

# TEXAS HOUSE HOLDS LINE ON SPENDING

*Rep. Darby, other House Legislative Budget Board members release 2016-17  
Budget Recommendations*

**AUSTIN** – The Texas House proposed a budget Thursday that would keep spending flat over the next two years while addressing priorities such as education, transportation and border security.

The House released a two-year state budget plan that would spend \$202.4 billion during the 2016-17 budget cycle, up from an estimated \$202.1 billion in the current cycle - an increase of 0.2%. The plan appropriates \$98.8 billion in General Revenue, up from \$95.2 billion.

"It was an honor to be part of this process of building the House budget recommendations to meet the needs and priorities for this state," said Representative Drew Darby, R-San Angelo. "I look forward to working with every member to pass a conservative budget they can be proud of."

The initial budget lays the foundation from which House members will work over the next five months.

"This plan proves that the Texas House remains serious about fiscal discipline," said Speaker Joe Straus, R-San Antonio. "We are able to hold spending in check while addressing some very important challenges related to our rapid growth."

Last August, Speaker Straus launched a process called Strategic Fiscal Review in order to ask key questions about state agencies' operations, priorities and goals. The House budget proposal incorporates a number of findings from that process, which produced major savings and identified critical issues. For example, significant management and policy issues were identified at the Texas Juvenile Justice Department, requiring members to take a fundamental look at the mission and scope of this agency.

"Strategic Fiscal Review worked as intended," Speaker Straus said. "Because of that process, we begin this session with a much better understanding of how these agencies work now and how they can work better in the future. The end result will be that state government is more efficient and more effective."

Even as it controls spending, the House budget addresses a number of key priorities, such as:

- **Public Education.** It funds enrollment growth in public schools over the next two years.
- **Higher Education.** The budget expands graduate medical education in order to begin addressing shortages of medical professionals in Texas. It also increases TEXAS Grants.
- **Border Security.** Last month, the Legislative Budget Board extended and expanded Department of Public Safety operations along the border through the end of August 2015. The House budget funds those operations through August 2017.
- **Transportation.** Ends diversions of the State Highway Fund, with all of the money in that Fund going to the Texas Department of Transportation.
- **Mental Health.** The budget maintains expansions in mental health services from the current budget while committing additional dollars to mental health care for veterans.
- **Child Protection Courts.** The budget addresses a critical need by establishing four new child protection courts to serve children in West and rural Texas.

The House Appropriations Committee will work from this initial proposal as it prepares a budget for the full House to consider later in the session. Speaker Straus is expected to name House committees in the coming weeks.

More information is available here:

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