

Texas Rural Health and Economic Development Advisory Council

Member Bios

The Honorable Kyle Kacal; State Representative, District 12

Kyle Kacal was first elected to the Texas House of Representatives in 2012 to serve and represent House District 12. The district is comprised of Falls, Limestone, and Robertson counties and portions of Brazos and McLennan.

During the most recent legislative session, Representative Kacal was appointed to the House Committees on Natural Resources and Environmental Regulation, and served as the Vice Chair of the House Committee on Rules and Resolutions.

As a lifelong conservative, Representative Kacal has worked to cut over 1 billion dollars in taxes as well as ending millions of dollars in tax diversions. Alongside his conservative colleagues, he continues to work on addressing the critical needs of our state and upholding its constitutional responsibilities. He has also supported efforts to increase governmental transparency and accessibility to the voters of Texas.

After graduating from Texas A&M University in 1992, Kacal received a Certificate of Ranch Management from Texas Christian University. Representative Kacal owns and operates a large-scale cattle business, focusing on breeding and raising beef cattle as well as a full-service hunting business during the fall and spring. Having devoted his life to preserving the land and contributing to local and state economies through his dynamic ranching business, Representative Kacal is considered to be a strong voice and leader on agriculture and rural issues.

Representative Kacal and his wife, Marci, have two children, Carter and Kendall, who attend Allen Academy in Bryan, Texas. The family is actively involved in the St. Thomas Aquinas church.

The Honorable John Thompson; former County Judge, Polk County

Judge Thompson has served as Polk County Judge for the last 21 years, with a special interest in developing and utilizing regional partnerships to address local, state and national issues.

He has chaired the Legislative Committee for the County Judges and Commissioners Association since 1997. Currently, Judge Thompson serves as President of the North & East

Texas County Judges and Commissioners Association. He has served as President of the Texas Association of Regional Councils.

Judge Thompson has dedicated much of his energy to working for transportation solutions in Texas and throughout the nation. He currently serves as President of “Alliance I-69 for Texas”, and as Chairman of the “Gulf Coast Strategic Highway Coalition (Strategic I-14).” In 2000, the Texas Department of Transportation honored him with the “Road Hand Award” and in 2004 he was awarded the Department’s Russell H. Perry Award- both recognizing his interest and efforts in the improvements of transportation.

In 2009, Judge Thompson became the second ever to receive the Giles W. Dalby Award for Judicial Leadership by the Texas Judicial Academy and the Texas Association of Counties.

The Honorable Don McBeth; Director of Advocacy and Communications, Texas Organization of Rural and Community Hospitals

Don McBeth is the Director of Government Relations for the Texas Organization of Rural and Community Hospitals (TORCH) where he serves as a liaison with state and federal lawmakers, and agencies for more than 150 rural hospitals in Texas. In that role, he provides rural health policy information to both the members of the Texas Legislature and members of Congress from Texas. He was also a driving force behind recent state legislation to allow hospitals in rural areas to directly employ physicians in an effort to enhance recruitment opportunities.

Prior to joining TORCH in October 2007, Don was Director of Telemedicine and Rural Health for Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center in Lubbock, a position he held for nine years. In that role, he worked with many communities across West Texas on rural health issues and directed the telemedicine program for Texas which is used extensively in the prison system and in rural communities to electronically link physicians and patients. He was also instrumental in the establishment of the West Texas Area Health Education Center program at Texas Tech.

Don also served as Lubbock County Judge from January 1991 through December 1998 and as the Office Administrator of the Lubbock County District Attorney’s Office for the ten years prior to being County Judge. Early in his career, Don worked in radio and television news.

Throughout his health care career, Don has been active in many state and national health organizations, including the National Rural Health Association. He is a past president of the Texas Rural Health Association.

A 1977 graduate of Texas Tech University with an Arts and Sciences Degree in Telecommunications, he has been honored as an Outstanding Alumnus from the Texas Tech School of Mass Communications.

