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BRYAN HUGHES

November 8, 2012

Dear Fellow Members and Members-Elect,

As I have spoken with members of both parties about the role of the Speaker, a recurring theme has been the need for decentralization of power in the House. Over time it is natural for power to be concentrated, and this session provides us an opportunity to reverse this trend, and to move power out of the Speaker's office and back to the members. The members know best the needs and interests of the folks who sent them to Austin.

The following suggested changes in the House Rules and procedures would help empower the members to do the work we have been elected to do:

Increase the number of committee appointments chosen by the members. Under current House Rules, the Speaker makes the vast majority of appointments to committees (a significant majority of the seats on substantive committees and ALL of the seats on procedural committees are selected solely by the Speaker). Increasing the number of seniority seats on committees and making all committees – substantive and procedural – subject to seniority appointments would greatly transfer power back to the members.

Allow bills with broad support to be brought to the floor for a vote. If a bill has strong support in the House – whether filed by a democrat or a republican – it should not die a slow death in the shadows of the committee process. This is frustrating to members and especially to the people of Texas. There should be a mechanism for bringing to the floor those bills with broad support among the members.

Appoint committees early. In recent sessions, committees were appointed significantly later than they had been previously. This delay wastes precious time and contributes to the bottleneck of bills and to the breakneck pace at the end of session. Members should be given as much time as possible to move the legislation important to them and their districts.

These are a few of the ways we can make the process more member-driven and more transparent. Please continue to let me know what you think. I look forward to continuing to visit with you as we move forward toward choosing a Speaker and beginning the session.

Sincerely,

Bryan Hughes