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Hunter Delivers Legislative Wins for Coastal Bend

TWIA reform, suicide prevention, college funding make session successful.

(CORPUS CHRISTI) – It will be more difficult for the Texas Windstorm Insurance Association (TWIA) to raise insurance rates under legislation successfully pushed this year by State Rep. Todd Hunter of Corpus Christi. The protection against TWIA rate increases was one of many legislative victories that Rep. Hunter delivered for the Coastal Bend.

Rep. Hunter, who has long fought against TWIA rate increases, ensured language was included in Senate Bill 1448 requiring that two-thirds of the TWIA Board of Directors must vote to approve any rate increase, rather than a simple majority. Governor Greg Abbott signed Senate Bill 1448 into law on May 26, making it effective September 1.

Coastal Bend business leaders joined Rep. Hunter at a Tuesday press conference to celebrate the passage of Senate Bill 1448.

“TWIA rates are already too high and it should not be easy for the TWIA Board to raise them further,” Rep. Hunter said. “We put together a bipartisan coalition in the Legislature to stand up to TWIA and support the coastal homeowners and businesses who must pay these high rates. These controls on TWIA rate increases will provide needed protections for property owners and our Coastal Bend economy.”

An experienced legislator who works well with members of both political parties, Rep. Hunter accomplished many of his legislative priorities throughout this year’s session, which lasted from January to May. Many of his top priorities emerged from meetings and conversations with residents of the Coastal Bend over the last several years.

For example, after a group of local students approached Rep. Hunter about an alarming increase in suicides, he formed a local task force to work on the issue. He passed House Bill 4074, which requires the Statewide Behavioral Health Coordinating Council to create a subcommittee focused on suicide prevention through the use of data and by including suicide prevention efforts in the council’s behavioral health strategic plan. Rep. Hunter also successfully authored House Bill 3821, which requires the Texas Veterans Commission and the state Health and Human Services Commission to employ and train mental health professionals as part of the state’s mental health program for Veterans.

Rep. Hunter also organized a task force several years ago to focus on prevention human trafficking, and once again, feedback from the task force helped pave the way for legislative action. For example, the risks for human trafficking and exploitation are often high at sexually oriented businesses. Rep. Hunter was the House sponsor of Senate Bill 315, a new law raising the age of employment in sexually oriented businesses from 18 to 21 and prohibiting sexually oriented businesses from allowing minors on site. He also authored House Bill 3521, which redefines coercion as it relates to human trafficking offenses to include the performance or provision of labor or services.

“Meetings with community stakeholders over the last several years have informed and strengthened our work to prevent suicides and human trafficking,” Rep. Hunter said. “From law enforcement to students to mental health professionals and educators, the members of our task forces have helped shape legislative solutions in a positive way.”



Rep. Hunter's legislative work this year also reflected the concerns of key Coastal Bend industries. For example, to support the beleaguered music industry after a very difficult year, Rep. Hunter helped pass Senate Bill 855 to crack down on those who try to illegally sell music online without the consent of the artists who created it. He also helped secure funding to continue the development of oyster mariculture, which Rep. Hunter brought to Texas with legislation he passed into law in 2019.

"We delivered victories for key sectors of our local economy," Rep. Hunter said. "Those victories will impact the whole community by creating a stronger climate for economic activity."

Rep. Hunter also helped the effort to fund numerous Coastal Bend educational institutions and tourist attractions in the two-year state budget, including:

- \$130.9 million in total funding for Texas A&M University - Corpus Christi
- \$34.7 million in total funding for Del Mar College
- \$8.9 million for the University of Texas – Marine Science Institute
- \$6.65 million for Texas A&M University – Corpus Christi Unmanned Aircraft Systems
- \$500,000 for a grant to the Texas State Aquarium Wildlife Rescue Center

Finally, Rep. Hunter authored two new laws to improve beach safety. House Bill 3807, the Je'Sani Smith Act, requires cities, counties, and the Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) to add signs and lifeguards in certain areas to improve the safety of public beaches during the summer months. House Concurrent Resolution 46 designates April as Beach Safety and Rip Current Awareness Month in order to raise awareness of the potential dangers of swimming in the ocean. The resolution calls for a public awareness campaign focused on beach safety each April.

Overall, Rep. Hunter declared the legislative session a success for residents of the Coastal Bend and pledged to continue prioritizing issues that matter to the people he represents.

"The issues that matter to the Coastal Bend are the ones that matter to me," Rep. Hunter said. "I am proud of the legislation we passed on a range of important issues, and it would not have been possible without the input of so many people in our community."

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About Rep. Todd Hunter

Todd Hunter is the state representative for Texas House District 32 in Nueces County. He is the Chairman of the House Redistricting Committee. He is also a member of the State Affairs Committee, which deals with significant matters of state policy, ranging from the administration of the state government to cybersecurity, and he sits on the International Relations & Economic Development Committee.

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