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Mansfield leaders visit state Capitol

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AUSTIN - Mansfield leaders worked the halls of the state Capitol on Thursday, talking with state legislators about the needs of their fast-growing city.

A Mansfield Day resolution was read on the House floor; there were appreciations all around for the hard work of area lawmakers; and photos were taken with Gov. Rick Perry, state Sen. Chris Harris and state Reps. Toby Goodman and Bill Zedler.

"There are about 200 bills that could affect us," longtime Mansfield City Manager Clayton Chandler said as he ushered a dozen city officials through the Senate chambers. "We're for anything to reduce tax burdens, but we are also concerned about maintaining economic development and our good schools."

Because Mansfield is growing so quickly, the city would be hurt by any legislation to cap property value appraisal increases that could limit additional revenue, Mayor Mel Neuman said.

Since 1980, Mansfield's population has grown from around 8,000 residents to a bustling 50,000, and city officials predict it could reach 70,000 by 2010.

"Mansfield has become an attractive community for high-dollar development," Goodman said.

Transportation improvements in southeast Tarrant County -- completing Texas 360 between Interstate 20 and U.S. 287 and freight and commuter rail system improvements -- are also a big concern of the residents and businesses moving to the city, said Becca Hancock, president of the Mansfield Area Chamber of Commerce.