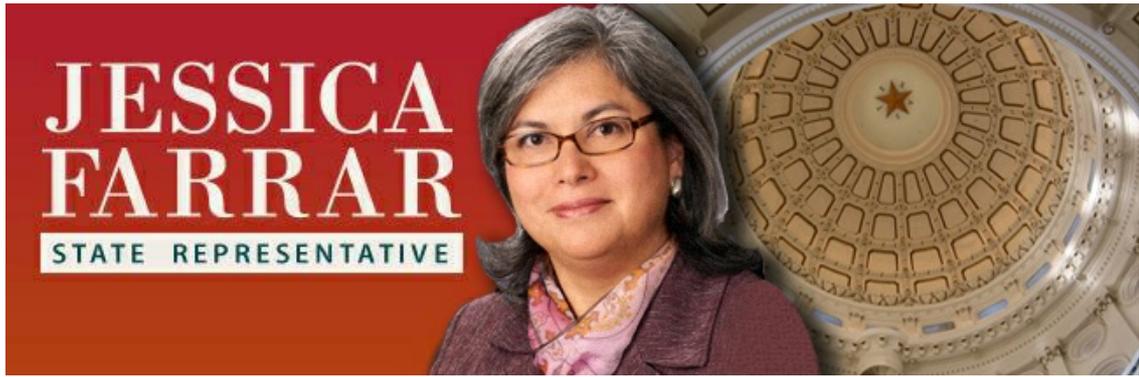




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## *Capitol Update*

*Tuesday, February 14, 2017*

Dear Friend,

My staff and I continue to meet with constituents and stakeholders about the issues of most importance to them. Last week, I filed six more pieces of legislation that are described below. This week, Speaker Straus announced House Committee membership assignments. I am delighted to announce that I was reappointed to the House Committee on State Affairs, and as Vice-Chair of the House Committee on Judiciary and Civil Jurisprudence.

I look forward to continuing to work on issues in State Affairs related to public utilities and telecommunications, and ensuring the various hot-button social issues the committee hears do not negatively impact targeted Texans, such as immigrants, LGBT people, and women. As a member of Judiciary and Civil Jurisprudence, I look forward to continuing to ensure equal access to Texas' judicial system.

With topics ranging from healthcare to criminal justice, the members of the Texas House of Representatives have already filed almost 3,000 pieces of legislation. Last session, more than 4,000 House bills were filed. March 10th is the last day any Representative or Senator can file a piece of legislation to be considered by the Legislature this session.

As always, I look forward to hearing your concerns. Please feel free to contact my office in the Capitol at (512) 463-0620 or email me at [jessica.farrar@house.texas.gov](mailto:jessica.farrar@house.texas.gov).

Respectfully,

Jessica Farrar

State Representative, District 148

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## *Around the State Capitol*

My staff and I have been meeting with many constituent groups and advocates on a wide range of issues. Representatives from Spring Branch Community Health Centers, the Children's Assessment Center, Hollybrook Elementary, Northside High School, the Hospital Corporation of America, the Houston Arts Alliance, and more have visited the Capitol office to discuss their legislative priorities. I also participated in an interview with Univision to discuss [HB 1537](#), to abolish the death penalty in Texas. This will be my sixth attempt at doing away with the death penalty, which would save both innocent lives and money spent by the state.



Additionally, there have been several events going on around the Capitol that you may have heard about already. January 31 was Muslim Advocacy Day. Recent federal news and decisions regarding immigration in our country have kept many across the nation worried and tense. Those fears have been felt at the State Capitol as well. Fortunately, the recent gathering at the Capitol of Texas Muslim's and those who support them was large and supportive. Several District 148 constituents participated in this advocacy day and visited my office. My staff and I support any and all individuals coming to visit and advocate at the Capitol. My office will always be a safe haven for all Texans no matter their skin color, sexual orientation, income, gender, or faith. All Texans will always be treated with respect when visiting with myself or my staff.

Also on January 31, Governor Greg Abbott delivered his State of the State address where he declared four issues to be considered emergencies for lawmakers to take up immediately. The four emergency items are: banning so-called "sanctuary cities," fixing the state's broken child welfare system, ethics reform, and approving a resolution to support a convention of states to amend the U.S. Constitution. Gov. Abbott also announced a hiring freeze at state agencies and institutions of higher education. The state's welfare system is certainly broken and desperately needs fixing, and ethics regulations in Texas surrounding public officials could also use some improvement. However, forcing local law enforcement to enforce federal regulations, and focusing on amending the U.S. Constitution should not be priorities for the Texas Legislature this legislative session. Below is more detail on the discussion surrounding "sanctuary cities."

