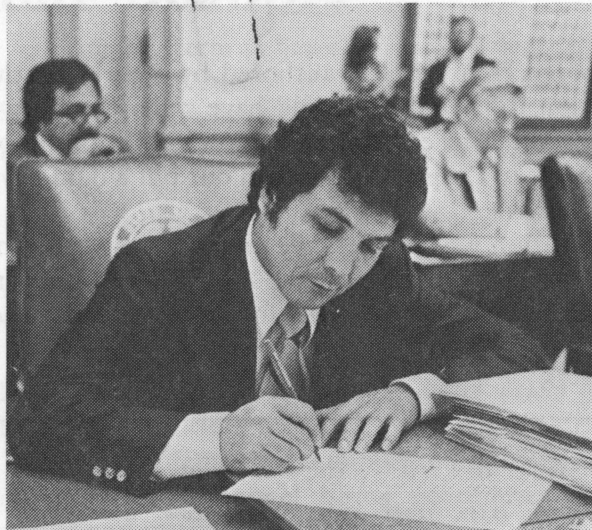


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LEGISLATIVE REPORT

ARNOLD GONZALES
State Representative
District 48-A

Dear Friends:

It was a time of learning.

As a freshman representative, I earned my stripes in the 65th session of the Legislature . . . I learned "the ropes" . . . studied parliamentary rules and procedures . . . and spent those late hours of the evenings in committee meetings. From your letters and visits, I learned a great deal about my constituency and applied this knowledge to my votes. Aware of my awesome responsibility as a servant of the people, I studied and analyzed every piece of major legislation, often a thankless but, for me, a most rewarding task.

In this "Legislative Report" form, I would like to share with you some information regarding legislation that we considered during the regular session of the Legislature which ended May 30, 1977, and the highlights of the recently concluded special session.

In the interest of the citizens of Texas, many important laws were changed or written anew during the regular session; among them are statutes which institute a "living will" under the Natural Death Act, govern the filing of medical malpractice suits, and increase benefits for retired school teachers. Also, I am pleased to report that Texas now has a so-called "Sunset Law," which provides for the termination of those state agencies unable to justify their existence. In addition, a State Adult Probation system was created, the use of laetrile was legalized, and the mentally retarded were given legal rights and status. One proposed law that I assisted in keeping out of the books was an open-beaches regulation, which would have restricted automobiles on our beaches in Corpus Christi.

During the special session, we covered three important areas of law. We wrote a school finance law, placed restrictions on nursing home administrators, and created a port authority which will be responsible for the building of the Seadock project near Freeport.

I know that there are areas of legislation which I am not able to review for you in this letter. If you need information about one of these bills, please do not hesitate to call my Corpus Christi office. The address and telephone number are listed on the final page of this report. And, if you happen to be in Austin, stop by my Capitol office so that you can meet my Austin staff, who will be glad to assist you with anything you might need at the Capitol.

I will write again in the fall to assist you in keeping abreast of important legislative changes.

Sincerely yours,

Arnold Gonzalez
Arnold Gonzalez

School Finance

During the special session of the 65th Legislature, I co-sponsored House Bill 3, authored by Representative Ron Coleman of El Paso. Commonly referred to as the "Equalization Bill," H.B. 3 would have given the Corpus Christi I.S.D. \$7,292,800 in new state aid. Our bill was narrowly defeated in committee and on the House Floor. Senate Bill 1, the bill which was finally passed, spends considerably less in Corpus Christi than our bill would have, and does little to narrow the gap between the rich and poor school districts.

The main emphasis of H.B. 3 was to put more money into equalization which meets the directives as set out by the 1973 Rodriguez decision. When compared to H.B. 3, the passage of S.B. 1 means a loss of \$1,358,800 to Corpus Christi I.S.D. Needless to say, I am very disappointed that our bill did not pass. The following is a very brief review of some of the highlights of the new school finance law:

Teacher salaries: The graph illustrates teacher salaries for 1977-78.

