

FROM THE OFFICE OF
STATE REPRESENTATIVE RUTH JONES MCCLENDON

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**Representative Ruth Jones McClendon
Praises Cancelling of Costly State-Federal
Consulting Contracts**

(San Antonio) -- State Representative McClendon (District 120, San Antonio), commends the State of Texas for cancelling controversial consulting contracts with two private Washington, D.C. lobbying firms. The announcement, made earlier today by U.S. Representative Gene Green (Houston), concerns contracts which were questioned last year by Texas' Democratic members of Congress, who became concerned about close ties alleged between some of the firms' associates, convicted lobbyist Jack Abramoff, and former House Majority Leader Tom DeLay. "It's about time this decision was made," said McClendon. "I applaud our San Antonio Congressman, Charlie Gonzalez [U.S. District 20], for being vigilant in urging the dissolution of this wasteful spending."

According to a November, 2006 report from the Texas Sunset Commission, the Texas Office of State-Federal Relations paid as much as \$255,000 in 2005 to two private consulting firms in Washington, D.C. The consulting firms, Cassidy & Associates and The Federalist Group, were engaged to assist the agency in obtaining Congressional support for the state's federal agenda. The Office of State-Federal Relations, an agency operating with an annual appropriation of \$1.2 million, employs one staff member in Austin and six staff members in its Washington, D.C. office. According to the report, the largest expenditures of the agency, the source of which derives mainly from the state's General Revenue fund, included salaries, building rent and consulting fees.

In November 2006, the Texas Sunset Commission issued a decision adopting a recommendation requiring the Office of State-Federal Relations to interact and consult with the Lieutenant Governor and Speaker, and requiring the Office to include the Lieutenant Governor and Speaker in any routine communication relating to its progress on the federal level, including weekly conference calls. The Office of State-Federal Relations will be subject to review by the Sunset Commission again in six years, giving the Office a new Sunset date of September 1, 2013. More information about the most recent Sunset review can be obtained at http://www.sunset.state.tx.us/80threports/sfr/sfr_dec.pdf.

Representative McClendon serves on the Sunset Advisory Commission, which oversees all agencies under the auspices of the State of Texas. She invites constituents with comments on legislative issues, or who may have ideas for legislation, to contact her at the Capitol office at 512-463-0708. The District office will remain open during the 80th Legislative Session and may be reached by calling 210-225-2107.