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## Patrick's new approach

posted by Patricia Kilday Hart at [12:50 PM](#)

Yesterday's Senate debate on Sen. Jeff Wentworth's driver's ed bill highlighted one of the remarkable stories of the session: Dan Patrick's transformation into a real player who is having an impact on legislation.

Wentworth's bill would have required 18 to 25-year-olds to take a driver's ed course before obtaining a driver's license, and it was originally opposed by only six members on the motion to suspend: Eltife, Fraser, Gallegos, Hinojosa, Jackson and Whitmire. Patrick then offered an amendment narrowing the bill to 18 to 21-year-olds, and 14 members opposed the motion to table: the bill's original six opponents, joined by Patrick, Averitt, Estes, Nelson, Nichols, Seliger and West.

It wasn't particularly momentous legislation, but it is illustrative of the dramatic change Patrick has undergone. It's hard to imagine that the Dan Patrick of last session would have either offered the amendment or won over seven of his colleagues to his position.

This session, it's happened over and over. He's offered solutions, he's honored requests to hold up bills for further work, he's forged compromises.

There have been flashes of the old Patrick: he's been argumentative in committee with witnesses with whom he disagrees and contemptuous of his colleagues during Senate floor debate. But his colleagues — including many Democrats — report being pleasantly surprised at his new willingness to work in a productive way.

I'm also told that in the contentious Senate caucus over the Democrat's letter to the Secretary of Education, Patrick advocated calm when others were threatening a spectacle of personal privilege speeches denouncing the D's. The Dan Patrick of last session would never have passed up an opportunity to demagogue on the floor.

I spoke with one senator who remarked how difficult it would be to have two distinct personas: the edgy, angry talk show host one day, a collaborative lawmaker the next.

Somehow, Patrick seems to have figured out how to check his talk show host hat at the door of the Senate chamber.