

# State Representative Carrie Isaac

## “The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly”

*88<sup>th</sup> Session Recap*

### **THE BUDGET**

**HB 1** by Bonnen – The Texas House Budget appropriates \$321.3 billion. State General Revenue (GR) spending totals \$144.13 Billion, an increase of \$13.73 billion or 10.5 percent. While remaining well below the Pay as You Go limit, constitutional tax spending limit rate of population growth and inflation, and the newly created consolidated general revenue limit, the 88th Legislature has identified a series of priorities that will be addressed this session through a fiscally conservative budget. *\*With an influx of 470,708 people flocking to the Lone Star State last year, Texas secured the No. 1 spot for the "largest-gaining state in the nation." The almost half a million new residents increased the total population in Texas to 30,029,572, making Texas the second state to reach over 30 million people.*

### **BORDER SECURITY**

#### *Victories passed*

- **HB 1** by Bonnen – HB 1 allocates \$5.1 billion to securing the Texas-Mexico border, including \$1 million to continue construction of physical barriers.
- **HB 6** by Goldman – Empowered the U.S. Border Patrol to search, seize and arrest, and prosecute fentanyl deaths as murder.
- **HB 4635** by Guillen – Prosecuting Mexican Cartels: The Texas Racketeering Act allows Texas to aggressively prosecute organized crime, including drug and human trafficking cartels and street gangs, and it provides for civil actions, remedies, and enforcement for racketeering and unlawful debt collection.
- **SB 1403** by Parker – creates an interstate compact for border security that allows for cooperation among states to stop illegal entry/cartel activity.

- **SB 1484** by Creighton – provides for a training program for local law enforcement officers for addressing and cooperating with the prosecution of criminal activity in the Texas-Mexico border region.
- **SB 1900** by Birdwell – designates drug cartels as "foreign terrorist organizations" and places their criminal conduct in the same level of code as a criminal street gang for the purposes of prosecution.

### *Failed to pass*

- **HB 7** by Guillen (*Isaac Co-Author*) – Establishes a Texas Border Force for border security and provides a fund to compensate people affected by illegal trespass onto their property – *failed to pass conference*
- **HB 20** by Schaefer (*Isaac Co-Author*) – creates a border protection unit to further secure the border and makes an offense out of trespassing while entering the state – *died on a point of order*

## **BROADBAND**

### *Victories passed*

- **HB 9** by Ashby – Expanding Rural Broadband (House Bill 9/ House Joint Resolution 125): Prepares Texas to make historic investments in rural broadband expansion to better facilitate access to online education and telehealth if it is approved by the voters.
- **HB 1238** by VanDeaver – Monitoring Broadband Investment: Creates oversight of broadband investments to ensure they are targeted, prudent, and cost-effective.

## **BUSINESS & REGULATIONS**

### *Victories passed*

- **SB 895** by Johnson/Lambert – Omnibus bill that updates statute related to money transfer services. Sen. Kolkhorst added an amendment that *bans* Central Digital Bank Currency or any other mechanism that prohibits or hinders the use of paper money.
- **HB 2837** by Schaefer – prohibits credit card companies from tracking firearm or ammunition purchases; gives the attorney general enforcement power.

- **HB 2127** by Burrows (*Isaac Co-Author*) – Establishing Regulatory Consistency: Harmonizes disparate local ordinances across the state by precluding cities and counties from adopting or enforcing excessive and inconsistent regulations unless expressly allowed by state law. The field preemption measure applies to eight different codes, including agriculture, business & commerce, finance, insurance, labor, property, occupations, and natural resources.
- **HB 3137** by Isaac - Prevents local government entities in Texas from being able to require owners of firearms to license their firearms or from imposing any liability insurance requirements on firearm owners. Recently, San Jose, California, passed a so-called "gun harm reduction ordinance" that would require all gun owners to obtain and maintain liability insurance and pay an annual registration fee. Additionally a Texas Senator filed legislation during the 88th (R) to require insurance on firearms in Texas. These sorts of requirements effectively create illegal gun-owner registries. Moreover, these requirements infringe on a protected right under the U.S. Constitution by requiring a person to pay what is essentially a tax to exercise their rights. Don't California my Texas!

