

GC CISD Raises \$51,000 for United Way, Page 2

Valentine Flowers, Page 5

Rotary Chili Feast



Taste Chester's Famous Chili Recipe Saturday, February 7 at the Highlands Rotary Chili Feast. And win a new car at the same time! Raffle Tickets \$100, call 713-906-2337

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THURSDAY, JANUARY 29, 2026

HIGHLANDS, TEXAS 77562

IN THE STARS

Community Ready for Rotary Chili Feast Feb. 7

Annual Event in 51st Year; Raffle for New Car

THEA Meeting Tuesday Feb. 3

Save The Date For The Next San Jacinto Community Meeting.

Our next meeting is just one week away and we hope you will join us.

This meeting centers on a critical question:

Where is the action from the EPA — and what does it mean for our community?

During the meeting, we will also:

- Share updates on the site
- Discuss ongoing fishing concerns and what actions may be available to protect community health.
- Talk about the future of THEA, including our plans to expand support to communities nationwide

Your participation helps ensure that community concerns remain visible and that agencies are held accountable. These conversations are essential as we push for transparency, action, and long-term solutions.

Meeting Details
Tuesday, February 3 at 6:00pm
604 Highland Woods Dr.
Highlands, TX 77562

We hope you will join us and be a part of this important discussion.

Highlands Rotary Chili Feast is like a homecoming for friends

By David Taylor
Managing Editor

In the circle of life, things change. One thing that has stood the test, however, is the Highlands Rotary Club Chili Feast scheduled for Feb. 7 this year.

"The bank that used to support us is gone. Many of the businesses that were sponsors are gone, but we continue," said Club President Patricia Scott.

Her dad started his dentistry business in Highlands and became a huge supporter in Rotary.

"I've grown up in Rotary and have been at it for 69 years," she smiled.



Rotarians from the Highlands Rotary Club are raffling off a new Chevrolet SUV from Turner Chevrolet at their Chili Feast on February 7th. Seen at center in this photo are club president Patricia Scott, past president GayLynn Milliorn, president-elect and Chili Feast chair person Connie Russell, and members of the club. Raffle tickets are available for a \$100 donation, and you can get a ticket from any Rotarian, or call 713-906-2337 to get a ticket. Tickets for the Raffle, or just the Chili meal, are also available at the door. Everyone Welcome!!

Willie Lee Herndon was one of the original members that chartered the club in 1948 with the assistance of the Dayton Rotary Club that helped sponsor and mentor them.

"He and Chester Stasney helped start the club. My dad bought the first

vehicle they gave away, and Gladys Little won that first vehicle," she recalled.

Scott said their first meetings were at the Methodist Church.

"Clubs sang back then. We had a little booklet with the music and words and I used to play the piano for

the meetings," she said.

The club took a break from the church for a short period but returned shortly after and have held their meetings in the same place for decades.

Another thing that hasn't changed is the Methodist women cooking

for the meetings.

"My mother used to cook fried chicken on her Tuesdays, and she had a committee, and she fried chicken every Tuesday," Scott remembered.

When her husband retired, they moved to Livingston and continued their membership with the Livingston club.

"They gave her a gold-plated chicken bone as her going away gift," Scott smiled. "I have a long relationship with the Highlands Rotary Club."

She has served several times as president of the club and remains committed to the success of the fundraiser and club.

She has been a member of the club for 25 years in

Continued. See ROTARY CHILI FEAST, Page 5

Garcia announces Keep2Clean

'Keep2Clean' aims to curb illegal dumping through education, enforcement and surveillance.

CLOVERLEAF, Texas — Illegal dumping continues to plague neighborhoods across Harris County, but a new initiative spearheaded by Precinct 2 Commissioner Adrian Garcia's office hopes to better address it.

