



- Chairman of Committee on Criminal Jurisprudence
- Member of Committee on Judicial Affairs

Texas House of Representatives

District 40: (part) McAllen, Elsa, Edcouch, Edinburg & San Carlos

Juan J. Hinojosa

November 26, 2001

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OPINION COMMITTEE

Honorable John Cornyn
Texas Attorney General
P.O. Box 12548
Austin, TX 78711-2548

Re: Request for Attorney General Opinion
Vehicle Registration Fees

FILE # ML-42312-01

I.D. # 42312

RQ-0475-JC

Dear General Cornyn:

I am requesting attorney general opinions, addressing the following issues:

- ▶ Can the governor raise the state vehicle registration fee, without approval, for the purpose of generating funds to help Texas hospitals, emergency medical personnel, police and firefighters develop and improve their capabilities to respond to, and prevent terrorist biological and chemical attacks in Texas?
- ▶ Is the automobile state registration fee considered a tax, which would require action by the House and Ways Means Committee?

During the 2001 regular session of the Legislature, the House of Representatives approved my measure, House Bill 893, which would have created an additional \$5 (five dollar) fee for motor vehicle registration. This new funding would have provided state grants for use by hospitals to improve their trauma care capabilities. The measure was approved by a Senate committee, but failed to pass the full Senate.

HB893 would have generated at \$80 (eighty) million a year to help trauma centers, which now are facing the tremendous burden of preparing for possible biological and chemical attacks. Dedicating a \$5 motor vehicle registration fee for trauma centers, as envisioned under my legislation, would have provided the Texas public health system with the ability to pool resources with the federal government to upgrade emergency health responses.

As a result of the September 11 attacks against our nation, protecting Texans will require a full range of initiatives, including improving public health systems in our state against the threat of bioterrorism. The issue is so important the U.S. Senate, led by Sen. Bill Frist, R-Tenn, and

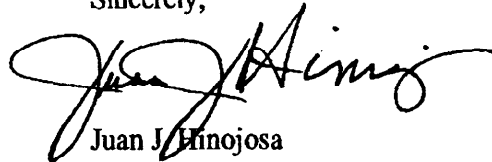
- District Office: 612 Nolana, Suite 410B, McAllen, TX 78504-3089 (956) 972-1841 Fax: (956) 686-8462
- Austin Office: P.O. Box 2910, Austin, TX 78768-2910 (512) 463-0636 Fax: (512) 463-0229
- E-mail: JUAN.HINOJOSA@HOUSE.STATE.TX.US

Page No. 2
Attorney General John Cornyn

Sen. Edward Kennedy, D-Mass, have asked the Congress for \$1.4 billion to improve the nation's health system, specifically at the local and state levels. Health and Human Services Secretary Tommy Thompson has publicly acknowledged there are gaps, saying he had asked the Bush administration for \$800 million, most to be sent to local and state public health systems.

Your attention to this request is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Juan J. Hinojosa". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and a long, sweeping underline.

Juan J. Hinojosa
Chairman
House Committee on Criminal Jurisprudence