***Failed to pass***

- **HB 483** by Dorazio (*Isaac Co-Author*) The 84th Texas Legislature enacted H.B. 483, which established the Texas Bullion Depository. The depository has additional capacity and an opportunity to provide a gold and silver backed currency. While many Texans choose to purchase gold and silver, there is almost no option for them to use it in everyday life. C.S.H.B. 4903 seeks to make the depository more accessible and usable for Texans by providing for the issuance of gold and silver pieces and the establishment of a digital currency based on gold and silver.

## CRIMINAL JUSTICE

### *Victories passed*

- **HB 6** by Goldman – reclassifies fentanyl-related deaths as poisonings and increases punishments for manufacturing, delivering, and possessing fentanyl.
- **HB 17** by Cook (*Isaac Co-Author*) – State law is meant to be followed, not enforced at the whim of district and county attorneys. House Bill 17 enforces criminal laws uniformly across the state and prohibits district and county attorneys from announcing, adopting or implementing policies that prevent or materially limit the enforcement of certain criminal offenses in Texas. **It also** allows for the removal of rogue district and county attorneys who fail or refuse to prosecute certain crimes and deflects potential conflicts of interest in the petition for removal by requiring prosecutors in the case to be appointed from a different county.
- **SB 540** by Campbell (*Isaac Sponsor*) – Amends the Transportation Code to include, among the police officers eligible to apply for certification to enforce commercial motor vehicle safety standards, a police officer of a municipality that is located as follows:
  - within 20 miles of an international airport; and
  - in a county that:
    - contains an active quarry;
    - has a population of more that 150,000 but less than 170,000; and
    - is adjacent to a county with a population of more than 2 million.

## ENERGY/CLIMATE CHANGE/ENVIRONMENTAL SOCIAL GOVERNANCE

### *Victories passed*

- **SB 833** by King (*Isaac Co-sponsor*) – prohibits insurance companies from denying coverage/assigning rates based on Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) factors. This important legislation was on one of the last calendars for the House. On the night in question I whipped 25 votes to "move the previous question" and send the bill to an immediate vote. The bill passed with less than two minutes left before the midnight deadline.

- **SB 1860** by Hughes – bans cities from enacting climate change policy in their charters by requiring state approval for those amendments.
- **SB 1017** by Birdwell – preemptively bans political governing bodies from prohibiting gas-powered engines.
- **HB 1500** by Holland – Ensuring Grid Reliability: Reforms policies governing Texas’ electric grid, including a reliability requirement for new power plants and a mandate that the Public Utility Commission study the effect of allocating reliability costs to existing variable generators. This legislation gives guidance to the PUC with respect to implementing the Performance Credit Mechanism (PCM). Under the PCM, certain electricity generators (mainly fossil fuels generators) could earn a performance credit for being available when demand surges. HB1500 provides that the credits are available only for dispatchable facilities (i.e., wind and solar will not be eligible for these credits).
- **HB 4932** by J. Lopez (*Isaac Co-Author*) – Helping Texas Avoid EPA Authoritarianism: Requires the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality to include the effect of foreign sources of emissions when evaluating whether Texas has attained emissions goals, which will help Texas cities avoid draconian EPA restrictions on air emissions limits.
- **SB 784** by Birdwell – Preventing Local Government Regulation of Greenhouse Gas: Gives the state the ability to preempt greenhouse gas emissions standards set by local governments.
- **SB 2627** by Schwertner – will create a fund for up to \$7.2 billion designed to encourage construction, maintenance and modernization of dispatchable-electric-generating facilities (such as natural gas power plants) in Texas. (Funding of this program will require approval from the Texas voters of a constitutional amendment in the fall of 2023.) The non-dispatchable electric generation facilities (such as solar and wind) and electric energy storage facilities will not be eligible to take advantage of this fund. SB2627 creates multiple zero or low interest funding mechanisms.