Garcia unveiled "Keep2Clean," which he said is aimed at curbing illegal dumping through education, enforcement and surveillance. Garcia called the dumping of trash a "chronic problem" in several hotspots in Precinct 2, including the Aldine and



Precinct 2 Commissioner Adrian Garcia announces KEEP2CLEAN Initiative, with staff in background.

Cloverleaf areas.

"It is one of the most disrespectful things people can do to a community," Garcia said.

The first phase of the program focuses on educating residents through new canvassing efforts in

the most impacted neighborhoods.

"My team will be out distributing fliers to educate the public that there is a systemic way to do it, to do it properly, to do it legally," Garcia said.

The initiative also in-

cludes a significant enforcement component for the most severe cases from both the Harris County Sheriff's Office and the Harris County District Attorney's Office.

"If we don't get that collaboration and that coop-

eration, we'll hold people accountable," Garcia said.

Garcia said his office already regularly reports illegal dumping to the sheriff's office. But through Keep2Clean, deputies with the sheriff's office will be officially attached to the program, watching out for illegal dumping — which, in some cases, could lead to criminal charges and fines.

"Enforcement could look like charges, misdemeanor charges that a person could face, which is up to two years in jail and a \$10,000 fine," Garcia said.

Garcia also said officials will expand their use of surveillance cameras, a tool traditionally reserved

Continued. See KEEP2CLEAN, Page 5

Highlands Rotary Club Serves 100 Seniors at Community Center



The Highlands Rotary Club dedicated their efforts to serving approximately 100 senior citizens at San Jacinto Community Center. Rotarians and volunteers prepared and

served meals, showcasing their commitment to the community.

A special acknowledgment goes to AG Gilbert Santana for his participation. This event highlights

the ongoing service of Highlands Rotarians, special shout out to Wayne Prescott and 12 others contributing.

Continued. See ROTARY CLUB SERVES SENIORS, Page 7

Barge Industry Commandeers San Jacinto River; raises health concerns



By Salina Arredondo
Public Health Watch

Over the past three decades, the San Jacinto River east of Houston has seen a dramatic increase in oil and chemical barge traffic, rising from about 100 barges in 1990 to at least 600

today. This growth, driven by the needs of Houston's refineries, chemical plants, and pipeline terminals, has transformed the river into a critical extension of the Houston Ship Channel—one of the nation's busiest shipping corridors for petrochemicals and re-

lated products.

However, for the 54,000 residents of Channelview and Highlands, this industrial expansion has brought significant environmental and safety concerns. Air quality in these

Continued. See BARGES COMMANDEER RIVER, Page 6

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Goose Creek CISD Employees Raise More Than \$51,000 for United Way Campaign

Story by: Kendall David, GCCISD Executive Director of Community Engagement

Goose Creek CISD (GCCISD) employees once again demonstrated their strong commitment to students, families, and the community through the successful 2025-2026 United Way campaign.

GCCISD has maintained a long-standing partnership with United Way of Greater Baytown Area & Chambers County in support of services that strengthen families and improve lives for the students they serve. During this year's campaign, 1,001 district employees collectively raised \$51,614, directly supporting United Way programs that provide essential resources and support throughout the community.

To help recognize the success of the campaign, the district was honored to welcome United Way CEO Mrs. Reabold to celebrate the generosity of GCCISD employees and the campuses that led the way in participation and giving. District leaders expressed appreciation for every employee who contributed, noting that the campaign's



Pictured, from left, Joe Rodriguez, GCCISD Superintendent; Renee Stripling, Highlands Elementary campaign coordinator; Blanca Capetillo, Highlands Elementary Principal; Melissa Reabold, United Way of Greater Baytown Area and Chambers County CEO; and Jim Campisi, GCCISD School Board President. (Photos by: Carrie Pryor-Newman)

success reflects the service-minded spirit of GCCISD.