The Honorable Orlando Correa; former Mayor, Raymondville, Texas

Mayor Correa has spent the last 12 years as an elected official in Raymondville, Texas; six years as City Commissioner and six years as the city's mayor. During his time as a city official, Mayor Correa has been elected to the Willacy County Appraisal District and the Lower Rio Grande Valley Development Corporation. He has also been appointed to the Raymondville Economic Development Board.

Mayor Correa earned his bachelor's degree in education along with a double master's degree in Counseling & Guidance and Administration. He has spent the last 23 years of his career in the education field. Currently, he works as a high school counselor in his community.

Mayor Correa and his wife, Christina, have been married for the last 23 years. He is an active member of the Willacy County Lion's Club and enjoys spending his time hunting and fishing.

The Honorable Jay Carnes; former Uvalde City Council Member

Jay Carnes was born and raised in Uvalde, Texas. In 1997 he graduated from the University of Texas with a BBA in finance. After graduating, he returned to his hometown and was elected to the Uvalde City Council where he has served since 2008. For the last 15 years, Carnes has been running an agricultural wholesale business that does over 15 million in annual sales and has an annual payroll of 3.5 million.

In 2004 Carnes became involved in agriculture politics on the producer side of the industry. He has worked on issues such as the 2004 farm bill, agriculture workforce issues and water. Currently, Carnes serves as the Texas board representative on the National Council of Ag Employees. He is the immediate past president of Texas Vegetable Association.

Donna Kuenstler, RN, MSN; Director and Instructor at Sul Ross University

Donna M. Kuenstler is Director and Instructor of the Vocational Nursing Program at Sul Ross State University. Donna has been in the position since 2001. She is also the Clinical Instructor for the LVN to RN Transition Program with Midland College. She has been a practicing RN in the West Texas region since 1992. Previous jobs held include: staff nurse,

charge nurse, Director of Home Health, and Interim Chief Nursing Officer for Big Bend Regional Medical Center; and coordinator of student internship experiences throughout Brewster, Jeff Davis, and Presidio counties for the West Texas Area Health Education Centers.

Many years of experience in working with patients, families, healthcare providers, and students gives Donna a unique understanding of the health-related challenges, both historic and current, facing the citizens of the predominately rural Big Bend region. In her role as a nurse educator, Donna works closely with local hospitals, clinics, and private practices to train and supply the vital nursing workforce for an area of Texas considered at high risk for a continuing and severe shortage of nurses.

Donna Kuenstler holds a Bachelor of Science degree from University of Texas Health Science Center School of Nursing and a Master of Science in Nursing with a specialty in Nursing Education from the University of Phoenix. She is a member of Sigma Theta Tau International Honor Society of Nursing, Texas Association of Vocational Nurse Educators, and the National Federation of Licensed Practical Nurses.

Kathi Masonheimer; Community Development Director, Brady/ MuCulloch County Chamber of Commerce

Kathi Masonheimer is the Community Development Director for the Brady/McCulloch County Chamber of Commerce. She joined the Brady Chamber in May of 2010 and manages the Chamber, EDC, Tourism, and Industrial Foundation.

Prior to these services, she was the Executive Director of the Palestine Area Chamber of Commerce in east Texas. While in Palestine she served as the District 1 Councilperson from February 2007- until her departure in May of 2010.

Kathi has served on numerous boards and delegations including Texas Midwest Community Network, Brady Historic Theater Board, Palestine Main Street, Palestine CVB, and Palestine Downtown Association.

She attended Abilene Christian University and Cisco Junior College. She recently completed her third year of Institute for Organizational Management in Los Angeles and will graduate in July 2012. She has been married to her husband Jamie for 14 years and they have 4 children.

Bryan Tucker; City Manager, Childress, Texas

For the past three years, Bryan Tucker has been serving as the City Manager of Childress, Texas. He is the past owner of JC Fiber, an underground construction company, and the current owner of Jachin Construction, a residential construction company.

He is an active volunteer speaker for the Texas Department of Criminal Justice. He is a past volunteer for Mission Arlington and a current member of the Texas Tech Letterman's Association. Tucker received two bachelor's degrees in Marketing and Management from Texas Tech University.