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### *"Sanctuary Cities"*

On February 2, 2017, an outpouring of emotion from Texans across the state filled the State Capitol. From 8:30 in the morning to past midnight, hundreds of passionate individuals voiced their concerns on [SB 4](#), the "sanctuary cities" bill. Thursday's hearing on SB 4 began with the questioning of key witnesses by State Senators on the Senate State Affairs committee. Law enforcement, faith leaders, immigrant groups, and worried citizens all united behind a common theme during the questioning and subsequent testimony: Texans must stand up against fear. By the end of the hearing, more than 200 individuals testified against the bill and less than 10 individuals testified in support. Further, more than 1,000 individuals came to the Capitol to register their official opposition to the bill, but did not speak before the Committee. Less than a dozen individuals registered their official support of the bill but did not speak before the Committee.

Despite fervent opposition and the bill's constitutional issues, SB 4 passed through the Senate

on February 8th along party lines. SB 4, authored by Senator Perry and backed by Governor Greg Abbott, does multiple things. All entities in Texas, with limited exceptions for hospitals, K-12 schools, and religious organizations, must abide by the proposed law. Local law enforcement departments would be charged with enforcing federal immigration laws in all cases where a person is lawfully detained. Consequences for governments breaking this proposed law result in the state withholding grant money for veteran's courts, family violence prevention, roads, and other necessary services. In a state where only 0.22% of Immigration and Customs Enforcement detainee requests are denied by local officials, this law only serves to incite fear, erode trust between law enforcement and the community, punish needy individuals, and push a partisan political agenda. I will advocate for the most efficient use of Texas' limited resources, ensuring Houston's families remain united, are safe from legitimate harm, and, even more importantly during this time, standing up for communities without a voice.

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### *Legislation Most Recently Filed*

#### *Online Resources for Pro-Se Litigants*

[HB 1532](#) seeks to improve access to self-help resources for Texans without an attorney to represent themselves. These individuals, also called pro-se litigants, are often at a disadvantage during the legal process. Some resources exist for pro-se litigants in Texas, but where there is information, it is often inconsistent and difficult to access. This bill will allow all Texans interacting with the court system the best shot at a fair outcome in court. HB 1532 will require court websites to post notice of legal self-help resources, and will also require a physical notice of these legal resources to be posted in the court itself.

#### *Excluding Liquid Resources and Cars from SNAP Determination*

[HB 1533](#) will exclude liquid assets and the value of vehicles from eligibility determinations for Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits. SNAP provides low-income individuals and families with money to purchase food, increasing their food security and improving the health outcomes and academic performance in children. Currently, to be eligible for participation in SNAP, formerly known as the Food Stamps Program, a family's assets may not exceed a \$5,000 limit. The assets evaluated to determine eligibility include a family's liquid assets and the value of their vehicles. This eligibility standard creates an incentive for applicants to surrender their savings or sell their vehicles in order to provide food for their family, impeding their ability to achieve self-sufficiency.

#### *Omnibus Anti-Discrimination Measures*

[HB 1534](#) will prohibit discrimination in the areas of employment, public accommodations, housing, and state contracting based upon sexual orientation, or gender identity or expression. Discrimination of any kind runs counter to the values of opportunity, personal faith, and freedom that all Texans hold dear. Unfortunately, while discrimination against certain groups is deterred by punishments codified in state statute, discrimination against the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) community is not. There are examples across the state of LGBT people being denied housing for themselves and their family, losing a job because of their sexual orientation or gender identity, or being denied other services typically provided to the general public. Aside from discrimination tainting the values that Texans hold dear, discrimination is also bad for business. An inclusive Texas is crucial to recruiting and retaining talent, attracting entrepreneurs and company relocations, and maintaining a strong travel and tourism industry. Discriminatory behaviors must be discouraged with real, enforceable consequences to ensure a business-friendly, people-friendly environment.

### *Banning Use of Neonicotinoids on the Side of Transportation Roadways*

[HB 1535](#) will ban the use of neonicotinoids on the side of transportation roadways.

Neonicotinoids are a new class of insecticides that are chemically related to nicotine. Recent research points to toxicity to bees when nectar and pollen are contaminated with neonicotinoids insecticides. Millions of bees are dying each year, in the United States and around the world, with alarming consequences for our environment and our food supply. Banning the use of neonicotinoids on the side of roadways has proven successful in several communities for supporting prosperous bee habitats.