Several campuses were recognized for outstanding employee participation. POINT Alternative Center earned the third-highest participation rate at 50 percent, led by Principal Bill Kimbel and United Way campaign coordinator Nancy Hockless. Clark Elementary received recognition for the second-highest participation rate at 70 percent under the leadership of Principal Kem Scheidt and campaign coordinator Michelle Schramm. Highlands Elementary achieved the highest employee participation rate at 85 percent,

with leadership from Principal Blanca Capetillo and campaign coordinator Renee Stripling.

Campuses were also recognized for the highest monetary contributions within their size categories. In the small campus category, ranging from one to 85 employees, IMPACT Early College High School led contributions with a total of \$2,095 under the leadership of Principal and campaign coordinator Laura Reyes. In the medium campus category, ranging from 86 to 115 employees, Pumphrey Elementary raised \$3,027, led by Principal Carlaskio Smith and campaign coordinator Michelle Grimes. In the large campus category, ranging from 116 to 259 employees, Robert E. Lee High School contributed the highest amount at \$5,135, with leadership from Principal Earnest Brooks and campaign coordinators Clemencia Vigil and Connie Guerrero.

GCCISD extends sincere gratitude to all employees who participated in the 2025-2026 United Way campaign. Their gener-



Pictured, from left, Pictured, from left, Joe Rodriguez, GCCISD Superintendent; Michelle Jackson, Robert E. Lee High School Assistant Principal; Clemencia Vigil, Robert E. Lee High School campaign coordinator; Melissa Reabold, United Way of Greater Baytown Area and Chambers County CEO; and Jim Campisi, GCCISD School Board President. (Photos by: Carrie Pryor-Newman)

osity continues to strengthen the partnership with United Way and ensures vital resources remain available to support students, families, and the

greater Baytown and Chambers County communities.

Pictured, from left, Pictured, from left, Joe Rodriguez, GCCISD Superintendent; Carlaskio Smith, Pumphrey Elementary Principal; Michelle Grimes, Pumphrey Elementary campaign coordinator; Melissa Reabold, United Way of Greater Baytown Area and Chambers County CEO; and Jim Campisi, GCCISD School Board President. (Photos by: Carrie Pryor-Newman)

greater Baytown and Chambers County communities.

Goose Creek CISD Celebrates School Board Recognition Month

Story by: Nancy Bonds, GCCISD Director of Communications

Each January, Goose Creek CISD (GCCISD) proudly joins school districts across Texas in honoring the dedicated individuals who serve their communities as volunteer school board members. School Board Recognition Month provides an opportunity to recognize trustees for their leadership, service, and commitment to ensuring students receive a high-quality public education.

The 2026 School Board Recognition Month theme, "Our Future Is Public," reflects the powerful role public education plays in shaping the next genera-



Pictured, from left, Richard Clem, GCCISD School Board Vice President; Jim Campisi, GCCISD School Board President; Tiffany Guy, GCCISD School Board Secretary; Jessie Martinez, GCCISD School Board Assistant Secretary; Gretchen Knowles, Harris County Precinct 2 Community Liaison; Helen Berrott-Tims, GCCISD School Board Member; Howard Sampson, GCCISD School Board Member; and Mercedes Renteria, GCCISD School Board Member. (Photo by: Carrie Pryor-Newman)

tion. Through their time and expertise, GCCISD trustees guide the district's direction while in-

vesting in student success, workforce readiness, and the long-term strength of the community.

The Board of Trustees' leadership impacts nearly 24,000 students across GCCISD each day. From

academic opportunities to facilities planning, safety initiatives, and student support systems, trustees help create the conditions for students to learn, grow, and thrive.

To celebrate School Board Recognition Month, campuses across the district created posters and visual displays expressing gratitude for the board's service and dedication. These student- and staff-created tributes reflect the district's appreciation for the trustees' commitment to public education.

In addition to campus celebrations, trustees were formally recognized through a proclamation from City of Baytown Mayor Charles Johnson, a proclamation from Harris

County Precinct 3 Commissioner Tom Ramsey, a resolution from State Representative District 143 Honorable Ana E. Hernandez, and certificates from Harris County Precinct 2 Commissioner Adrian Garcia. Trustees also received a book dedication in their honor, recognizing their lasting impact on students and the community.

