



Office of State Senator José Menéndez

Senate District 26

District Office
4522 Fredericksburg Rd., Suite A-22
Balcones Heights, TX 78201
210-733-6604

Capitol Office
P.O. Box 12068
Austin, TX 78711
512-463-0126

District26.Menendez@senate.texas.gov

Announcements for October, 2021

The following are updates to keep the residents of Senate District 26 up-to-date with announcements from state agencies, the Texas Legislature, and from your SD 26 office.

Office Hours

Senator Menéndez's office is rotating to work at the office and remotely. With the spread of the Delta variant of the COVID-19 virus, we ask that visitors schedule an appointment and wear a mask upon entering the office.

We remain committed to responding to your questions and concerns. Feel free to call or email us if we may be of assistance.

Update on the Texas Legislature

The 87th Texas Legislative Session began on January 12 and ended on May 31. Senator Menéndez sent 26 bills to the Governor to be signed into law addressing public education, health, senior citizens, consumer protection, transportation, criminal justice, foster care, and veterans.

Please contact our office to get a list of the bills Senator Menéndez passed during the legislative session.

Items on the 1st Called Special Session of the 87th Texas Legislature

Lawmakers reconvened on July 8, by order of the governor, to address 11 of his priority issues. While these are the Governor's priorities, our office's priority is to represent the constituents of District 26.

BAIL REFORM: Legislation reforming the bail system in Texas to protect the public from accused criminals who may be released on bail.

ELECTION INTEGRITY: Legislation strengthening the integrity of elections in Texas.

BORDER SECURITY: Legislation providing funding to support law-enforcement agencies, counties, and other strategies as part of Texas’ comprehensive border security plan.

SOCIAL MEDIA CENSORSHIP: Legislation safeguarding the freedom of speech by protecting social-media users from being censored by social-media companies based on the user’s expressed viewpoints, including by providing a legal remedy for those wrongfully excluded from a platform.

ARTICLE X FUNDING: Legislation providing appropriations to the Legislature and legislative agencies in Article X of the General Appropriations Act.

FAMILY VIOLENCE PREVENTION: Legislation similar to Senate Bill 1109 from the 87th Legislature, Regular Session, requiring schools to provide appropriate education to middle- and high-school students about dating violence, domestic violence, and child abuse, but that recognizes the right of parents to opt their children out of the instruction.

YOUTH SPORTS: Legislation identical to Senate Bill 29 as passed by the Texas Senate in the 87th Legislature, Regular Session, disallowing a student from competing in University Interscholastic League athletic competitions designated for the sex opposite to the student’s sex at birth.

ABORTION-INDUCING DRUGS: Legislation similar to Senate Bill 394 from the 87th Legislature, Regular Session, which prohibits people from providing abortion-inducing drugs by mail or delivery service, strengthens the laws applicable to the reporting of abortions and abortion complications, and ensures that no abortion-inducing drugs are provided unless there is voluntary and informed consent.

THIRTEENTH CHECK: Legislation similar to House Bill 3507 from the 87th Legislature, Regular Session, relating to a “thirteenth check” or one-time supplemental payment of benefits under the Teacher Retirement System of Texas.

CRITICAL RACE THEORY: Legislation similar to House Bill 3979 concerning critical race theory as originally passed by the Texas Senate in the 87th Legislature, Regular Session.

APPROPRIATIONS: Legislation providing appropriations from additional available general revenue for the following purposes:

- property-tax relief;
- enhanced protection for the safety of children in Texas’ foster-care system by attracting and retaining private providers for the system; and

- to better safeguard the state from potential cybersecurity threats.

Items on the 2nd Called Special Session of the 87th Texas Legislature

On August 5th, the Governor announced that he would call state lawmakers back to Austin to address his priority items. As stated in the governor's press release, those issues are:

BAIL REFORM: Legislation reforming the bail system in Texas to protect the public from accused criminals who may be released on bail.

ELECTION INTEGRITY: Legislation strengthening the integrity of elections in Texas.