## EDUCATION AND PROTECTING CHILDREN

### *Victories passed*

- **SB 15** by Middleton (*Isaac Co-Sponsor*) – “Save Women’s Sports Act”
- **HB 3** by Burrows – Omnibus school safety legislation that requires districts to implement multi-hazard plans, requires armed security at public schools, and provides for greater threat assessment training to teachers.
- **HB 900** by Patterson (*Isaac Co-Author*) – the R.E.A.D.E.R. Act (Restricting Explicit and Adult-Designated Educational Resources Act). Provides regulations to identify what is "sexually explicit material" in school library materials.
- **SB 12** by Hughes – creates civil penalties for an individual who controls the premises of a commercial business and allows a sexually oriented performance to occur in front of a child. A person who engages in the sexually oriented performance can also be charged with a Class A misdemeanor.
- **SB 17** by Creighton – bans Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI). Higher education institutions cannot have an office that engages in hiring, implements policies, conducts training about, or provides preferential treatment based on race, sex, color, or ethnicity. After my budget rider passed which prohibited state funds from funding DEI practices, we passed this bill which makes sure these programs can not be funded by leftist organizations.
- **SB 18** by Creighton – reforms the tenure system to ensure that university governing boards and chancellors have sole authority to grant and revoke tenure.
- **HB 1707** by Klick – preventing Charter School discrimination. Removes a barrier to providing more seats in great schools by prohibiting local governments from discriminating against charter schools. Cities cannot regulate charters with laws that do not apply to ISDs.
- **HB 2102** by Goldman – Expanding Charter Schools: This small but important law was specifically requested by charter school leaders we spoke with: school leaders will have three years, rather than 18 months, to launch new schools. This will help them start strong on Day 1.

- **HB 1959** by Noble – Offering Choices to Law Enforcement Families: Under this law, a police officer may select the ISD school of their choice for their child.

*Failed to pass*

- **School vouchers (SB 8 by Creighton)** – failed to pass through the House Education Committee
- **Teacher pay raise (HB 100 by King)** – failed to pass the conference committee.

**ELECTION INTEGRITY**

*Victories passed*

- **HB 246** by Swanson / Bettencourt – Requires the Secretary of State to create uniform requirements for the videotaping of areas containing voted ballots so counties and cities cannot deliberately place cameras in locations that obscure visibility.
- **HB 1217** by Swanson / Kolkhorst (*Isaac Co-Author*) – Standardizes voting hours in rural areas, so rural Republican counties are not receiving less time to vote than the urban Democrat counties.
- **HB 1243** by Hefner / Hughes (*Isaac Co-Author*) – Increases the penalty for illegal voting to a 2nd degree felony (currently a Class A misdemeanor) and attempted illegal voting to a state jail felony (currently no penalty explicitly enumerated in statute).
- **HB 1631** by Paul / Middleton – Removes the requirement that a poll watcher must serve five continuous hours to be eligible to serve at the hours that the watcher chooses.
- **SB 545** by Kolkhorst / Toth – Requires the Department of Vital Statistics to turn over death records to the Secretary of State to remove dead voters from voter rolls and registrations.
- **SB 1070** by Hughes / Jetton (*Isaac Co-Author of House Companion*) – Republican Party of Texas priority legislation to get Texas out of ERIC (Electronic Registration Information

Center) the interstate voter registration crosscheck program. SB 1070 allows Texas to use private market software to fulfill the functions of interstate voter registration and cross-check services instead of the ERIC program.

- **SB 1750** by Bettencourt / Cain – **Returns** Harris County elections back to the elected officials by abolishing the position of Harris County Elections Administrator and ceding those duties to the tax-assessor collector and county clerk.
  
- **SB 1933** by Bettencourt / Oliverson – The Alan Vera Election Accountability Act of 2023.
  - Establishes procedures for the secretary of state to have oversight of a county office administering elections or voter registration in the county.
  - Creates a process to state election oversight by allowing administrative election complaints to be filed with the secretary of state
  - Allows the secretary of state to oversee county elections after conducting an investigation and finding good cause to believe that a recurring pattern of problems with election administration or voter registration exists in the county.
  
- **SB 1661** by Hughes – Placing Guardrails on Ballot Scan System Use: Prohibits a central counting station from purchasing or using a ballot scanner unless that scanner is only capable of using a storage device that can only be used once.

*Failed to pass*

- **HB 2498** by Swanson – Alan Vera Elections Omnibus
  - 10-page omnibus to cleanup the provisions of 87(2) SB 1, and ensure there are proper penalties for election officials that violate the law.
  - Clarifies Chain of Custody; ensures that the SOS gives proper oversight to counties that are in noncompliance and that poll watchers have full access to the entire election procedure such as ballot duplication, counting, and ballot by mail processing.



