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## BAHEP and CLACC take recommendations to decision makers in Austin

The regular session of the Texas 84<sup>th</sup> Legislature meets for 140 days from Jan. 13 – June 1, 2015. Meeting biennially, it's a brief amount of time for legislators to get a whole lot of work accomplished.

The Bay Area Houston Economic Partnership prepares a legislative agenda over several months in advance of each session. A meeting with the region's legislators is then held prior to the start of the session.

In mid November 2014, Sens. Larry Taylor and Sylvia Garcia, Rep. Greg Bonnen, M.D., and Representatives-Elect Wayne Faircloth and Dennis Paul met with members of BAHEP to review and give input on nine agenda items that had been developed.

Following the meeting, the items were finalized to be presented to select legislators during a trip to Austin, which took place on February 18<sup>th</sup>. Members of BAHEP, as well as the Clear Lake Area Chamber of Commerce, participated in the trip.

The nine legislative agenda issues presented are as diverse as the region itself. Following is a brief description of each. For additional details, visit BAHEP's website at [www.bayareahouston.com](http://www.bayareahouston.com)

and go to the News Room section where BAHEP's final legislative agenda can be found.

### Education, Workforce Development

Increased funding was a universal request for public education K-12, community colleges, and universities. Changes to academic programs regarding End-of-Course exams as well as educational accountability were other items addressed for K-12.

Community colleges requested an improvement in transfer and articulation provisions and investment in college readiness efforts among other issues.

Universities need support for facilities construction to meet enrollment. In regard to workforce development, internships, industry endorsements, and a dual funding provision called "ISDs Without Borders" were all included as agenda items.

### Recreational Maritime Jobs Protection

In order to preserve and protect the marine industry jobs and the jobs of ancillary businesses, being lost to other states like Florida, BAHEP and the CLACC supported:

- **Establishment** of a "Safe Harbor" rule for out-of-state vessels.

- **Establishment** of a "Removal Affidavit" for out-of-state purchasers.

- **Placing** a cap on the sales and use tax charged on recreational boats above \$250,000 in Texas.

### Transportation Funding

In order to address Texas' critical transportation and infrastructure needs, recommendations for reform included:

- **Eliminate** or cap diversions from the State Highway Fund that are not directly related to the maintenance and expansion of the state highway system, except for the 25 percent diversion to education that is required by the Texas Constitution.

- **Establish** a sustainable user base funding source which could include an allocation of the vehicle sales tax on the purchase of new and used vehicles, an increase and index of the gas tax, or an increase in the vehicle registration fee.

- **Consider** the creation of a new funding source, such as a vehicle miles traveled user fee, directly related to roadway use.

### Ellington Field Joint Reserve Base

Ellington Field is a major military and interagency installation in southeast



Members of the 84<sup>th</sup> Texas Legislature met in November 2014 to discuss legislative priorities with representatives from the Bay Area Houston Economic Partnership. Shown l to r are: Sen. Larry Taylor; Rep. Greg Bonnen, M.D.; Brenda Hellyer, Ed.D., 2014 BAHEP chair and chancellor, San Jacinto College District; Sen. Sylvia Garcia; then Representatives-Elect Dennis Paul and Wayne Faircloth; Bob Mitchell, BAHEP president.

Texas. One of the recommendations for reform was for state support of Ellington's infrastructure to influence the federal creation of formal joint forces infrastructure to be eligible for U.S. congressional appropriations.

### State Franchise Tax

In 2006, Texas faced a court mandate to boost education spending from a source other than local property taxes and established the "margin" tax. Recommendations for tax reform were:

- **Increase** the exemption to \$5 million.

- **Simplify** the process to increase small business

compliance and reduce costs.

- **OR** repeal the Franchise/Margin Tax entirely.

### Storm Surge Protection

On Sept. 13, 2008, Hurricane Ike made landfall on the Texas coast. The hurricane killed 80 people and caused economic damages totaling over \$37 billion.

An initiative is currently underway to conduct the required studies for a coastal barrier system which, once constructed, would provide significant protection from storm surge.

BAHEP's recommendation was for state funding

of \$12 – \$14 million for completion of required studies.

### Spaceport Development Corporation

In 2013, the Spaceport Trust Fund was refunded at approximately \$15 million. In order to receive funds from the Spaceport Fund, a "Spaceport Development Corporation" (authorizing entity) must first be established. It was recommended to:

- **Designate** Ellington Airport as a Spaceport Development Corporation.

- **Appropriate** funds to the Spaceport Trust Fund targeted to Ellington Airport's spaceport infrastructure needs.

### Spaceport Trust Fund Expansion

It was recommended that the Spaceport Trust Fund should be funded again to support Ellington Airport's infrastructure in becoming a spaceport.

It was also recommended to expand the language of the Spaceport Trust Fund to allow for Texas space research and for student STEM related activities.

### Texas Aerospace Scholars, Space Alliance Technology Outreach Program

Started in 1998, the SATOP program allows for NASA and space industry companies to donate engineering support to Texas small businesses with technical challenges.

Also initiated in 1998, the Texas Aerospace Scholars provides Texas students, regardless of income or background, the opportunity to participate in a semester-long educational curriculum and a week of onsite experience at NASA's Johnson Space Center. There are also programs for community college students and for teachers. Recommendations included continued support and expanded funding for the SATOP and TAS programs.