FEDERAL RELIEF APPROPRIATIONS: Legislation providing appropriations from unappropriated available revenues for COVID-19-related healthcare expenses, such as those listed below, taking into consideration the approximately \$10.5 billion in funds received by local governments intended to be used on COVID-19 from the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021(ARPA), Pub. L. No. 117-2:

- healthcare staffing needs, including physicians, nurses, and other medical professionals;
- establishing, staffing, and operating alternative care sites;
- supporting the operations of nursing homes, state supported living centers, assisted living facilities, and long-term care facilities;
- vaccine administration;
- testing sites;
- supplies and equipment, such as personal protective equipment (PPE) and ventilators; and
- standing up and operating infusion centers.

EDUCATION: Legislation providing strategies for public-school education in prekindergarten through twelfth grade during the COVID-19 pandemic, which ensures:

- students receive a high-quality education and progress in their learning;
- in-person learning is available for any student whose parent wants it;
- the wearing of face coverings is not mandatory; and
- COVID-19 vaccinations are always voluntary.

BORDER SECURITY: Legislation enhancing criminal laws or providing funding from unappropriated available revenues to support law-enforcement agencies, counties, and other strategies as part of Texas' comprehensive border security plan.

SOCIAL MEDIA CENSORSHIP: Legislation safeguarding the freedom of speech by protecting social-media and email users from being censored based on the user's expressed viewpoints, including by providing a legal remedy for those wrongfully excluded from a platform.

ARTICLE X FUNDING: Legislation providing appropriations from unappropriated available revenues to the Legislature and legislative agencies in Article X of the General Appropriations Act.

FAMILY VIOLENCE PREVENTION: Legislation similar to Senate Bill 1109 from the 87th Legislature, Regular Session, requiring schools to provide appropriate education to middle- and high-school students about dating violence, domestic violence, and child abuse, but that recognizes the right of parents to opt their children out of the instruction.

YOUTH SPORTS: Legislation identical to Senate Bill 29 as passed by the Texas Senate in the 87th Legislature, Regular Session, disallowing a student from competing in University Interscholastic League athletic competitions designated for the sex opposite to the student's sex at birth.

ABORTION-INDUCING DRUGS: Legislation similar to Senate Bill 394 from the 87th Legislature, Regular Session, which prohibits people from providing abortion-inducing drugs by mail or delivery service, strengthens the laws applicable to the reporting of abortions and abortion complications, and ensures that no abortion-inducing drugs are provided unless there is voluntary and informed consent.

THIRTEENTH CHECK: Legislation similar to House Bill 3507 from the 87th Legislature, Regular Session, relating to a "thirteenth check" or one-time supplemental payment of benefits under the Teacher Retirement System of Texas.

CRITICAL RACE THEORY: Legislation similar to House Bill 3979 concerning critical race theory as originally passed by the Texas Senate in the 87th Legislature, Regular Session.

APPROPRIATIONS: Legislation providing appropriations from unappropriated available revenues for the following purposes:

- property-tax relief;
- enhanced protection for the safety of children in Texas' foster-care system by attracting and retaining private providers for the system; and
- to better safeguard the state from potential cybersecurity threats.

PRIMARY ELECTIONS: Legislation modifying the filing periods and related election dates, including any runoffs, for primary elections held in Texas in 2022.

RADIOACTIVE WASTE: Legislation reforming the laws governing radioactive waste to protect the safety of Texans, including by further limiting the ability to store and transport high-level radioactive materials in this state.

EMPLOYMENT: Legislation shielding private employers and employees from political subdivision rules, regulations, ordinances, and other actions that require any terms of employment

that exceed or conflict with federal or state law relating to any form of employment leave, hiring practices, employment benefits, or scheduling practices.

STATE LEGISLATURE: Legislation relating to legislative quorum requirements.

Items on the 3rd Called Special Session of the 87th Texas Legislature

Governor Abbott announced on September 7 that he would again call Texas legislators to reconvene on September 20 to address the following five items listed on the proclamation:

- Legislation relating to the apportionment of the State of Texas into districts used to elect members of the Texas House of Representatives, the Texas Senate, the State Board of Education, and the United States House of Representatives.
- Legislation providing appropriations from the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (ARPA), Pub. L. No. 117-2.
- Legislation identical to Senate Bill 29 as passed by the Texas Senate in the 87th Legislature, Regular Session, disallowing a student from competing in University Interscholastic League athletic competitions designated for the sex opposite to the student's sex at birth.
- Legislation regarding whether any state or local governmental entities in Texas can mandate that an individual receive a COVID-19 vaccine and, if so, what exemptions should apply to such mandate.
- Legislation similar to Senate Bill 474 as passed by the 87th Legislature, Regular Session, but that addresses the concerns expressed in the governor's veto statement.

