucio.

- ★ Strengthening the efforts of the Colonia Coordinator by assisting in the modification of the program's existing culture through a Colonia Advisory Committee;
- ★ Addressing issues that improve the quality of life for colonia residents through individual initiatives, such as street lighting;

- ★ Working to expand the efforts in the conversion of contract-for-deeds to conventional mortgages with transfer of title through key reforms aimed at curbing the abuses of contracts-for-deed by unscrupulous developers, and attempting to curtail the emerging predatory practice of option-to-buy lease contracts;
- ★ Directing TxDOT and DPS to continue to work with the appropriate authorities (United States and Mexico) to research and develop an initiative that would mitigate the traffic congestion at Texas' ports-of-entry by beginning northbound truck inspections on the Mexican side of the international boundary;
- ★ Increasing the effectiveness of the Border Trade Advisory Committee by strengthening its membership with key transportation and academic professionals;
- ★ Increasing bilateral relations with Mexico, in the spirit of NAFTA, by enhancing the effectiveness of the Mexico-domiciled truck inspections near Texas' ports-of-entry through expanding opportunities of local Border communities and those involved in truck inspections to provide their input and concerns to an Oversight Community Outreach Committee;
- ★ Requesting from Congress parity between Mexican and Canadian visitors; extending the 30-day limitation to six months with no limitation on travel distance in the US-VISIT Program.

Senator Lucio's Committee Membership

Senator Lucio was elected to the Senate in November, 1990.

- ◆ Chairman, International Relations and Trade
- ◆ Business and Commerce
 - Subcommittee on Emerging Technologies & Economic Development
- ◆ Nominations
- ◆ State Affairs
- ◆ Select Committee on Education Reform and Public School Finance
- ◆ Study Commission on Transportation Financing

Prior to serving in the Senate, Senator Lucio served in the Texas House of Representatives. He began his public service in 1971 when he became Cameron County Treasurer, the youngest county treasurer ever elected in Texas.



Senator Lucio and his wife, Minnie, are joined at the podium where he is honored as Governor for a Day by Comptroller Carole Keeton Strayhorn (left), former UT Chancellor Bill Cunningham (back, center) and Dean of the Senate John Whitmire (back, right).

helpful info

How to Contact Senator Lucio

Senator Lucio welcomes input from his constituents throughout Senate District 27. You can reach Senator Lucio at these offices:

Si desea comunicarse con nosotros, por favor llame a los siguientes numeros:

AUSTIN

P.O. Box 12068
Capitol Station
Austin, Texas 78711
(512) 463-0127
(512) 463-0061 Fax

BROWNSVILLE

7 North Park Plaza
Brownsville, Texas 78521
(956) 548-0227
(956) 548-0440 Fax

WESLACO

500 South Kansas
Weslaco, Texas 78596
(956) 968-9927
(956) 447-0583 Fax

You can send e-mail to Senator Lucio through his web site at:

www.senate.state.tx.us



Senate District 27

Helpful Information:

Legislature
www.capitol.state.tx.us

Senate Web Site for Kids
www.senate.state.tx.us/kids

Voting and Election Information
1-800-252-8683
www.sos.state.tx.us

Attorney General
1-800-252-8011
www.oag.state.tx.us

Texas Department of Aging & Disability Services
(512) 424-6840
www.dads.state.tx.us

Claim your Credit

Was your family's income last year less than \$37,263? You may be entitled to an Income Tax Refund. The Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) is a refund to qualified taxpayers. You may qualify, if:

- your family earned less than \$33,030 in adjusted gross income in 2005 and you had a child who lived with you for more than six months in the year; or
- you had two or more children who lived with you for more than six months of the year and your family income was less than \$37,263; or
- you had no qualifying children and your family income was less than \$13,750.

Millions of dollars in EITC go unclaimed each year. In Cameron County alone, more than \$30 million went unclaimed in tax year 2003. For more detailed information, visit <http://www.window.state.tx.us>. You may also get free tax filing assistance by calling the IRS toll free at 1-800-TAX-1040 or visiting <http://www.irs.gov>.



