

## *The Quorum Report*

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### **TODAY WILL TEST THE REAL RESOLVE OF THE HOUSE**

#### **Navigating the path to bustin'the spending cap**

Yesterday was a lesson in the difference between Democrats and Republicans. Republicans put forward a fairly straightforward bill on paying for the \$14 billion property tax cut they approved during the last special session in *House Bill 2*.

The Democrats nibbled around the edges: First they talked about the deficit the tax cut created above and beyond the revenue from the business tax. Then they tried to tie some contingency riders to the bill ... "We will spend money on the tax cut if only we also spend money on (fill in the blank)..." forcing the Republicans to take votes that appeared to make them anti-teacher pay, anti-textbook and anti-pre-kindergarten in their motives.

Throw in an obligatory point of order and a question by **Rep. Scott Hochberg** (D-Houston) that underlined the fact the *Legislative Budget Board* split the budget and tax bill to specifically sidestep the "bust the cap" issue and it was a typical bipartisan session.

Most of the votes went down as expected, on roughly 80-60 margins. The closest the House came to a coup was a 75-65 vote on an "if only..." teacher pay raise. At the final vote it was only a handful of hard-left Democrats --- **Reps. Roberto Alonzo, Lon Burnam, Garnet Coleman, Yvonne Davis, Jessica Farrar and Senfronia Thompson** -- who ended up voting down a measure that was all but *fait accompli*. That was followed by a flurry of press releases from Democrats, touting their "yes" votes on the *SJR 12* that provided tax cuts to the elderly and disabled, intended but not approved last session.

As **Rep. Warren Chisum (R-Pampa)** said, simply, in a post-vote press avail, the Republicans were able to "hold our votes together."

Today could be different, possibly a far closer vote and a measure of what could be dubbed the "*Dan Patrick effect*." Today the House votes on SCR 20. Not only is it possible for Democrats to peel off the vote – either out of spite or principle – but also the chance to see whether conservative Republicans are going to follow the lead of a defiant **Sen. Dan Patrick** (R-Houston).

"When we vote to change the rules in an attempt to make ourselves feel better about spending \$15 billion more in this budget than the last, then you can count me as a no vote," Patrick said. "The only way to get my vote is if we add in a lower appraisal cap on residential properties. Without lower appraisal caps, any reduction in property taxes will just be temporary."

Patrick is defiant in the face of conservative groups, who have all come in line with the "bust the cap" proposal. Groups such as the *Texas Public Policy Foundation* and *Americans for Prosperity* have come out in favor of the concept of SCR 20, signaling a green light for conservatives to vote in favor of the measure. But Patrick devoted many of his own volunteers and resources to the efforts of other House-area conservatives. Watch for whether those conservatives will hold with Patrick today, making the vote much closer....

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