



I ended last month's column by alluding to conversations at the Graford Café, (particularly at the round table) about the role of the Texas Legislature. Most of the gentlemen having breakfast with me weren't entirely sure of some of the roles and responsibilities of our state legislature, so I found myself giving a bit of a Texas history and civics lesson. I know that there are many others who have the same questions, so I want to use this month's column to share a bit of information about the Texas House of Representatives.

To begin, I'll go back to my deep Texas roots. My great great grandfather, Dr. Edwin Clay Rogers was a Representative in the 5<sup>th</sup> Congress of the Republic of Texas, representing Fannin County. Our state legislature is the constitutional successor of the Congress of the Republic of Texas.

The Texas House consists of 150 elected members, who serve a two-year term. Each House District has roughly 167,500 constituents. The Texas Senate, on the other hand, consists of 31 members, each elected to a four-year term and represent about 806,000 constituents. With Texas growing at the rate of 1,000 people per day, the number of citizens represented by state representatives and senators will rise substantially with the 2020 census. The annual salary for both the state representatives and senators is \$7200.

In some urban areas like Houston and Dallas, there are numerous House Districts in a single city. In rural areas, a single House District can span multiple counties. For instance, House District 60 consists of eight counties: Brown, Callahan, Coleman, Eastland, Hood, Palo Pinto, Shackelford, and Stephens.

The House is called into regular session at noon on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday in January for 140 days in odd-numbered years (the 87<sup>th</sup> Texas Legislature will be called into session next month on January 12<sup>th</sup>). The regular session generally runs through the beginning of June. If the legislature has not completed all of its business, the governor may call for a special session that can last for 30 days. The governor can call for as many special sessions as he deems necessary throughout the two-year legislative session, but the sessions must deal only with topics designated by the governor.

Once the House is called into session in January, the members of the House officially select the Speaker of the House. The Speaker has many responsibilities, including appointing committee chairpersons and assigning each member to various standing committees. It is also at this time that the Speaker directs the other members to decide on the rules that will govern the session. For example, in this next session there will likely be rules to allow certain virtual components to the session due to the COVID-19 concerns. Once these rules are adopted, the House can officially begin their legislative duties.

There will be considerable challenges as I head to Austin, but I am excited about the opportunity to serve this district. I look forward to communicating with as many of you as possible and I look forward to addressing your concerns, ideas and feedback.

As we head toward the end of the year, I hope that you all enjoy the Christmas season with your family and friends.

Merry Christmas and God Bless Texas!