¡Bienvenidos! Visit us!

As Texans, we should all be proud of our State Capitol, which averages 1.5 million visitors a year. Senator Lucio encourages all of you to visit this National Historic Landmark and take advantage of the many educational and entertaining services it provides. Free tours are available through the Capitol Information and Guide Services, as well as the Capitol Visitors Center located in the historic General Land Office Building.

School groups and families are urged to contact the Capitol Visitors Center or Senator Lucio's office to find out more information about setting up personal tours at the State Capitol.

What better way to learn about Texas than with a fun and educational experience at the Bob Bullock Texas State History Museum. Experience a place dedicated to the history and the spirit of the Lone Star State.

Visitors Center: (512)305-8400

Capitol Information and Guides: (512)463-0063

Senator Eddie Lucio: (512)463-0127

Texas State History Museum: (512)936-8746

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Honor the Texas Flag: I pledge allegiance to thee, Texas, one and indivisible.

ORDERING A TEXAS FLAG

Contact Senator Lucio's Capitol office (512)463-0127 to order a Texas flag and request to have it flown over the State Capitol.

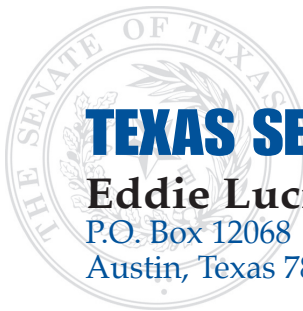
Make checks payable to the Texas Senate.

3x5 Nylon	\$15.25	3x5 Cotton	\$16.00
4x6 Nylon	\$22.00	4x6 Cotton	\$23.00

FLYING THE TEXAS FLAG

When flown out-of-doors, the Texas flag must be on a flagpole or staff at least two and one half times as long as the flag. It should not be unfurled earlier than sunrise and should not be left out in rain, snow or other inclement weather. It should be flown with the white stripe at the uppermost except in case of distress.

When the flag is displayed horizontally against a wall, the blue field should be at the flag's own right (observer's left). When the state flag is displayed vertically against the wall, the blue stripe should be above white and red stripes and the white stripe should be to the flag's own right (observer's left). The state flag is displayed at all Texas public schools during regular school days and carried with pride in most state holiday parades.



TEXAS SENATOR

Eddie Lucio, Jr.

P.O. Box 12068

Austin, Texas 78711-2068

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Senator Lucio's Constituent Survey on Public Education

Your response to this survey will let Senator Lucio know your educational priorities for the upcoming Special Session. Please take a few moments to share your opinions and mail to:

Senator Eddie Lucio, P.O. Box 12068, Capitol Station, Austin, TX 78711.

Directions: Based on your perception of the need for educational reforms, rank all the following statements on a scale of 1 to 10. Place a 1 beside the most important item, a 2 beside the next most important, and so forth.

- Increase state funding for public education.
- Enhance curriculum and programs to better prepare high school students for college.
- Address the funding disparity between poor school districts and rich school districts.
- Implement financial incentives for school districts based on student TAKS test scores.
- Implement financial incentives for teachers based on student TAKS test scores.
- Provide across-the-board pay raises for teachers.
- Increase state funding for instructional facilities (classrooms).
- Implement a classroom ratio of 1 teacher for every 22 students at all grade levels.
- Expand student access to school counselors.
- Increase the financial accountability of school districts.

If school property taxes are lowered, what is the best way to replace funds? Rank all the revenue options below on a scale of 1 to 10. Place a 1 beside the most preferred item, a 2 beside the next most preferred, and so forth.

- Increase the sales tax.
- Expand the sales tax to include services.
- Implement a broad-based business tax.
- Close the franchise tax exemption.
- Increase the cigarette and tobacco tax.
- Increase the beer/wine/mixed beverage tax.
- Replace local property taxes with a uniform statewide property tax.
- Implement a personal state income tax.
- Allow video lottery terminals.
- Allow casino-style gambling.

Comments:

Optional information:

Name:

Address:

City, State, Zip:

E-mail:

