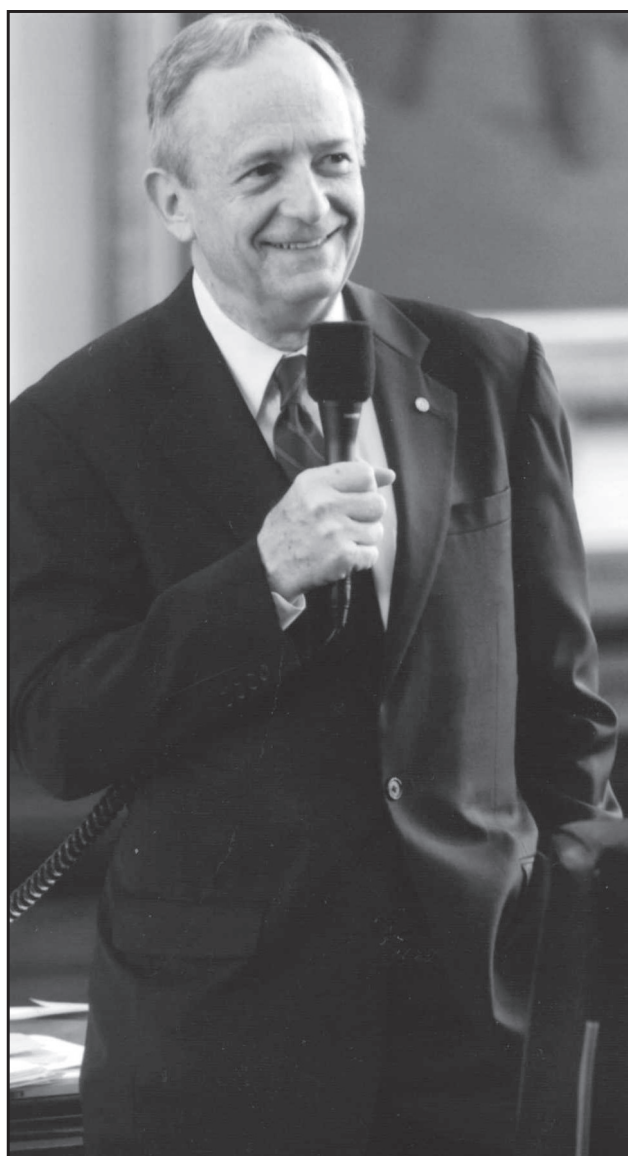


State Senator

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

The 82nd Texas Legislature will convene on January 11 for what is already shaping up to be a difficult session. We will be undertaking the rancorous and always partisan task of drawing new political boundary lines for Congress and the Legislature, and we are required by the Texas Constitution to adopt a balanced state budget, which is expected to have a shortfall currently estimated at about \$18 billion.



Senator Wentworth on the floor of the Senate.

These two tasks alone would be enough to occupy our time during the session's 140 days; however, we also will be dealing with issues of utmost importance to Texans: education funding, property taxes, transportation and border security, to name but a few.

In an effort to represent your interests and concerns on the floor of the Texas Senate, I would be grateful if you would take a few minutes to share your opinion on a variety of issues. A questionnaire is included in this newsletter, which I hope you will complete and return to my office.

Because you have sent me to Austin for a number of years, of the 19 Republicans in the Texas Senate, I rank third in seniority. During my time in the Senate, I have served as chairman of the Nominations Committee, Redistricting Committee and Jurisprudence Committee.

As one of five senators who has seen active duty military service, Lt. Governor David Dewhurst recently named me chairman of the Senate Select Committee on Veterans Health. Additionally, I serve on three other standing committees of the Senate as well as the Texas Judicial Council.

I am profoundly grateful to the 800,000 Texans in the six counties of Senate District 25 who have allowed me the honor and privilege of acting as their voice and their servant in the Texas Senate since 1993.

Sincerely,

Jeff Wentworth

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INTERIM CHARGES

During the time between regular legislative sessions, Texas Senate Committees work on a variety of interim charges relating to issues that impact Texans' lives. A few of these committees and some of the issues being explored are listed below.

Finance Committee

In addition to the difficult task of balancing the budget, the Senate Committee on Finance has a full plate of issues to study before the Legislature convenes. One of those issues is property tax system reform.

Reforms being considered include: increasing public participation in the tax-setting process, ensuring fairness in appraisal protests and appeals, and not allowing property appraisal values to increase by more than inflation and/or population growth.

Transportation and Homeland Security Committee

This committee is dealing with two hot-button issues: transportation and border security. I serve on this committee, which is considering 12 interim charges ranging in scope from highway congestion to monitoring transnational, gang-related legislation passed in the 2009 Regular Legislative Session.