### *Failed to Receive a Hearing in the House*

- **HB 2860** by Swanson – Stopping Ballot Harvesters from Exploiting Database Latency.
  - "Database latency" is a term to describe the delay between an input and an output that occurs when a database's record does not match current reality.
  - Ballot harvesters in states across the nation have found a mechanism for using database latency to send thousands of ballots to a single address, then remove the evidence.
  - Voter Registration Audit Log; HB 2860 ensures that all voter registration information is tracked through an instantaneous, voter registration audit log.
    - Florida has this; Texas does not.
  - Free Access to Voter Registration Info; Ensures that voters have free access to all voter registration information in a downloadable, searchable format.
  - Penalties for Officials; Creates penalties for election officials who willfully violate the law (Class A Misdemeanor).

### *Died in Calendars*

- **SB 220 (HB 549)** by Bettencourt / Swanson –
  - Election Marshals; Authorizes Texas Rangers to serve as Election Marshals under the SOS to stop fraud.
  - Rocket Docket; Allows election violation suits to go to a court within 3 hours on early voting and 1 hour on Election Day.
  - Adjoining Judge; Allows election violations suits to go to a judge in an adjoining jurisdiction.

### *Failed to Receive a Hearing in the House*

- **SB 221 (HB 190)** by Bettencourt / Paul – Ensures that cities and home rule municipalities cannot mislead voters with ballot language on petition elections.

### *Died on a Caption Point of Order*

- **SB 1911** by Bettencourt – Created criminal penalties for obstructing the delivery of ballot supplies or materials.

### **EXTRATERRITORIAL JURISDICTION (ETJs)**

#### *Victories passed*

- **SB 2038** by Bettencourt – allows property owners within the extraterritorial jurisdiction of a municipality to release their property from the ETJ in one of two ways:
  - **Petition of over 50% of property owners to the municipality.** If a city receives a valid petition signed by the satisfactory threshold that describes the area to be released, the city must remove the area from the ETJ within 45 days or it is released automatically by operation of law
  - **Local option election.** A property owner may request an election to release a mapped area from the ETJ by presenting a petition signed by **5%** or more of residents within the mapped area. Upon receipt, the city must call an election on the following uniform election date within the specific area in question. If 50% or more voters choose to leave, the area is removed from the ETJ.

### **HOUSING**

#### *Victories passed*

- **HB 2071** by Jetton – cracks down on public facilities corporations (PFCs) or government subsidized housing - a tax loophole that apartment complexes use to get out of paying ALL property taxes without proving that they provide affordable housing - with greater transparency and accountability measures, including:
  - Minimum number of required units for truly needy individuals
  - Frequent auditing with potential loss of tax exemptions
  - Requires approval from elected officials on a city council, not unelected bureaucrats in housing authorities like the Houston Housing Authority

- Authorizing a long-term study on the negative effect of PFC tax exemptions on local governments

## **MEDICAL PROCEDURES**

### *Victories passed*

- **HB 44** by Swanson (*Isaac Co-Author*) – prohibits Medicaid providers from refusing to provide services to enrollees who have not received a particular vaccine or immunization.
- **SB 14** by Campbell/Oliverson (*Isaac Co-sponsor*) – bans gender reassignment surgeries on children under 18.
- **SB 29** by Birdwell – prohibits government vaccine mandates, lockdowns, and mask mandates for COVID-19.

### *Failed to pass*

- **SB 265** by Perry – requires physicians to report experimental or emergency use vaccine-related injuries to the federal Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System.

*Never received a hearing in House Committee on Public Health*

## **PROPERTY TAXES**

### *Victories passed*

- **HJR 2** by Metcalf, **SB 2** by Bettencourt, & **SB 3** by Bettencourt (*Isaac Co-Sponsor on all 3 measures*) – In the Second Called Session of the 88<sup>th</sup> Legislature, the Texas House, Senate, and Governor negotiated a comprehensive property tax relief package that appropriates \$18 Billion toward property tax relief This tax package includes the following provisions across three different bills:
  - Increases total tax reduction on School district Maintenance & Operation (M&O) by **\$12 billion** by providing additional state funds to lower or “compress” local school district tax rates

- School district M&O Tax Homestead Exemption increase – increases from first **\$40,000** of taxable value of homestead properties to first **\$100,000** of taxable homestead value
- Increases the exemption from Franchise Tax on businesses, increasing the exemption from **\$1 million** worth of total revenue to **\$2.47 million** worth of total revenue
- Implements a temporary **20% cap** on year-to-year appraised value increases on all **non-homestead properties worth \$5 million or less**. This pilot program or “circuit breaker” will remain effective until 2026.
- Entitles school districts to increased state funding to offset losses from enhanced exemptions in the 2023-2024 school year
- **Increases appraisal review board membership by three**, three of whom will serve as **elected board members** on appraisal review boards in counties of 75,000 or more; the three elected members shall run in nonpartisan elections on the November ballot.

