

MEMORANDUM

**To: Subscribers Re: Weekly Report
(Supplement)**
From: Dana Chiodo Date: April 18, 2009

HOUSE – Around 3:30 a.m. Saturday, after a 16-hour floor session, the House approved its version of the state budget for the next biennium by a vote of 149-0. The House version totals \$178.4 billion. SB 1 will now go to a conference committee with members of the Senate to hash out the final budget plan for the 2010-11 biennium. Over 400 amendments had been proposed by House members to modify the budget proposal voted out of the House Appropriations Committee. A house rule required any amendment that proposed spending additional funds on a specific program would have to reduce an equivalent amount of spending in another program. Numerous amendments were moved over to a specific section in the budget bill –Article XII – referred to as a “wish list”. The items on the wish list can be considered for funding should the conference committee end up with any extra funds after taking care of other state spending priorities. Although protracted, the process proceeded relatively smoothly with very little acrimony among the various factions in the House.

Specific changes of general interest made on the House floor to the House budget proposal included:

- The House voted overwhelmingly to break a requirement that teachers be judged by their students' performance on standardized tests as a condition of receiving a merit pay raise. Instead, all decisions on incentive pay would be made by local school districts. School districts would get all \$343 million that budget writers had recommended for merit pay.
- \$4 million for veterans' programs and \$18.7 million for community mental health "crisis services" to help keep the mentally ill out of jail and emergency rooms were funded by taking funds from the Governor's office budget.
- The \$136 million in Texas Enterprise Fund, which is controlled by the Governor, would be transferred to a job training fund controlled by the Comptroller if the pending legislation that would allow Texas to qualify for \$555 million in federal stimulus funds fails to become law. Governor Perry has rejected the money, saying there are too many strings attached.