GCCISD extends sincere appreciation to its Board of Trustees for their dedication, leadership, and service to students, families, and the community. Their commitment to public education continues to strengthen opportunities for today's learners while building a brighter future for generations to come.

Carver Elem. Invites Carver HS Alumni to 2nd Annual Black History Month Program

G. W. CARVER ELEMENTARY

**610 S. PRUETT
BAYTOWN, TX**

**FEBRUARY 26TH
@ 5:30PM**

CARVER HIGH SCHOOL ALUMNI

YOU ARE CORDIALLY INVITED TO JOIN US AS AN HONORED GUEST AT OUR 2ND ANNUAL BLACK HISTORY MONTH PROGRAM ON FEBRUARY 26, 2026.

Carver Elementary is excited to invite all Carver High School alumni to attend and be recognized during the campus's 2nd Annual Black History Month Program on **Thursday, February 26, 2026, at 5:30 PM.**

This special event celebrates the legacy of Carver High School and honors the lasting impact its alumni have made on our community. Alumni guests will be recognized as honored attendees during the pro-

gram, which highlights student performances, history, and cultural pride. Location: 610 S. Pruett, Baytown, TX For more information: Contact Carver Elementary at 281-420-4600

Annual GCCISD Dance Spectacular

GCCISD Dance Spectacular 2026

competition showcase

Wednesday, February 4th | 6:00pm

Lee College Arena

\$10 PRE-SALE - \$12 ONLINE AT THE DOOR

The GCM Dazzlers, Lee Celebrities, and Sterling Stars, along with their respective JV Teams, will perform in the 2026 GCCISD Dance Spectacular to showcase their upcoming contest routines

on **Wednesday, February 4, 2026, at 6:00 PM** at the Lee College Arena! Come out and show your support to our teams as they have been working hard this season! Tickets can be pur-

chased from any Varsity or JV member for \$10 cash before the day of the event. Starting February 4, tickets will be sold online for \$12 each through the GCCISD Athletics website. We hope to see you there!

Barbers Hill Press

Dayton

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THURSDAY, JANUARY 29, 2026

MONT BELVIEU, TEXAS 77580

ON THE HILL

Methodist Baytown Hospital among Top-Performing Maternity Care Nationwide

Six Houston-area hospitals were named among the top maternity care providers in the country, ranking the Bayou City in the top 20 U.S. cities with the most high-quality maternity care options.

The hospitals U.S. News & World Report evaluated for its "2026 Best Hospitals for Maternity Care" ratings, included 15 in the Houston metro area, the majority of which are located in Harris County. The area's six "high-performing" maternity care hospitals are:

- Houston Methodist Baytown Hospital
- University of Texas Medical Branch
- Houston Methodist Willowbrook Hospital
- Houston Methodist Clear Lake Hospital
- Memorial Hermann Greater Heights Hospital
- Texas Children's Hospital

The metro area with the most high-performing hospitals is New York City with 39, and the Texas metro area with the most is Dallas-Fort Worth, which has 12. Houston's six high-performing hospitals tied with Charlotte, North Carolina; Cincinnati; Detroit; Seattle; and Indianapolis.

U.S. News identified high-performing hospitals through a survey collected in the summer. Out of the 2,582 eligible hospitals nationwide, 901 submitted survey responses for the U.S. News ranking.

Several of the Houston-area honorees have received other recognition this year for their quality of care. Houston Methodist's Baytown, Clear Lake and Willowbrook hospitals were all named alongside several other Methodist campuses in Premier's Top 100 Hospitals lists in April.

Judge Jimmy Sylvia Honored for 30 Years of Transformative Leadership in Chambers County

CHAMBERS COUNTY - County Judge Jimmy Sylvia was honored at the Mont Belvieu Area Chamber of Commerce State of the County Membership Luncheon, celebrating more than three decades of service to Chambers County.

