



Valley Interfaith leaders recognize Democratic Senators Eddie Lucio, Jr and Juan Hinojosa, and Republican Senator Charles Perry from Lubbock, for their efforts to generate investment in South Texas' poorest families.

They authored Senate Bill 2452 and Senate Joint Resolution 79, which would allow the Texas Water Development Board (TWDB) to use money from the Economically Distressed Areas Program (EDAP) to bring millions of dollars to economically distressed areas to cover most of the costs to provide access to drinking and waste water services.

These bills passed with overwhelming bipartisan support in both chambers; and on June 14, Republican Governor Greg Abbott signed S. B. 2452.

In 1989, Valley Interfaith and our sister Texas IAF organizations worked with our state senators and representatives to pass the first EDAP legislation. This legislation allowed the state to sell bonds to invest in water and wastewater services in "colonias" and other low-income areas throughout the state.

EDAP money went to cities, counties, water districts, and supply corporations to plan, buy land, design, and build the needed water infrastructure. This project transformed the Rio Grande Valley and communities throughout Texas by

providing over \$1 billion for water projects that have served over 400,000 residents.

Because of EDAP's success, it ran out of money. In response, the Senators authored and passed S. J. R. 79 which will place an amendment to the Texas State Constitution on the ballot for the November 5, 2019 election. If passed, the TWDB will be able to issue up to \$200 million dollars in bonds to pay for the many remaining projects without raising the tax rate. The amendment is necessary because Texas' Constitution does not allow the State to borrow money without the consent of the voting public.

Valley Interfaith and its sister organizations continue to support EDAP. We applaud the work of the Senators and their staffs, especially Senator Lucio, for shepherding this legislation. EDAP funds have changed the lives of countless people who live in "colonias" in South Texas, including Cameron Park in Cameron County and Las Milpas in Hidalgo County. Because of the investment in the poorest communities, EDAP has been an economic development engine that paid for the needed infrastructure to grow healthy communities and successful businesses.

Let's not forget to vote for this amendment in November. Its passage ensures that more families live in neighborhoods that have safe drinking water and wastewater services. The Senators have done their jobs, now we have to do ours and get out the vote in November to approve the amendment.

*Editor's Note: The above guest column was penned by the Rev. Kevin Collins (pictured above), OMI, pastor at St. Eugene de Mazenod Catholic Church in Brownsville, Texas; and Rev. Alfonso Guevara, pastor at St. John the Baptist Catholic Church in San Juan, Texas. Both are leaders in the Valley Interfaith.*