Years of Experience	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
New Salary (Bachelor)	8,460	8,740	9,020	9,400	9,780	10,150	10,620	11,050	11,560	11,560	12,130	12,130	12,690	12,690	12,690	12,690	12,690	13,250
Increase over last year	460	740	720	780	830	850	950	1,040	1,110	1,110	1,260	1,260	1,380	1,380	910	910	910	1,470
New Salary (Masters)	9,020	9,310	9,680	10,150	10,620	11,090	11,560	12,130	12,690	12,690	12,690	12,690	13,250	13,250	13,820	13,820	13,820	13,820
Increase over last year		710	730	850	950	1,040	1,110	1,260	1,380	1,380	1,380	1,380	1,470	1,470	1,550	1,550	1,040	1,040

State Money for Corpus Christi: The new law will provide \$6,339,600 in new state money including teacher salaries for Corpus Christi Independent School District.

Tax Relief for Property Owners: By a Vote of 70-70 a measure that would have mandated tax relief for property owners was defeated. I voted for the tax relief.

Higher Education

As a member of the House Committee on Higher Education, I learned a great deal about the appropriative and financial needs of institutions of higher learning in our area. As a firm supporter of post-secondary education, I was very pleased to assist Corpus Christi State University and Del Mar Junior College receive extra monies for new projects, in addition to their regular appropriations:

Corpus Christi State University: For 1977-78, a total appropriation of \$4, 978,792, which includes 1.8 million for the construction of a new classroom building and \$440,000 for the construction of a new library building. I am very enthusiastic about the new construction, because I am sure that it will greatly enhance the quality of education on the campus.

Del Mar Junior College: A total appropriation of \$4,029,512 for 1977-78.

Another development in the field of Higher Education, was the establishment of the University System of South Texas. Under this new system the name of Texas A & I University at Corpus Christi is changed to Corpus Christi State University, and Texas A & I University at Laredo is changed to Laredo State University. The result of such action will mean more money for system administration in the future.

Nursing Homes

During the special session, the Legislature passed a nursing home regulation bill that would tighten down on the half-billion dollar industry in Texas. Serving on the Health and Welfare Committee which considered this bill, I became acquainted with the major complaints and problems concerning homes for the aged. Currently there are 1,001 nursing homes with the responsibility of caring for the elder citizens of our state. With the recent complaints of abuse, mishandling and mistreatment of residents, the nursing home reform bill will attempt to curb the reoccurrence of such incidents. Major provisions provided by the bill include:

- 1) All inspections of nursing homes are to be unannounced, with at least one inspection per year.
- 2) Annual open hearings in nursing homes.
- 3) Stiffer legal sanctions and fines against homes that do not comply with the regulations.
- 4) Transfer of nursing care functions from the Department of Public Welfare to the Department of Health.
- 5) Criminal penalties for those who abuse or neglect nursing home residents.
- 6) Easier public access to information about nursing homes.

State Schools

During my term as State Representative, there have been several problems of serious concern at the Corpus Christi State School and other state schools across the state. The Committee on Health and Welfare, of which I am a member, has proposed an interim study in the area of Mental Health and Mental Retardation. I have asked to be appointed to such committee so that we can further investigate the problems of state schools. Investigation will focus on the quality of care provided to residents and determine the need for additional follow-up services for the residents and other possible solutions to specific problem areas. Under the category of specific problems, the committee proposes to study funding needs, personnel hiring procedures, and the screening and testing of residents.

Many of you have written to me concerning the deaths of residents at the Corpus Christi and Mexia

State Schools, and I fully agree that certain irregularities exist in our state schools that warrant an exhaustive investigation. Hopefully, after we have all the facts we can work to avoid such incidents and provide the residents of these schools with the best care possible.

Also, as a member of the Health and Welfare Committee this session, I was involved in the appropriative decision-making for the Texas Department of Mental Health and Mental Retardation. For 1977-78, the Corpus Christi State School will receive \$6,586,703 in state revenues. Of this figure, \$250,000 in new monies were included as a result of my negotiations on the committee to procure more funds for the school. Hopefully, such funding will help to avoid the reoccurrence of the tragic events which have plagued this school recently.



St. Cyril and Methodius School 5th graders.

Arnold Gonzales conferring with Rep. Ron Coleman author of H.B. 3.