A slideshow highlighted his career and the progress made throughout his time in office.

Judge Sylvia followed with a heartfelt and emotional speech, sharing that he's an introvert at heart and reflecting on his first public speaking experience teaching junior high boys in Sunday school. He spoke about the rewarding moments, the challenges, and the relationships built over the years — emphasizing that the county's successes were never his alone, but the result of strong



Judge Sylvia, center, receives award at the Chamber's State of the County Luncheon.

partnerships, dedicated employees, and a united community. He also shared gratitude for the incredible natural resources God blessed our county with.

Under his leadership, Chambers County has become one of the fastest-growing counties in the nation, while balancing

growth with industry and viewing businesses as partners. He highlighted key priorities such as infrastructure and drainage, noting the county maintains 350 miles of roads and 700 county ditches, and shared that over the past 10 years, \$2.3 million has been spent housing inmates outside the county.

His presentation reflected Three Decades of Service and Growth:

- Elected Commissioner in 1993; appointed County Judge in 1996
- Population grew from 26,031 to 60,151
- Median household income increased from \$40,919 to \$108,114
- County budget grew

from \$11.2 million to \$110.6 million

Finally, Judge Sylvia spoke about the many disasters Chambers County has weathered together. While he joked he wouldn't change a thing — except maybe the number of disasters — he emphasized how those moments brought teams closer together and strengthened the county's ability to work collaboratively for the people it serves.

As he looks toward retirement and more time with his grandkids, today's luncheon was a powerful reminder that our county's greatest asset is its people — and Judge Jimmy Sylvia's leadership has left a lasting legacy on Chambers County.

Thank you, Judge Sylvia, for 30 years of service, dedication, and heart.

Good Times Texas Made Celebrates Membership with Baytown Chamber of Commerce Ribbon Cutting

Baytown, TX - The Baytown Chamber of Commerce proudly celebrated the official membership of Good Times Texas Made with a ribbon cutting ceremony, marking an exciting milestone for the business and its continued commitment to the Baytown community.

Located at 1307 S. Highway 146 near the Fred Hartman bridge in Baytown, Good Times Texas Made has become a popular local gathering spot offering a welcoming atmosphere, great drinks, and live entertainment. The ribbon cutting celebration brought together Chamber leadership, local business representatives and community members to recognize Good Time Texas Made's involvement in Baytown's growing business community.

"We are excited to join the Baytown Chamber of Commerce and celebrate this milestone with a ribbon cutting," said Joseph Chapa, Owner of Good



Baytown Chamber Ambassadors, staff and other business representatives joined Good Times Texas Made owners, Joseph and Laura Chapa and their staff.

Time Texas Made. "As a live entertainment venue, we're proud to provide a space where people can come together to enjoy mu-

sic, events, and good times while supporting our local community."

The Baytown Chamber of Commerce supports local

businesses through networking opportunities, advocacy, and community engagement. Good Time Texas Made's membership

reflects its dedication to being an active, engaged business and entertainment destination in Baytown.

THOUGHTS FROM HILLSIDE CHURCH

By Dr. Mark Trice



When the New Year Shine Starts to Fade

fades as life returns to its normal pace and your to-do list gets longer and longer. Most people feel their excitement fade quickly and mistake that loss of drive for personal failure. It's not. It's just that motivation, that burning desire we have on New Year's, is unreliable. What works consistently instead? Commitment.

Galatians 6:9 warns us not to grow weary in doing well. Why the warning? Because weariness is normal! But if we choose to keep showing up realistically - as opposed to hav-

ing unrealistic expectations about what we can and cannot accomplish - progress happens. The thing is it happens quietly.

True growth hardly ever comes quickly. Weight loss, which is one of the most common things people long for, is better for you if it happens slowly. Relationship improvement takes time. Healthy habits are easiest to adopt if you're realistic about what you will and will not be able to maintain. The key is consistency.