### Making a difference

A recommendation is just a recommendation. Whether or not laws are created or changed to comply with a recommendation remains in the hands of Texas legislators. The long-term and concerted efforts of organizations like the Bay Area Houston Economic Partnership and the Clear Lake Area Chamber of Commerce very often make a huge difference in a recommendation becoming a successful bill or ending up forgotten in a "circular file."

## BAHEP welcomes the City of Morgan's Point, the YMCA of Greater Houston and Your Printing Now

### City of Morgan's Point

The City of Morgan's Point, "Home of the Yellow Rose of Texas," is located 30 miles east of Houston. The city recently became Bay Area Houston Economic Partnership's 14<sup>th</sup> member city.

BAHEP President Bob Mitchell commented, "It's both exciting and gratifying to be able to include the City of Morgan's Point

among our other member cities. Mayor Michel Bechtel has been active in our storm surge protection initiative and understands its importance to a coastal city like Morgan's Point. The city will be a great ally as we work to guard the entire region from the devastating effects of storm surge."

Morgan's Point is a quiet community with a small town atmosphere. In spite of its small footprint, the city is home to the Port of Houston's Barbour's Cut Container Terminal, the largest on the Gulf Coast. In addition, the world's largest international ethane export facility is currently under construction by Enterprise Products Partners.

Mayor Bechtel stated, "Morgan's Point had a very rich history for more than 125 years prior to its incorporation in 1949. In the 1850s, Col. James Morgan promoted plans for what would become the Houston Ship Channel with the initial portion being dug by Commodore Charles Morgan in 1876. It stands to reason that Morgan's Point has always had a symbiotic relationship with the Port of Houston. A lot of hard work has been done to determine the most effective way to protect the coastal and bay cities from storms, yet so much more needs to be done. We feel that it is important to be fully involved with BAHEP's work for our city and region's economic prosperity and safety."

Learn more about the city at [www.morganspoint-tx.com](http://www.morganspoint-tx.com).

### The YMCA of Greater Houston

The YMCA of Greater Houston (the Y), a private, nonprofit, 501(c)(3) charity, is a leader in providing services that enrich the lives of children and families, offering early childhood and youth developmental programs, child care, health and wellness services, programs for seniors, job training and more, while offering need-based financial assistance. The Y has become one of the newest members of the Bay Area Houston Economic Partnership.

BAHEP President Bob Mitchell stated, "It's amazing that the YMCA of Greater Houston is 125 years old and has 5,000 employees.

"The Y's many services make the organization indispensable to the communities it serves. I'm very pleased that we will be



working together on behalf of the families in Bay Area Houston."

David Lopez, the Y's vice president, External Affairs, will represent the Y within BAHEP. He said, "At the Y, we've always known that positive change only comes about when we invest in our kids, our health and our neighbors. BAHEP knows that investment in economic development is also

a positive investment in the community. The Y and BAHEP definitely make a good team."

As one of Houston's leading non-profits committed to helping people and the community succeed, the Y bridges the gaps in community needs. The Y also nurtures potential with the belief that everyone should have the opportunity to learn, grow and thrive. Its objectives are to advocate for laws and policies that support children, families and communities as well as collaborative funding opportunities for YMCA initiatives; develop strategic alliances with other nonprofit and community organizations to support community needs; and strengthen governmental policies supporting nonprofit, community-based organizations.

To learn more about the Y's many programs and services, visit [www.ymcahouston.org](http://www.ymcahouston.org).

### Your Printing Now

Your Printing Now has joined the Bay Area Houston Economic Partnership. Your Printing Now is a woman-owned, minority business that provides printing and is also a Fed Ex and UPS Authorized Ship Center. Founded in 2003, Your Printing Now offers services to retail, resale, and wholesale clients. Kim Morrell serves as the company's president and will represent it within BAHEP.

Bob Mitchell, BAHEP president, welcomed Your Printing Now to BAHEP saying, "Kim has been very active in the community, and we have a long-

standing relationship with him. He has traveled with our Citizens for Space Exploration group to Washington, D.C., for the past 10 years and also served on the Seabrook



City Council for six years. We are happy to have Your Printing Now, with its many services, as one of our newest members and to again have Kim participate in our initiatives."

Your Printing Now provides digital and large press offset printing. Other services include bulk mailing, training manuals, data management, business cards, brochures, postcards, flyers, banners, pocket folders, promotional items, apparel, and embroidery.

Morrell commented, "I've been involved with BAHEP for many years, especially through my duties as a council member with the City of Seabrook. It's a great organization that does so much for so many. I look forward to working with everyone there."

Your Printing Now is located at 3128 NASA Pkwy. (next to Spec's in the Pelican Plaza).

For additional information, call Kim directly at 713.806.8989 or visit the website at [www.yourprintingnow.com](http://www.yourprintingnow.com).



### BUSINESS

to BUSINESS is a monthly Bay Area Houston Economic Partnership publication in partnership with the *Houston Chronicle*. BAHEP is a member-driven organization in southeast Texas that includes more than 265 business partners encompassing 14 cities, Galveston and Harris counties, the Houston Airport System, and the Port of Houston Authority. For membership information, contact Membership Director Harriet Lukee at 832.536.3250.

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