

# State Employees: Your Vote

## WHO WILL FILL THESE SEATS IN 2009



# ...Your Clout

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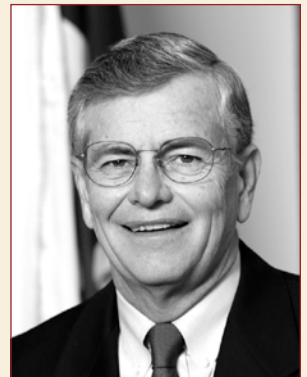


During this presidential election year, there is a great amount of coverage focused on national issues, allowing critical local concerns to potentially become obscured. Immigration reform, the economy, health care, and the war in Iraq demand our attention. However, it is government at the local and state level that ultimately affects us the most. Basic services, infrastructure, education and public safety are the day-to-day issues that touch all of our lives.

For state employees and taxpayers alike, the looming question is whether the workforce that provides these local services is adequate in numbers and quality. TPEA's mission is to work with the Legislature to ensure that benefits, compensation, and working conditions are sufficient to maintain a competent, qualified workforce. The effort to educate the Legislature never ends and proves to be most successful when friendships are formed with leaders who ultimately gain seniority and a strong, influential presence in government. To that end, EMPACT, TPEA's affiliated political action committee, focuses its effort to help keep proven friends in office.

EMPACT encourages all state employees, active and retired to get involved in their local legislative elections. With 140,000 general agency workers, 160,000 higher education employees, and 70,000 retirees receiving health care through the Employees Retirement System of Texas, this is an important, highly influential constituency.

In 2008, there are no statewide offices up for election, making the legislative races even more influential in determining who shapes state budgetary and policy priorities, particularly those affecting state employees and retirees. TPEA, through EMPACT, has historically published a list of endorsed candidates for state elected office. One of EMPACT's guiding principles for its endorsement selection process has been, and remains, the "friendly incumbent rule."



Rep. Tom Craddick

The rule is simple. Because over 90 percent of incumbents win re-election TPEA generally endorses, regardless of party affiliation, those incumbent candidates seeking re-election. This year is no different. Unless a candidate has done something against TPEA, EMPACT supports the "friendly" incumbents who are in a position to support state employee issues along with the work of TPEA. Please review the complete list of endorsements on page 17.

There are 150 House elections and another 15 Senate races. EMPACT endorsed 156 of these candidates. In many of these races, the primary election is pivotal, due to either no opposing candidate or none from the other major party. In some legislative districts, the predominant



*Sen. Tommy Williams*

strength of a particular political party ensures that the winner of the primary prevails in the general election.

A good example is the District 4 election for state Senate, where longtime TPEA friend and state employee champion Tommy Williams faces former state Senator Michael Galloway in the Republican primary. There is no Democrat running for the seat. Not only does EMPACT endorse Senator Williams, but also the entire

TPEA family urges all state employees and retirees to join in assisting Senator Williams win reelection.

Gary Anderson, TPEA Executive Director, sounds the call for Senator Williams. "Tommy Williams has been one of the very best friends TPEA has had in the Texas Legislature," he said. "His keen and comprehensive knowledge of arcane employee benefit and compensation issues is virtually unique in the Legislature. He clearly sees and articulates the connection between good government and the need to maintain the asset, state employees, most critical to provision of those services."

The Texas Senate race in District 11 in southeast Texas is receiving TPEA's focus. Incumbent Senator Mike Jackson has drawn two opponents, both Democrats. Senator Jackson has proven open and responsive to state employee concerns, like opposing measures that would have been detrimental to hard won employee insurance. He deserves the full support of state employees in his district.



*Sen. Judith Zaffirini*

Another incumbent deserving of additional state employee support is Democratic Senator Judith Zaffirini, representing District 21 in south Texas. Although her primary opponent is not actively campaigning, the Senator will have opposition in the general election. EMPACT endorses Senator Zaffirini, and TPEA gives its full support to this longtime friend of state employees and retirees.

There are a number of crucial house races too, none more notable than the District 82 Midland election where Speaker Tom Craddick has drawn a Democratic opponent. EMPACT's endorsement of Speaker Craddick reflects the favorable treatment state employees, along with TPEA, have received under his administration.

A House race of special interest to state employees is the District 11

contest in east Texas where EMPACT has endorsed incumbent and TPEA friend, Chuck Hopson over his Republican opponent.

In the greater Austin area, EMPACT is endorsing the incumbents, all of whom have proven responsive to state employee and retiree issues. However, TPEA is paying special attention to the District 46 race, where Representative Dawnna Dukes has drawn a primary opponent. Ms. Dukes' appointment to chair the key Appropriations Subcommittee on State Employee Compensation has allowed her to play a strong, positive leadership role on all legislative issues impacting state employees.

EMPACT's endorsements are released prior to the primaries because candidates do a good job of remembering the supporters who stand with them in the beginning of their campaigns. If they win re-election they should be open to hear TPEA's concerns.

So what can you do? First, meet the people seeking office in your area. This is the best time to get to know your candidates and get a clear picture of their positions. Face-to-face communication is a powerful tool. Question the candidates and find out where they stand on their support of state employees. If they do not have a clear understanding of the issues facing state employees, both active and retired, this is your opportunity to educate them. Ultimately, show up at the polls and have your voice heard through your vote. The 2008 State Primary elections will be held March 4<sup>th</sup>. The early voting period will run from February 19 – 29.

TPEA urges you, your family, and your friends to please vote in the upcoming legislative elections. Many of these races will have a critical effect on the future benefits and pay of state employees and retirees.

"These endorsements will have little benefit unless TPEA members and state employees as a whole, go to the polls and vote," Gary Anderson stressed. "EMPACT encourages all states employees to vote for the candidate of their choice, recognizing that the winners will play an important role in determining the salaries and benefits of state employees, staffing levels, and the level of service that will ultimately be provided to the citizens of Texas."

Get involved, today!



*Rep. Chuck Hopson*



*Rep. Dawnna Dukes*