



# Senator Eliot Shapleigh

District 29

Press Advisory

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**For Immediate Release**

March 18, 2009

**"SENATOR SHAPLEIGH, AREA BUSINESS AND MEDICAL LEADERS TO HOST PRESS CONFERENCE ON LEGISLATION TO BAN TRANS FAT IN TEXAS RESTAURANTS"**

*"Across Texas, a silent epidemic of obesity is shortening lives, raising health costs and putting more and more Texans at risk. With SB 204, we can make sure more Texans live strong—and healthy lives. In Austin, the support of the Texas Restaurant Association will help pass this key bill."*

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**EL PASO - On Friday, March 20, 2009 at 2 p.m. at L&J's Café** in El Paso, Senator Eliot Shapleigh, local restaurateurs and area medical professionals will host a **press conference supporting legislation filed by Senator Shapleigh to eliminate trans fat from the menus of Texas restaurants.**

This legislative session, Senator Shapleigh filed [SB 204](#), which amends the Health and Safety Code to prohibit Texas restaurants from packaging, storing or using trans fat to prepare or serve food.

"Across Texas, a silent epidemic of obesity is shortening lives, raising health costs and putting more and more Texans at risk. With SB 204, we can make sure more Texans live strong—and healthy lives. In Austin, the support of the Texas Restaurant Association will help pass this key bill," Senator Shapleigh said.

Most of the trans fat Americans consume is artificial trans fat that comes from oil that has undergone partial hydrogenation, a process in which hydrogen is added to an oil to make it more solid. This process is used in most margarine or shortening.

Passage of [SB 204](#) would go a long way in combating rising obesity rates across Texas. According to the Texas Department of State Health Services, [nearly 66 percent of adults](#) in the state and 32 percent of high school students were overweight or obese in 2007. According to a Paso Del Norte Health Foundation report, more than 37 percent of El Pasoans were overweight in 2006, and another 27.2 percent were obese.

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High obesity rates translate into enormous health costs from illnesses such as diabetes, heart disease, hypertension and high blood pressure. [The Texas Department of Health has reported](#) that economic costs related to obesity could reach as much as \$39 billion by 2040.

[SB 204](#) would also require restaurants in Texas to keep for inspection purposes the original label for any food or food additive that contains a fat, as already required by federal law. Exempted from the bill are packaged food served in an original package with a label indicating that the food has a trans fat content of less than 0.5 grams per serving.

If passed, the bill will require franchises of 15 or more restaurants to comply by September of 2010. The bill will give restaurants or bakeries that use trans fat to deep-fry yeast dough or cake batter, and franchises of less than 15 restaurants one additional year to comply.

Testifying during the press conference will be Dr. Elaine Barron, Dr. Carlos Gutierrez and Dr. Laurence Nicky. Dr. Barron is a practicing internist, past president of the El Paso County Medical Society and Texas Water Commission, and recipient of the U.S. President's pin for her service to the community. Dr. Gutierrez is a practicing pediatrician and former Thomason Hospital board member. Dr. Nicky is a retired pediatrician, former City-County Health Department Director, former president of the El Paso County Medical Society and lifetime member of the United States-Mexico Border Health Commission, a position he was first appointed to by President Bill Clinton.

Since filing [SB 204](#), Senator Shapleigh has worked closely with the Texas Restaurant Association (TRA) to make sure the bill improves Texans' health without putting undue burden on Texas restaurants.

Also testifying during the press conference will be Leo Duran Sr., owner of L&J Café and member of TRA's government advocacy committee, and Bonnie Dominguez, president of the El Paso Restaurant Association and owner of Moe's Mexican Restaurant.

"The restaurant industry is committed to practical, achievable and long-term solutions that have a positive health impact on consumers and that also allow us to make the products consumers know and love. Our industry's objective is to provide a wide range of food options to accommodate the variety of needs of our diverse population," Duran said.

To combat childhood obesity, this session, Senator Shapleigh also filed [SB 352](#), which prohibits school districts from providing meals to students that contains trans fat or that was prepared using another food that contains trans fat.

[SB 204](#) has been referred to the Senate Committee on Health and Human Services. [SB 352](#) has been referred to the Senate Committee on Education.

**What:** Senator Eliot Shapleigh, local restaurateurs and area medical professionals to host press conference supporting legislation to eliminate trans fat from Texas restaurants.

**When:** Friday, March 20, 2009 at 2 p.m.

**Where:** L & J Café, 3622 E. Missouri Ave 79903 ([map](#))

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