Committee members will include recommendations for improving both homeland security and the Texas Department of Transportation's organizational structure in its report to the Legislature due no later than December 1, 2010.

Intergovernmental Relations Committee

While the Committee on Intergovernmental Relations has held hearings on a number of issues, the hearing on homeowners associations (HOAs), which was held in Houston, attracted the largest crowd. For nearly four hours, the committee, of which I am a member, heard witnesses describe their battles with HOAs and HOA representatives relate their difficulties with homeowners. The committee is studying current law governing HOAs to ensure

that homeowners are given both adequate protection against unfair foreclosures and proper channels for redress in case of foreclosure.

Education Committee

The Senate Committee on Education is reviewing the past while looking toward the future. Committee members are looking at the impact of two bills that were passed in 2009. One bill changed school accountability standards, and the other directs the Texas Education Agency to study the use of electronic textbooks in public schools. The committee also is studying how changing demographics and economic environments affect the cost of public education.

Higher Education Committee

Since the Texas Legislature voted to deregulate tuition rates in 2003, the statewide academic charges for a student taking 15 semester hours at a public university have increased by an average of 63 percent. I voted against tuition deregulation, so I am pleased that during the time between sessions, the Higher Education Committee is reviewing student financial aid, community colleges and cost drivers in higher education to find ways to ensure that a college education is within reach of young Texans willing to work for their degrees.

Health and Human Services Committee

The second largest item in the state budget is health and human services. Next session is going to be especially difficult as the state copes with implementation of the federal health care reform bill. During the time between sessions, the committee has studied a number of health-related issues, and it has listened to ideas for ways to increase the number of physicians and nurses in Texas.

Jurisprudence Committee

As immediate past chairman of the Jurisprudence Committee, I am aware of the variety of issues that this committee studies during the time between legislative sessions. This interim, for example, the committee is studying the effectiveness of current regulation and practices of debt management. On a totally different note, the committee is studying the effectiveness of the guardianship program implemented by the Department of Aging and Disabilities and Adult Protective Services. At the other end of the age spectrum, the committee is evaluating the voluntary relative placement process in issues of guardianship for children and the ability of nonparent relatives to make decisions for children in their care.



Senators Robert Duncan and Wentworth, Committee Chairman, listen to testimony at a meeting of the Senate Jurisprudence Committee.

LEGISLATIVE PROGRAM

Selecting which issues to pursue during a regular legislative session begins months before the Texas Legislature convenes. Listed below are some of the bills now being drafted that will be part of my legislative agenda next year.



Senator Wentworth and Senator Kevin Eltife discuss a bill on the floor of the Texas Senate.

Redistricting Reform

There was a time when voters chose the men and women who represented them in the Legislature and in Congress. Now, once every 10 years, legislators and members of Congress choose their constituents. It is again time to draw new boundary lines for the Texas Legislature and the U.S. House of Representatives. If history repeats itself, redistricting will be a highly divisive, partisan, rancorous exercise likely resulting in a federal court's drawing the lines for Congressional districts and the Legislative Redistricting Board's drawing the lines for the Texas Senate and House of Representative.

Our current redistricting process is a waste of time, money and energy. It is a genuine disservice to the people of Texas, and it diverts legislators' attention from the serious challenges facing Texas.

This is why I am again going to file a bill to reform the process by establishing an independent, bipartisan citizens' redistricting commission. The Texas Senate passed a bill I authored in both 2005 and 2007 to reform this process and came within one vote of doing it again last year. Although it is too late to be effective for next year's redistricting process, I remain hopeful that one day enough legislators will realize that taking care of the challenges our state faces is more important than all the partisan wrangling that currently afflicts our present system that my redistricting reform bill will be passed and signed into law.

County Authority

County commissioners courts have little authority to regulate subdivisions that are springing up in unincorporated parts of counties, particularly those in the Hill Country. This lack of authority has resulted in subdivisions being developed without proper utilities and roads. Unscrupulous developers have been known to leave residents with the responsibility of paving bad roads or putting in additional utilities. When this happens, the residents turn to the county for help. Fixing problems in the subdivisions often puts a drain on county funds as commissioners try to respond to constituents.

My bill would give county commissioners courts more authority to regulate and place stricter standards on subdivision developments in their counties.

Selective Service Registration

Because Texas ranks 49th in the nation for draft registration compliance of 19-year-old men, the Selective Service has asked me to carry a bill that would amend Texas law regarding draft registration.

Currently, men ages 18 through 26 have the option of registering for the draft when they obtain a Texas drivers license or ID card. I will file a bill that would amend the law to make it mandatory for men ages 18 through 26 to register when they obtain a Texas drivers license or ID card.