Say you want to grow closer to God. You may have set a goal (made a resolution) to spend an hour a day in prayer and read your Bible through this year. These are good goals, but if you set yourself up by making goals you can't possibly maintain, it's easy to fail one day, two days, three days...and then give up. Don't.

God's mercies are new every morning (Lamentations 3:22-23). That means you don't just get a fresh start on January 1; you get a fresh start every day.

The truth is, consistency matters more than intensity. If you've set goals that were too high and you're about to give up, take another look at the goals you set. While traditional New Year messages often promise great transformation, true transformation takes time and consistency.

So maybe you need to adjust your goals to match your reality. Simplify them or break them down into bite-sized pieces. Don't worry about getting impressive results; work on faithfully taking baby steps if necessary. But take those steps - one at a time, slowly if need be. The scenery may not change while you're walking this road, but eventually, you'll look back and see how far you've come.

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OPINION PAGE



Yes, we need a \$1.5 trillion defense budget

Finally, the United States will follow through on its NATO commitments.

That'd be the cheeky interpretation of President Donald Trump's announcement, via Truth Social, that he wants the U.S. defense budget to be \$1.5 trillion. This would represent a stunning 50% increase over the current budget and put the U.S. right around 5% of GDP, the target level that NATO countries recently adopted at Trump's insistence.

The details and follow-through will matter, but on its own terms, the Trump declaration is of epic significance.

Such a historic buildup would meet the moment — it's never made sense that the U.S. would enter a period of heightened risk of great power conflict at a time when it has difficulty replenishing its missile stocks.

It would match the predilections of a president who enjoys throwing his weight around. If Trump wants to speak loudly and carry a big stick, it requires the resources to build and maintain the stick.

And it would match his vision of a world-class military. You can't have a Golden Dome — Trump's project for an enhanced missile defense — or a Golden Fleet — his notion of a next-generation navy — without a Golden Defense Budget.

The scale of spending contemplated here is truly astounding. A \$500 billion increase would roughly match the total annual spending of all non-U.S. NATO countries. The percentage increase would be the highest since the Korean War and double the biggest annual increases of the Reagan years.

"We still talk about the Reagan buildup," Secretary of War Pete Hegseth said in a speech last month, "and my kids and yours will someday talk about the Trump buildup."

The Trump proposal would not just be a down payment on that promise, but a big step toward fulfilling it.

If our military is highly proficient —as demonstrated in the Venezuela raid — it also doesn't have the materiel to wage a protracted major war.

Defense analyst Mackenzie Eaglin of the American Enterprise Institute has long been ringing the alarm. She recently noted that during the short Israel-Iran war, we fired 150, or one-quarter, of our THAAD missiles, exceeding our annual purchase rate by three times. In the Red Sea, the Navy fired more Tomahawks in January 2024 than it bought in all of 2023.

These shortfalls, as Eaglin points out, are especially disturbing when compared to the building capacity of our adversaries. Whereas the Russians make more than 300,000 artillery shells a month, we make only 40,000 155mm shells. "Beijing builds six naval combatant ships," she writes, "for every 1.8 ships the U.S. builds."

Even The New York Times — not known for beating the drums for more defense spending — devoted a splashy editorial last month to the sorry state of our military-industrial base.

In his new book, "War and Power," scholar Phillips Payson O'Brien relates how wars between great powers are usually not won by brilliant battle plans, or by the commitment or proficiency of the troops. Rather, it is productive capacity — and the ability to degrade that of the enemy while maintaining or increasing your own — that makes the difference.

The Nazis weren't going to win the Battle of Britain when the Brits were producing twice as many aircraft as Hitler.

On top of this, a nation needs to make shrewd choices about what it is building (the Nazis also had the wrong planes for the Battle of Britain — bombers with payloads that were too small and fighters with limited range).

