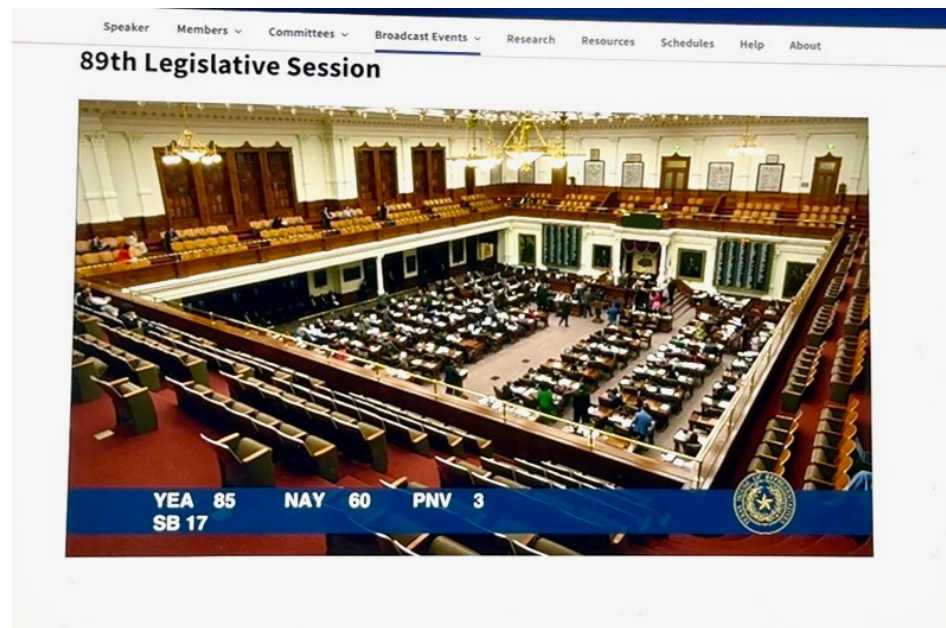


Dear All

Like many of you who might be exhausted from watching the debate for more than 6 hours and/or fasting and prayer for the whole day, I had no physical strength to write anything more. However, I felt compelled to say something, not just about the bill, but more on what it reveals about us as Chinese churches.

SB 17 has passed its second hearing with amendments largely more hostile, except for Amendment 4. The debate was very partisan, with all republicans' amendments adopted and all democrats' ones dismissed. Every amendment ended up with pretty much the same voting counts (85 vs 60), **as if none of the members have their independent thinking – only party allegiance.**



Amendment 3, which would have allowed home purchases after one year in the U.S. was tabled simply because it came from Democratic members. Yet the slightly more favorable Amendment 4 – eliminating waiting period altogether – passed unexpectedly solely because it was proposed by Republicans Matt Shaheen and Agie Chen Hutton. The bitter irony was that the extremely restrictive Amendment 7, limiting leases to just one year, was also adopted. The complete lack of logical consistency between these amendments reveals how deeply partisanship has played. All amendments from today's session can be reviewed at the Texas Legislature website.

at <https://capitol.texas.gov/BillLookup/Amendments.aspx?LegSess=89R&Bill=SB17>

A fellow elder from another Chinese church texted me a sobering perspective tonight, which I share here with his permission: “It’s disheartening to watch, because no matter how compelling your argument is, **most people have already made up their minds before the session even begins**. Even reasonable, common-sense amendments get dismissed. At this point, it feels like **no one can truly be trusted—only God**.” I replied that I agreed completely, not only in term of what just happened in the House, but also in our churches.

Isn’t it true that many of our brothers and sisters sided with Republicans on this bill (and countless others) before carefully examining the details of the most updated version of the bill. This seems to reflect an unquestioning trust in the Republican Party. One of the reasons we chose to speak as individual church leaders rather than in the name of our church is because we are concerned that taking an official church stance on one political issue today may force us to respond similarly to all future issues—implying that we, as leaders, are unable to think independently or discern on a case-by-case basis.