If a man is not registered before he reaches age 26, he has violated federal law and could lose benefits linked to registration, including federal and state student financial aid and jobs, citizenship for immigrants and job training.

Property Taxes

Current law does not require that the actual purchase price of property be listed in the deed; as a result appraisal districts rely on multiple listing services (MLS) and other sources to determine fair market value. In previous legislative sessions, I have filed bills that would have required that the sales price of a piece of real estate be included in the deed, resulting in a fairer property tax system, particularly for homeowners. I will file a similar bill when the Legislature convenes next year.

Transportation Related Bills

As Texas' population increases, so does traffic congestion. Where to find funds for new highway construction continues to challenge legislators. One of the transportation related bills I will file would ensure that highway construction would be the principal use of highway funds. I also will file a bill that would allow regional mobility authorities to choose from a variety of financing options for transportation funding.

In an effort to relieve congestion in cities, I will file a bill that would allow motor buses to use existing road shoulders as a motor-bus-only lane.



The Wentworths, Matthew, Jason, Karla and Jeff, at their home in San Antonio.

QUESTIONNAIRE



Budget and Taxes

Voter #1
Yes No

Voter #2
Yes No

1. To balance a state budget that already has a projected \$18 billion shortfall, would you recommend that the Legislature:
 - A. Increase the state sales tax
 - B. Cut services
 - C. Allow video lottery terminals at horse race tracks
 - D. Increase the fees on certain licenses, such as hunting, fishing, business, drivers licenses and others
 - E. An additional "sin" tax on alcohol and cigarettes
 - F. Allow the legalization of gambling casinos in Texas
 - G. Other: _____

2. If you prefer budget cuts to balance the budget, in which areas would you make the cuts?
 - A. Environmental protection
 - B. Health and human services
 - C. Higher education
 - D. Highways and public transportation
 - E. Mental health and mental retardation
 - F. Prisons
 - G. Public education
 - H. Public safety
 - I. State parks
 - J. None of the above

Voter #1		Voter #2	
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Government

3. Do you favor transferring from the Legislature the power to draw federal congressional district boundaries to an independent bipartisan citizens' Texas Redistricting Commission to be comprised of four Democrats and four Republicans who are not registered lobbyists, elected officials or officials of any political party?

4. Current Texas law allows state legislators to override the governor's veto with a two-thirds majority vote; however, most vetoes occur after the conclusion of the legislative session, effectively prohibiting legislators from utilizing this function. Do you favor a constitutional amendment that would allow legislators to briefly convene following the veto period to address affected bills?

5. County governments lack authority to correct the problems of substandard developments in the unincorporated areas of counties. Would 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?

6. Do you favor requiring a photo ID or at least two documents attesting to a person's identification before being allowed to vote?

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Education

7. Do you favor consolidation of **your** independent school district, resulting in larger school districts and fewer school superintendents and administrative staff?

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 school, public or private, selected by the parents?

9. Currently, the tuition rates at Texas public colleges and universities are set by boards of regents and not by the Texas Legislature. Do you favor returning that responsibility to the Legislature?

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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. Would you favor such gubernatorial nomination, senate confirmation, and retention elections for Texas judges?
11. During a civil trial, do you favor allowing jurors to take notes and submit written questions to the judge?



Public Safety

12. Do you favor restricting the use of cellular devices, such as mobile phones and personal digital assistants, by drivers in moving vehicles to only those devices which may be operated hands-free?
13. Do you favor allowing Texans 21 years of age or older who are legally licensed to carry a handgun to do so on a college or university campus?



Immigration

14. Do you support an immigration law to require law enforcement officers to check the immigration status of people they lawfully stop and suspect to be in the United States illegally?



Transportation

15. Recognizing the need to expand and repair the state's highway system, how would you want the state to finance the needed construction and maintenance?
- A. Tax vehicles on the number of miles traveled
- B. Increase the gasoline tax
- C. Increase fees for license plates and/or safety inspection stickers
- D. Toll roads
- E. _____

Voter #1		Voter #2	
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Senator Jeff Wentworth
 P.O. Box 12068
 Austin, Texas 78711-2068

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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.

Join the growing list of informed Texans

Texas state government functions best when Texans are informed.

To keep you informed about state issues and about state services that are available to you, I write a weekly column that appears in many, but not all, of the newspapers in Senate District 25. It also is sent via e-mail to constituents who request it.

If you would like to receive my column by e-mail, please contact me at jeff.wentworth@senate.state.tx.us and ask to be added to the distribution list. Please include your full name and street mailing address as well as your e-mail address.

My columns are not politically partisan in nature. They are written to be useful and informative, and I believe you will find them to be both.

COUNTIES IN SENATE DISTRICT 25

Bexar (north)
Hays

Comal
Kendall

Guadalupe
Travis (south)