All provisions of the property tax package *except* the franchise tax exemption must be approved by voters on **November 7, 2023** (HJR 2).

The proposition related to tax relief is still unnumbered, along with the **13** propositions passed during the regular session. Please check the **Secretary of State** website for information related to upcoming Constitutional Amendments elections.

- **HB 4082** by Goldman – Defining Allowable Uses for Non Voter Approved Debt Instruments: Defines what tax anticipation notes (TANs) and certificates of obligation (COs) can be used for and prohibits their use for certain projects, like stadiums, arenas, convention centers, and more.
- **SB 2035** by Bettencourt – Protecting the Will of Voters: Prohibits TANs and COs from being used to pay for projects that were rejected by voters in the previous five years.
- **HB 796** by Button – Creating Database of Appraisal Protests: Requires appraisal districts to create an online database of appraisal protests. H.B. 796 aims to make the appraisal process more transparent by requiring each chief appraiser to create and maintain a publicly

available and searchable Internet database of information regarding protest hearings conducted by the appraisal district's ARB. Effective date: January 1, 2024.

## **WATER**

### ***Victories passed***

- **SB 28** by Perry – together with the Senate Joint Resolution 75, will establish a new water supply fund to be administered by the Texas Water Development Board. This fund will be used to finance new, large water projects and to upgrade water infrastructure, especially in rural communities. The goal of the fund is to facilitate delivery of 7 million acre-feet (about 2.3 trillion gallons) of new water supplies by December 31, 2033, by financing desalination projects, produced water treatment projects, aquifer storage and recovery projects, and development of infrastructure to transport water produced by one of the previously described type of projects. Part of this legislation relating to the creation of the Texas Water Fund to assist in financing water projects is contingent on voter approval of a constitutional amendment in the fall of 2023.
- SB 2440. As I am sure many of you have noticed, many Families are moving to central Texas. [SB 2440](#) is one way we're ensuring that **development does not advance where water is not present**. New developments will be subject to this legislation, which requires that a plat application for a subdivision include **proof of groundwater supply** and ensures we've updated maps illustrating available groundwater. **This goes into effect 1/1/2024.**

***\*This is not an exhaustive list of wins of the 88th legislative session. During the 88th regular session 8,046 bills were filed and 1,246 of those passed.***

### **HOUSE RULE 5/ CHAPTER A/ SECTION 3**

The House of Representatives adopted this rule to address the issue of Democrats breaking quorum in the 87th legislature:

- If a member is absent without leave for the purpose of impeding the action of the house, the member is subject to one or more of the following:
  - (1) fines as provided by this section;
  - (2) payment of costs incurred by the sergeant-at-arms;
  - (3) reprimand;
  - (4) censure; or
  - (5) expulsion in the manner prescribed by Section 11, Article III, Texas Constitution.
  
- Unless the house excuses the payment by a majority vote, each member who is absent without leave is liable to the house for:
  - (1) a fine in the amount of \$500 for each calendar day of absence; and
  - (2) the member's pro rata share of the costs incurred by the sergeant-at-arms to secure the attendance of absentees.

The Committee on House Administration shall notify a member of the total amount of fines and costs for which payment is not excused. A member must pay the amount stated in the committee's notice by making payment of that amount to the House Business Office not later than the third business day of the first calendar month after the date of the committee's notice. A member may not make any payment from funds in the member's operating account or from funds accepted as political contributions under Title 15, Election Code. If a member does not make full payment as required by this subsection, the committee shall direct the House Business Office to reduce the amount of the monthly credit to the member's operating account established under the housekeeping resolution by 30 percent in each month that any amount of a fine remains past due and owing.

## **Helpful Information & Additional Resources**

### **Information on Bills and votes during Session:**

For additional questions or more information regarding a vote taken on, or the outcome of, specific legislation, please visit the Texas Legislature Online website at [capitol.texas.gov](http://capitol.texas.gov)

### **House Member Information:**

For additional questions or more information regarding a specific member of the Texas House of Representatives, please visit the official Texas House of Representatives website at [house.texas.gov/members](http://house.texas.gov/members)

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