[NOTE: SB 474: Relating to the unlawful restraint of a dog; creating a criminal offense; was passed by the Texas Legislature and was vetoed by the governor.]

Policy Items Added by the Governor to the 3rd Called Special Session

September 22: Property Taxes and Proposing a constitutional amendment regarding criminals who may be released on bail, including by giving magistrates the discretion to deny bail under some circumstances to people accused of certain violent, sexual, or trafficking offenses.

September 30: Elections and increasing penalties for breaking voting law.

October 11: Prohibiting vaccine mandates by public or private entities.

October 15: Higher education

This is the third called special session that the Governor has had the Legislature come back for with the opportunity to put anything on the call. What is not on the call is a Cost-of-Living-Adjustment for our retired teachers, addressing the foster care crisis our state is facing, expansion of Medicaid, or recovery from COVID-19 for our Texas families. These are things that our kids, families and seniors are in dire need of. Many of the bills we have heard over the last three months are aimed at hurting our fellow Texans and taking away many of their fundamental rights.

Senator Menéndez will continue representing the priorities of the constituents of District 26 and will fight for legislation that reflects that. Please contact our Capitol office at 512-463-0126 for an update on any of the Special Session items.

In the upcoming months, Senator Menéndez will host legislative briefings to give constituents an overview of the session and to answer questions from the public.

You may contact our office for a list of the Senator's bills, for information on other legislation, or if you have ideas for future bills.

Eight Constitutional Amendments on Nov. 2 Ballot

PROPOSITION 1 - Raffles

PROPOSITION 5 - Judges

PROPOSITION 2 - County Government

PROPOSITION 6 - Caregiver Visits

PROPOSITION 3 - Religious Services

PROPOSITION 7 - Property Tax Exemption

PROPOSITION 4 - Judges

PROPOSITION 8 - Property Tax / Military

Explanation of constitutional amendments in the League of Women Voters of Texas non-partisan guide: https://lwvtexas.org/content.aspx?page_id=22&club_id=979482&module_id=490719

General Announcements

Voting

Your vote is your voice! Early voting begins Monday, October 18 - Friday, October 29, 2021.

Election Day Vote Centers are open November 2, 7 AM until 7 PM

Voters can visit any of these Vote Centers to vote on election day. Visit the Bexar County Election Information page <https://www.bexar.org/1568/Elections-Department> for details on:

- Early Voting Locations & Hours
- Generic Sample Ballot
- Early Vote Centers Map
- Election Day Vote Centers List

Education Services for Children with Special Needs

New eligibility criteria for the Supplemental Special Education Services (SSES) will begin on Nov. 1, 2021. One-time grants of \$1,500 will be available to **parents of eligible PreK-12th grade students served by special education**. For more information, you may visit ses.tea.texas.gov.

Texas Dept. of Insurance

With recent rains and flooding, it's good to know you can contact the Texas Dept. of Insurance if you have a question about flood damage or insurance claims. Call for consumer protection questions at **800-252-3439**.

The time to purchase or renew a flood insurance policy is well before a disaster strikes as it typically takes up to 30 days for a policy to go into effect. To learn more about obtaining flood insurance, you may call the National Flood Insurance Program at **877-336-2627**

Hiring a Licensed Plumber

After the deep freeze in February, the [Texas State Board of Plumbing Examiners \(TSBPE\)](#) took unprecedented measures to increase the number of qualified plumbers available across the state. We now have more qualified plumbers available to work in Texas than ever before. A current Texas plumbing license guarantees a certain level of skill and that the license holder has passed a criminal background check. Search for a licensed plumber near you: tsbpe.texas.gov and look for the “Interactive Plumber Locating Map.” The [TSBPE advises residents](#) to also:

- Insulate water pipes
- Locate your main shutoff valve
- Close or replace foundation/attic vents
- Check your pipes while the weather is warm.

