



Senator Eliot Shapleigh

District 29

Press Release

Contact:

E. Anthony Martínez
(512) 463-0129

anthony.martinez@senate.state.tx.us



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\$48 MILLION IN EL PASO MEDICAL SCHOOL MONEY IN BUDGET; SENATE PASSES BUDGET

SENATOR SHAPLEIGH HAS FOUGHT FOR OUR 4-YEAR MEDICAL SCHOOL FOR 15 YEARS;
INAUGURAL CLASS EXPECTED IN 2009

"We first started dreaming about a medical school in Unite El Paso in 1992. More than any endeavor, a four-year medical school in El Paso will build jobs and give us a solid foundation for a prosperous future. Fifteen years of hard work have paid off this session. I want to thank my colleagues and especially Lt. Gov. David Dewhurst, who has championed our medical school since day one."

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AUSTIN – Today, **May 28**, the Texas Senate passed **H.B. 1**, the conference report for the state budget. State Senator Eliot Shapleigh (D-El Paso) voted to pass the budget, which includes \$48 million for first and second year faculty at El Paso's medical school.

"We first started dreaming about a medical school in *Unite El Paso* in 1992. More than any endeavor, a four-year medical school in El Paso will build jobs and give us a solid foundation for a prosperous future.," Senator Shapleigh said. "Fifteen years of hard work have paid off this session. I want to thank my colleagues and especially Lt. Gov. David Dewhurst, who has championed our medical school since day one."

Senator Shapleigh has spearheaded El Paso's effort to build a four-year medical school long before first taking office in 1997. Since 1973, Texas Tech University Health Science Center (TTUHSC) at El Paso has trained third and fourth year medical students in affiliation with R. E. Thomason General Hospital—but El Paso never had a full four-year medical school.

"In 1992, during *Unite El Paso*, 1,200 of us gathered in the Civic Center to craft a consensus vision for a new El Paso," said Senator Shapleigh. "That's when we first started the serious work of bringing a full four-year medical school to El Paso."

In 1998, following Judge Marquez' Court of Inquiry, where volunteer attorneys Eliot Shapleigh, José Rodríguez, and Ray Caballero successfully investigated inequitable state funding of El Paso's transportation infrastructure, Senator Shapleigh and *Unite El Paso* began working with Texas Tech Chancellor John Montford to give El Paso more autonomy in shaping health-care issues and to increase investment in the TTUHSC-El Paso campus.

That year, Senator Shapleigh traveled to Washington D.C. to create an El Paso *Empowerment Zone*, with the medical school as the center piece. He also worked to organize El Paso's first Economic Summit, with a central vision around a medical school as the anchor of a unified medical center.¹

In July 1998, Senator Shapleigh then joined with Texas Comptroller John Sharp to identify and explore major opportunities and challenges along the U.S.-Mexico Border Region. Their work resulted in the groundbreaking publication *Bordering the Future*, which included a proposal for a Border Health Institute (BHI), including a four-year medical school built on the existing third and fourth year program at TTUHSC.²

"Whoever builds a first-class medical center, and the logical place for that is going to be El Paso, is going to create one heck of a gold mine," Comptroller Sharp said.³

In 1999, during the 76th Texas Legislature, Senator Shapleigh fought for a \$50 million appropriation from tobacco funds to establish a research endowment for the medical school, which included \$25 million for UTEP and \$25 million for Texas Tech.⁴

"The case for the Border Health Institute in El Paso is clear," Senator Shapleigh wrote in a guest column for the *El Paso Times* on April 13, 2000.⁵ "With 2.4 million people in the Paso Del Norte metroplex (El Paso-Juárez-Southern New Mexico), and some of the most complex health issues in North America, we desperately need a campus dedicated to health education and research."⁶

¹ *State panel hopes to help with BHI*, El Paso Times, David Crowder, Nov. 15, 2000 ("In 1998, Shapleigh took the BHI proposal to EL Paso's economic summit and persuaded the 200 participants to put the creation of a border health institute at the top of its to-do list.").

² *Bordering the Future*, Office of the Texas Comptroller, footnote 10, July 1998 (available at <http://www.cpa.state.tx.us/border/ch04/endnotes.html#10>, last visited May 25, 2007.).

³ *Med school for El Paso gains support*, El Paso Times, Gary Scharrer, Jun. 15, 1998.

⁴ *City's Border Health Institute looks good to legislators*, El Paso Times, Gary Scharrer, Apr. 5, 1999; *Planning is key for BHI*, editorial, El Paso Times, Jun. 15, 1999.

⁵ *Border Health Institute: Let's make it happen*, Sen. Eliot Shapleigh, Aug. 13, 2000.

