

## Capitol Watch 436: Fallen Soldiers

Written by Betsy Blevins  
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June 2, 2011 - On May 28, the Texas House of Representatives and the Texas Senate met jointly to hold a memorial ceremony to honor Texan soldiers who lost their lives in the global war against terrorism. The ceremony began with the presentation of the colors by the Texas National Guard, the singing of the national anthem, and the recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance. Members of the legislature spoke briefly about the sacrifices made by the service members and their families before the Governor presented state flags to the families of the fallen Texans.

Ninety-six soldiers from Texas have lost their lives in the global war on terrorism in the last two years. The families of each of these fallen heroes were invited to the ceremony. The family members of fallen soldiers were on hand to participate in the memorial ceremony. The ceremony was closed with a 21-gun cannon salute and the playing of "Taps," both performed by the Texas National Guard.

In addition to this important and solemn ceremony, the legislature continued to work during this final week of session. The last few days of the session are primarily dedicated to working on conference committee reports. A bill that has been amended by the chamber from which it did not originate is returned to the originating chamber. Upon receiving the amended legislation, the originating chamber can either concur with all of the amendments made by the opposite chamber, or choose to go to conference committee to attempt to work out differences between the two versions of the bill.

When either the House or Senate decides to have a conference committee on a bill, five members from each chamber are appointed to serve on the committee. A conference committee's charge is limited to reconciling differences between the two houses, and the committee, unless so directed, may not alter, amend, or omit text that is not in disagreement. Nor may the committee add text on any matter that is not in disagreement or that is not included in either version of the bill in question.

After the committee has met and reached an agreement, a report is submitted to both houses for approval or disapproval. A conference committee report is not subject to amendment but must be accepted or rejected in its entirety. If the report is accepted, the bill is finally passed and sent to the governor. The last day for conference committee reports to be accepted this session is Sunday, May 29. The last day of session, also called Sine Die, was Monday, May 30.

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Lastly, I would like to thank all of those who serve in our military for their service, and encourage everyone to participate in local Memorial Day events to honor those who have sacrificed their lives for our country.

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