Supplemental Special Education Services

Families can purchase educational resources from the Supplemental Special Education Services accounts. This includes educational goods such as books, laptops, tablets, and services such as tutoring and therapy. To learn more, view the FAQs: <http://bit.ly/2YyY8GZ>

Emergency SNAP Benefits for October

The Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) announced that Texas received additional federal funds to continue assisting families with nutrition needs as the state continues to be impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. To learn details, go to <https://yourtexasbenefits.com/Learn/Home>

COVID-19 Mental Health Support Line

If you or someone you know is feeling overwhelmed by the COVID-19 pandemic, help is available. Speak with a mental health professional for help dealing with anxiety, depression, stress, grief or worry 24/7.

Call the toll-free COVID-19 Mental Health Support Line for more information: **833-986-1919** or text **COVID** to **832-479-2135**.

National Domestic Violence Awareness Month

Texans are encouraged to wear purple on “Go Purple Day” on **Thursday, Oct. 21**, as a symbol of peace, courage, survival, honor and personal dedication to domestic violence awareness. The [2021 campaign theme](#) is *Everyone Knows Someone* (hashtags #Every1KnowsSome1 and #DVAM).

If you or somebody you know is experiencing domestic violence, visit the [National Domestic Violence Hotline website](#). You can live chat to receive support, call 800-799-7233 (800-787-3224 for TTY), or text “START” to 88788 at any time.

Employment for Personal Care Attendants

HHSC and Texas Workforce Commission are collaborating to highlight the increasing **need for personal care attendants** to serve people with disabilities across the state. To learn about positions available, go to <https://www.mytxcareer.com/vosnet/Default.aspx>

Employment Opportunities for Veterans

For military veterans, the 2021 Hiring Red, White, and You! Job Fair will be held statewide on **November 4th**, with traditional in-person events and opportunities to participate virtually. For more information, visit: twc.texas.gov/hiring-red-white-you

Texas Department of Transportation Project Tracker

The Project Tracker is the gateway to information about more than 11,000 TxDOT projects. To see updates on those projects you see on your regular commute, go to:

<https://www.txdot.gov/inside-txdot/projects/project-tracker.html> **VFW Scholarship Competition**

The Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) is accepting submissions for **The Voice of Democracy Program**. It is open to students in grades 9-12 who are enrolled in a public, private or parochial high school or home study program in the United States and its territories.

The grand prize: \$30,000 paid directly to the American college, university or vocational/technical school of their choice! **Entry deadline:** October 31, 2021

Download form at <https://vfworg-cdn.azureedge.net/-/media/VFWSite/Files/Community/Youth-and-Education/Voice-of-Democracy-Entry-Form-Fillable.pdf?v=1&d=20210408T214552Z&la=en>

COVID-19 Vaccination

Reminder! COVID-19 vaccines are FREE without ID or insurance. Many pharmacies and other providers offer walk-in vaccinations.

Everyone 12 years of age and older can get vaccinated against COVID-19.

Getting vaccinated to prevent COVID infection is a high priority. Our office can provide you with resources of where you may schedule your vaccine appointment.

The Texas Mobile Vaccine Call Center is open Monday-Saturday, 8 a.m. - 5 p.m.
Call 844-90-TEXAS to schedule a team to vaccinate your group of 5 or more.

HHSC urges Texans in need of monoclonal antibody treatment to call 1-800-742-5990.

In Bexar County

To find a vaccine provider near you: <https://www.dshs.texas.gov/covidvaccine/>

Residents can also sign up for alerts notifying you when appointments are available, text **VACCINE** to **55000**

Metro Health	210-207-6000, Option 8	https://covid19.sanantonio.gov/Home
University Health System	210-644-1960	WeCanDoItSA.com

You may also contact our office for a list of resources to sign yourself up for vaccines and help others with that process. Contact us: 210-733-6604 or District26.Menendez@senate.texas.gov
Please take precautions if you need to go out. Together we can bring down the number of COVID-19 cases.