### *TCEQ Green Stormwater Practices Report*

[HB 1536](#) requires the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) to report biennially on the state of green stormwater infrastructure in Texas. This report will include an inventory of the amount of stormwater managed through green methods (e.g. rainwater harvesting, rain gardens, permeable pavement, etc), barriers to adoption, and recommendations to increase the use of green stormwater infrastructure (GSI). The report will also include goals set by TCEQ to increase the use of GSI and the progress achieved towards meeting those goals.

### *Abolishing the death penalty*

[HB 1537](#) will abolish the death penalty. Abolishing the death penalty would save both innocent lives and money spent by the state. The death penalty is arbitrarily and unfairly administered. Additionally, the death penalty carries the irreversible risk of executing an innocent person. HB 1537 will save the state millions of dollars by sentencing convicted capital murderers to life in prison without the chance of parole.

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### *Cervical Cancer Awareness Month*

January is Cervical Cancer Awareness Month. In honor of this, I presented and passed a House Resolution to raise awareness of steps women can take to prevent cervical cancer, and to remember the Texas women who have passed away from this disease. Cervical cancer affects more than 1,000 Texas women a year. I understand how accessibility and affordability for cancer screening can prevent late detection and encourage early treatment for Texas women. If Texas leaders want to decrease the mortality and incident rate for cervical cancer in the state, they should promote cervical cancer prevention measures such as HPV vaccinations, and work to keep cancer screening affordable for all Texans.



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### *Update from Women's Health Caucus*

Women's Health Caucus staff is ready to hit the ground running for the 85th Legislative Session. I will continue on as the Chair of the Women's Health Caucus. Under my leadership, the bipartisan Caucus will continue to fight for legislative and medical measures that keep Texas women healthy. This session, the Caucus will focus on affordable and accessible cervical and breast cancer screenings, comprehensive reproductive health care services for women, and working to help healthy moms and healthy children for the betterment of all families in Texas. I, with fellow Caucus members Representatives Ina Minjarez and Donna Howard, recently participated in a press conference with the Trust. Respect. Access. Coalition. The Coalition laid out their legislative priorities for the 85th Legislative Session. Each of us



discussed legislation we have filed this session to keep Texas women and their families healthy; I presented three of my bills. Firstly, I focused on how House Bill 742 will expand and protect breastfeeding accessibility to keep Texas moms and their newborns healthy and protected. I also presented House Bill 746, which will mandate that the state-sponsored "A Woman's Right to Know" pamphlet, given to women considering abortion, remove false medical information, such as the scientifically inaccurate link between abortion and breast cancer. Further, I discussed how House Bill 745 will remove obstacles to health care services by striking down the state mandated 24-hour waiting period for a woman to receive a safe and legal abortion. As Chair of the Women's Health Caucus, I am focused on improving health care accessibility and championing policies that support the needs of parenting women and families, instead of constructing barriers to care.

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### *Roe v. Wade*

This year marks the 44th anniversary of Roe v. Wade, the landmark court case which legally guaranteed women the autonomy to make the best reproductive health decisions for themselves and their families. I spoke at a commemorative rally outside of the Capitol, and enforced that I will always..."fight against regressive health care views which result in alarmingly high maternal mortality rates... fight against the criminalization of abortion..., and fight against facilities that give women seeking abortions false and misleading information." I am a proud advocate for comprehensive women's health care, including the right to have an abortion.



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### *Capitol Opportunities*

#### ***Honorary Page Program***

As Honorary Pages, students age 8-18 may serve as honorary pages during the legislative session. Students will work on the House Floor alongside a House Page assisting members and performing duties; such as, delivering documents to members' offices throughout the Capitol complex. I may nominate a total of 10 pages to serve half-day shifts throughout the session. Students participating in the program must follow the House Rules regarding dress code: coat and tie for boys and professional attire for girls. Since slots during Spring Break and other school holidays fill up quickly, contact my office as soon as possible.

#### ***Pastor of the Day Program***

I may select one member of the clergy from District 148 to open the daily House proceedings with a prayer one day this session. If you or someone you know may be interested, please contact the office.

#### ***Meeting Requests***

Please send an email to Ariana Campos at [ariana.campos@house.texas.gov](mailto:ariana.campos@house.texas.gov) or call (512) 463-0620 to schedule a meeting with me.

#### ***Contact Me***

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P.O. Box 2910  
Austin, TX 78768

jessica.farrar@house.texas.gov



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