⁶ *Id.*

Others, at the time, argued against a new medical campus in El Paso, advocating in its place the creation of an Internet website.⁷ In Nov. 2000, Rep. Joe Pickett (D-El Paso) told the *Austin American-Statesman*, "Senator Shapleigh is the only one who has this vision" for a medical campus in El Paso.⁸

During the 77th Texas Legislature, in 2001, Senator Shapleigh established the foundations for El Paso's medical school. With El Paso's legislative delegation, he fought to win approval of a \$40 million research tower, \$3 million for development and planning, and \$600,000 for Texas Tech's El Paso Diabetes Research Center.⁹

"We are already about halfway to completing a four-year medical school," Texas Tech Chancellor Montford told the *El Paso Times* following that session.¹⁰

In 2003, during the 78th Texas Legislature, with a \$10 billion budget shortfall, Senator Shapleigh worked to grant Texas Tech authority to start curriculum design and development for the four-year medical school.¹¹

Working with Senator Duncan (R-Lubbock), a rider was adopted to grant TTUHSC-El Paso the authority to take the organizational and procedural steps necessary to attain accreditation of the school.¹² In effect, this rider granted authority for a full four-year medical school in El Paso.

Additionally, Senator Shapleigh worked to attach a rider in the appropriations act to designate legislative intent to fund \$2 million for the El Paso medical school out of the Texas Enterprise Fund.¹³ In October 2003, the \$2 million was approved by Governor Rick Perry.¹⁴

Later that year, during the 78th Third Special Session, after hard work by Senator Shapleigh to craft rider language, Perry signed H.B. 28 authorizing Texas Tech to sell \$45 million in tuition revenue bonds to build additional classroom facilities.¹⁵

⁷ *El Pasoans split over BHI plan of action*, El Paso Times, David Crowder, Nov. 3, 2000.

⁸ *Details murky for health center*, Austin American-Statesman, Chris Roberts, Nov. 11, 2000 ("Visions for the institute range from a centralized research campus to an Internet site where wide-ranging resources can be brought together to aid the El Paso area.").

⁹ 77th Legislature – Session In Review, Senator Eliot Shapleigh, Aug. 2001 (available at http://www.shapleigh.org/system/reporting_document/file/5/focus_documents5.pdf, last visited May 25, 2007.).

¹⁰ *Medical school on way, Montford says*, El Paso Times, Tammy Fonce-Olivas, Jun. 14, 2001.

¹¹ *The 78th Legislative Session in Review*, Senator Eliot Shapleigh, Sept. 2003 (available at http://www.shapleigh.org/system/reporting_document/file/4/focus_documents4.pdf, last visited May 25, 2007.).

¹² *Id.*

¹³ *Id.*

¹⁴ *State finds \$2 million to start medical school, hire faculty*, El Paso Times, Darren Meritz, Oct. 31, 2003.

¹⁵ *Med school bill signed*, El Paso Times, Gary Scharrer, Oct. 21, 2003.

"With the steady global march toward a highly competitive, technology-based economy, it is more important than ever for Texas to increase opportunities in higher education," Perry said in 2006 during a signing ceremony for H.B. 153, a bill that authorized an additional \$6.3 million in tuition revenue bonds for the school and passed in the 79th Third Special Session.¹⁶

A groundbreaking ceremony for the medical school facilities was held December 1, 2005; and a "topping-off" ceremony for the medical education building was held in El Paso on September 8, 2006.

In recent months, Senator Shapleigh has also worked with the Paso del Norte Group and City of El Paso to fund a \$500,000 Medical Center of the Americas (MCA) development study. The study would provide goals, timelines and a solid development plan for a broader MCA concept.

With the \$48 million appropriated this session for first and second year faculty at the medical school, the first phase of development is completed and full accreditation is now possible. The first class is expected to enter in 2009.

The facilities for El Paso's medical school at Texas Tech University are located adjacent to Thomason Hospital and the Texas Tech complex, and next door to the offices of the City-County Health and Environmental District. The site is also near the Silva Magnet High School in El Paso Independent School District.

A 2005 impact study for Texas Tech indicates that the El Paso medical school will trigger \$1.5 billion in economic activity.¹⁷ Much of the activity will be generated from equipment, supplies and spin-off industries involving medical research.¹⁸

"With the medical school, Ft. Bliss, a mobility authority and downtown revitalization, we are creating a solid foundation for a new more prosperous El Paso," said Senator Shapleigh.

Before El Paso's medical school, Texas had not created a medical school in 30 years.¹⁹ The school at Texas Tech is the state's ninth medical school.²⁰

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¹⁶ *UTEP, Tech get millions to build*, El Paso Times, Brandi Grissom, Jul. 12, 2006.

¹⁷ *Perry backs funding for med school in El Paso*, El Paso Times, Gary Scharer, Jan. 16, 2005.

¹⁸ *Id.*

¹⁹ *Lawmakers applaud med school teamwork*, El Paso Times, Gary Scharer, Jun. 3, 2003 ("The newest medical school at Texas A&M Health Science Center in Temple and College Station was founded in 1977).

²⁰ *Id.*