I want to make it clear that I am not criticizing anyone here. I have committed the same sin that I am denouncing. In the last election, my wife and I voted for every Republican candidate without knowing who they were or understanding their political records. Our daughters strongly objected, and rightly so. The only justification we could offer was that all Democrats support LGBT rights and/or abortion—as if that were the only issue we know and should care about. What I’ve learned today is this: we must **never replace trust in God with blind trust in those who claim to represent Christian values in politics**.

What impacted me more deeply about SB17 today was the contrast between its two central figures: Representative Cole Hefner, the Republican author of the bill, and Representative Gene Wu, the leading Democratic opponent. If you haven’t watched the debate, I encourage you to view a short clip here: [Instagram Debate Clip](#). **It shows that our silence would have been a huge mistake.**

Shockingly, the author of a bill that could harm thousands of legal visa holders didn't even understand who these individuals are—mistakenly assuming they were permanent residents, and thus unaffected. More troubling, after learning the difference and realizing the bill contradicted his stated intentions, he still proceeded to block all corrective Democratic amendments—clearly for political reasons. **That kind of behavior is, without question, hypocritical.** 1 John 4:20 "Whoever claims to love God yet hates a brother or sister is a liar. **For whoever does not love their neighbor, whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they have not seen.**"

This led me to research their personal backgrounds. I was surprised to find that both Representative Hefner and Rep. Wu have Southern Baptist roots. According to his website ([colehefner.com](http://colehefner.com)), Mr. Hefner still proudly attends South Jefferson Baptist Church. Meanwhile, Mr. Wu no longer attends church—he explained why in this [2023 YouTube video](#), beginning at 3:49. He said **"I grew up in a Southern Baptist Church, ... and that was kind of the reason that I do not go to church anymore ... part of my personal frustration is, as I was growing up, I was taught things like what we should be and how we should treat each other. Then when I became an adult, I looked around and found out that people don't do that. I personally felt why I am still here" (in the church).**

SB17 may be a wake-up call for many Chinese Americans who routinely vote for Republican—and it should be an even louder alarm for Chinese churches, which are losing our young generation, **many of whom said they still love God, but hate churches, because our churches are full of hypocrites (like Mr. Hefner).** We preach about loving God and loving our neighbors as ourselves. However, when they look around, are they seeing that we are listening to our neighbor's plea, speak on their behalf, and acting with compassion and justice. I am still wrestling with whether speaking out on this bill may cause division in the church. However, now I felt that **if staying silent, we may retain many like Hefner while driving away more Gene Wu from our churches.**

Again, I am not here to criticize others. I'm guilty too. For 25 years, I've brought many students at UTD to Christ and disciplined them. Sadly, my older daughter stopped going to church after she entered college, probably because she saw we did not do what we taught her to do, while UTD students could not that. That's a deep pain I am carrying every day. In the

last election, she drove many miles home just to vote—apparently, for Democrats.

I don't pretend to have the answers, but I want to start a conversation. Please, respond in your personal name—even if you disagree with me. Don't just message me privately. Email this group so we can collectively reflect on how we, as Chinese churches, can do better.

The elder was right, only God can be fully trusted. I praise Him, because He has heard our prayers today—regardless of how the final vote turns out. SB17 is better than it was started today for Amendment 4 alone. It now allows legal visa holders to purchase homes. I saw our district representative, Mihaela Plesa, who officially responded to our Open Letter, standing beside Rep. Wu in opposition. Rep. Matt Shaheen, who authored Amendment 4, is a member of Prestonwood Baptist Church—the very first American church that we reached out.



The most encouraging news I heard today is that Representative Angie Chen Button—who coauthored Amendment 4 with Representative Shaheen—grew up in our church and, based on her speech today, continues to be a faithful, God-loving churchgoer. We thank God for her courage and leadership. She shows us the hope we have in the Lord. **Let's**

**work together to make changes to raise up more Angie among the younger generations in our churches.**



陳厚道伯伯的女兒 Angie Button

In His Grace,

Elder Fang Qiu  
Dallas Chinese Fellowship Church

**P.S.** If you prefer not to receive future emails on this topic, please kindly let me know privately, and I will promptly remove your address from the list.