STATE LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

February 11, 2011

(This update is produced by the UH System Office of Governmental Relations and the UH Division of University Advancement as a service to our students, faculty, staff, alumni, and friends.)

A Week of Appearances in the Legislature and House Committee Assignments Announced

We regret that last week's report was a victim of Austin's ice storms.

Although the legislature may have gotten off to a slow start, they are making up for it in a big way next week. On Monday, the Chancellor and system Presidents will testify before the Senate Finance Committee, followed on Thursday by appearances at the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Education at 7:00 a.m.

Also on Monday, Regents Nandita Berry and Jarvis Hollingsworth will appear before the Senate Nominations Committee. The Chancellor and Regents Carroll Robertson Ray, Welcome Wilson, Sr., and Nelda Luce Blair have scheduled appointments with legislative leaders next week. On Wednesday, the Senate Higher Education Committee will hold an organizational meeting.

The big news from this week was Speaker Joe Straus announcing House committee assignments. All of the members who were on the Appropriations Education Subcommittee last session were reappointed to the full committee: Representatives Scott Hochberg (D-Houston), Mike Villarreal (D-San Antonio), Geanie Morrison (R-Victoria), Jimmie Don Aycock (R-Killeen), and Susan King (R-Abilene). A new subcommittee has not yet been named but it is likely that at least several of those members will return. Representative Jim Pitts (R-Waxahachie) was renamed chair. Local legislator, Sylvester Turner (D-Houston), was named vice chair. In addition, two more local members were appointed: Debbie Riddle (R-Houston) and John Zerwas (R-Katy). Dr. Zerwas also serves on the key Calendars Committee.

Members on the Higher Education Committee include Dan Branch (R-Dallas) who returns as chair, along with Joaquin Castro (R-San Antonio), Roberto Alonzo (D-Dallas), Dennis Bonnen (R-Angleton), Fred Brown (R-Bryan), Donna Howard (D-Austin), Eric Johnson (D-Dallas), Tryon Lewis (R-Odessa), and Diane Patrick (R-Arlington).

Area legislators receiving key leadership appointments include Garnet Coleman (D-Houston), chair of County Affairs and member of Calendars; John Davis (R-Houston), chair of Economic and Small Business Development); Larry Taylor (R-League City), chair of Elections; Wayne Smith (R-Pasadena), chair of Environmental Regulation; Bill Callegari (R-Houston), chair of Government Efficiency and Reform; Senfronia Thompson (D-Houston), chair of Local and Consent Calendars; Rob Eissler (R-The Woodlands), chair of Public Education; and Harold Dutton (D-Houston), chair of Urban Affairs.

Senator Joan Huffman (R-Houston) has filed legislation removing the statutory prescription that the University of Houston System Board of Regents meet each April. It is SB 528.

Please see the weekly bill report for the status of legislation we are tracking. Go to http://www.capitol.state.tx.us for more information on the legislature.