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Representative Jim Pitts

DISTRICT 10 • ELLIS & HENDERSON COUNTIES

For Immediate Release
January 14, 2013

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REP. PITTS TO FILE HOUSE BILL 1, BEGIN BUDGET PROCESS IN THE HOUSE

AUSTIN - Rep. Jim Pitts will file House Bill 1, the 2014-15 General Appropriations Act, on Tuesday.

The bill is a starting point for the session-long budget process. It reflects the demands of a rapidly growing state, as well as the House's continued commitment to responsible fiscal leadership.

"The filing of this budget will allow the House to formally begin a discussion about Texas' priorities," said Pitts, R-Waxahachie, and Chairman of the House Appropriations Committee. "This bill recognizes the demands of population growth on public schools and Medicaid, and steadfastly maintains the House's commitment to fiscal discipline."

The bill appropriates \$89.1 billion in General Revenue, and a total of \$187.7 billion in All Funds. Assuming the passage of a \$6.8 billion supplemental bill in the coming weeks, this is a \$2.2 billion decrease from 2012-13 levels. It spends \$3.7 billion less than allowed by the Constitutional Spending Limit and \$5.5 billion less than is available under the Comptroller's Biennial Revenue Estimate, released last week.

"This bill will allow the House to have an open, thorough, and transparent debate about appropriate funding levels for education, infrastructure, and services for the citizens of this state," Pitts said.

Other highlights of the bill:

- The bill covers the cost of projected enrollment increases in public and higher education during 2014-15.
- It funds the Medicaid program for a full 24 months, as opposed to the 19 months funded by the budget passed in May 2011, and covers projected Medicaid caseload growth over the next two years.
- It appropriates no money for new grants at the Cancer Prevention and Research Institute of Texas. State leaders called for a moratorium on CPRIT grants in December until the agency can prove that the grant-award process is transparent and accountable to taxpayers.
- The bill begins reducing the state's reliance on General Revenue-Dedicated funds for budget certification by increasing appropriations for certain accounts and decreasing the fees that fund them. For example, the bill reduces a fee on consumer electric bills but increases the amount of money appropriated from that fund to provide discounts to low-income households.

Remaining costs from the 2012-13 biennium, such as the five unfunded months of Medicaid, a shortfall in the Foundation School Program, and reimbursements for wildfire expenses will be covered in a supplemental appropriations bill. In the coming weeks, Chairman Pitts will also file legislation to undo the deferral of August 2013 payments to public school districts and return tax collection schedules to their normal timing.

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