



I have spent much time traveling across the district to meet with constituents, business and community leaders, and elected officials. A number of trips to Austin have been made to meet with my new staff, attend freshman Legislative orientation, and become familiarized with the Capitol complex.

In December, I attended my first “freshman orientation” since my time at Texas A&M, this time for the state legislature. I met the 14 other freshman legislators as well as numerous heads of state agencies and departments. This was an excellent opportunity to learn about the processes and procedures of the Texas House.

My desk on the floor of the House and office were chosen through an interesting process based on cohort seniority, which was determined by pulling a numbered ping pong ball out of a box. Unfortunately, number 13 (out of 15) was pulled, but I was able to select a front-row desk to the right side of the Speaker’s dais and a great office that will welcome the people of HD 60.

The familiarization process with the Capitol building and extension is underway. Every time I enter the Capitol building, a great sense of awe and duty floods over me. It is a stunning symbol of Texas government steeped in a rich and unique history, representative of us as a people and a culture. Completed in the late 1880’s, more than 188,000 cubic feet of Sunset Red granite from Granite Mountain in nearby Burnet County was used to build the Capitol. Because everything in Texas is bigger, the builders made sure that the state capitol was 14 feet taller than the U.S. Capitol building in Washington, D.C. The legislature traded more than three million acres in the Panhandle as payment for the construction. This land became the historic XIT Ranch.

Being a big Texas history buff, I believe it is important to know the history of our state’s seat of government. The decisions made in that building affect not only our state, but our nation and the entire world. This capital complex illustrates the bold vision our state’s leaders have demonstrated throughout history. They were forward-thinking and unafraid of making tough decisions that would impact Texas for generations to come. When construction of the Capitol first began in 1882, our state’s population was only 1.6 million people and was overwhelmingly rural. Those men and women would be astounded to learn that Texas now has a population of almost 30 million people. Our state’s economy is now the 10th largest in the world. Today, our Capitol stands as an awe inspiring and powerful symbol of the great things that we, as Texans, can achieve.

This is the kind of leadership needed today. We are expected to make decisions to lead our state – and this country – through troubled times and to ensure that Texas succeeds and thrives. We will rise to this challenge.

The new legislative session begins Tuesday, January 12th. In my next few columns, I plan on discussing the important issues facing our state with you. Together, we will find solutions.

Happy New Year & God Bless Texas!