

Job creation, transportation among topics in Parker's bill package

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The 83rd Texas Legislative Session is about four months away, and Rep. Tan Parker (R-Flower Mound) is putting the final touches on his agenda.

Parker and other state leaders are preparing their respective bill packages they hope to propose during the legislative session.

The session begins Jan. 8 and runs for 140 days.

Atop Parker's list is addressing the Texas economy.

"My highest priority is keeping Texas' economy strong," said Parker, who is in his third term as state representative. "I'm going to spend a great amount of focus on economic development. We have to keep Texas the best economic state in the country."

Specifically, Parker said his bill packages will address workforce development.

"The workforce in Texas is the best in the world," Parker said. "So what kind of tools can we use to strengthen the workforce in 2012 and beyond? It's important to bring back the focus in manufacturing in Texas. Manufacturing jobs is important and will be a big priority for me."

According to the Texas Workforce Commission, there were 928,000 manufacturing positions in Texas in July 2008, right before the economy crashed. As of July 2012, there were 858,000 – 70,000 less despite a recovering economy.

One idea Parker has to address that is to provide a research and development tax credit to spur innovation.

"The speed of innovation has slowed," Parker said. "I would like to see a research and development tax credit to give businesses incentive to invest in new technology. Research and development is an important piece to the future."

Parker said his bill packages will also address transportation issues in the state.

"There are a number of capabilities at our disposal that aren't being used to their potential," Parker said. "I am looking for ways to improve the infrastructure of transportation funding with the existing tools we have at our disposal."

Education is another area Parker plans to address during the session.

"I support the public education system," Parker said. "And I want to work with people in the appropriate committees to find money for an increased share of public education funding."

Parker's legislation will also focus on the Texas-Mexico border.

"I want to work with the Department of Public Safety about border security," Parker said. "I'm concerned with the violence and the drug trafficking that is going on. I've met with Col. Steven McGraw, the head of the DPS, and talked with him about ways to allocate resources in ways that are most effective."

Parker said he also wants to address DPS needs in Denton County, namely problems many people have had obtaining a drivers license.

“There have been a number of issues with long lines, customer service, test time, etc.,” Parker said. “I’ve been working with that agency and am looking for solutions to expedite that process.”

Recently, the DPS announced its goal is to reduce the wait time down to 30 minutes.

Parker also plans to introduce bills to improve the foster care and adoption system in Texas, noting that there are a high number of children in the foster care system.

According to the Texas Department of Family and Planning Services, there are 9,150 children in the state’s foster care system eligible for adoption. The average time to place a standard adoption, meaning a child not going to a relative, is about 31 months.

Parker said he will discuss specific details about his plans as the legislature draws nearer. In the meantime, he is meeting with key representatives as he prepares his bill package.

“In each of these areas, I have been visiting with civic leaders on a weekly basis about these topics,” Parker said. “I’ve been actively engaged with the stakeholders and the experts during the interim to make sure I have a bill package that addresses the challenges and the opportunities in each of these areas.”