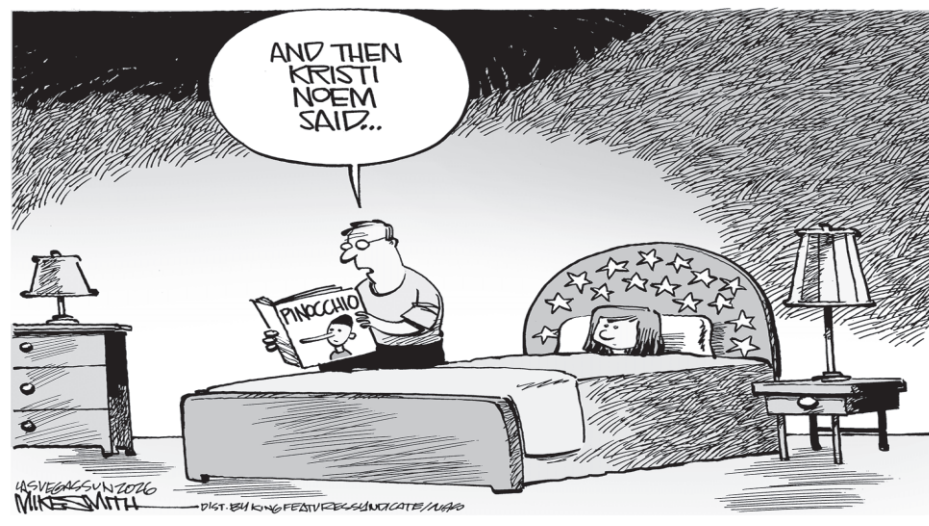
The U.S. needs to make sure that it is not overinvesting in the weapons systems of the past, although a defense budget on the scale that Trump is discussing would relieve some pressure from these choices. We could very well have our traditional subs and jet fighters, and our cutting-edge drones, too.

Trump's taste for gilding everything can be over the top. It'd be a national service, though, if he manages to make the U.S. defense budget golden.

Rich Lowry is editor of the National Review.

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STATE CAPITAL HIGHLIGHTS By Gary Borders



Deadline to Register for March Primary Nears

The last day to register to vote for the March 3 primary is Feb. 2, according to the Texas secretary of state's office. Early voting runs from Feb. 17 through Feb. 27, with Feb. 20 being the deadline for applying for a mail ballot.

Prospective voters can visit the votetexas.gov website to find out if they are registered, discern their polling places, learn what is on the ballot and find other information.

More than 18 statewide elected officials are up for election, with the governor's race and a U.S. Senate race topping the ballot. All Texas members of the U.S. House of Representatives are up for election, along with state lawmakers, district judges and local elected officials.

Some Texans will have to vote in new congressional districts after the Legislature redrew the map last summer.

NEW POLL HAS TALARICO LEADING, CORNYN TIED WITH PAXTON

A new poll of the state's U.S. Senate primaries shows state Rep. James Talarico, D-Round Rock, leading U.S. Rep. Jasmine Crockett, D-Dallas by 9 percentage points, 47% to 38%, among likely Democratic voters, The Texas Tribune reported. The Emerson College poll indicates a significant shift since a Texas Southern University poll in December showed Crockett with a similar-sized lead.

In both polls, Talarico leads among white and Latino voters, while Crockett has a commanding lead among Black voters.

On the GOP side, the latest polls show U.S. Sen. John Cornyn and Attorney General Ken Paxton deadlocked, with Paxton at 27% and Cornyn at 26%. U.S. Rep. Wesley Hunt, R-Houston, trailed with 16%. If those margins hold, that race would head to a runoff.

The survey also found Gov. Greg Abbott with a sizable lead over his main Democratic challenger, state Rep. Gina Hinojosa, 50% to 42%.

SOLAR POWER SURPASSES COAL IN FEEDING ERCOT GRID

For the first time, solar power supplied more electricity in 2025 to the state's main power grid than coal-fired power plants, the Houston Chronicle reported.

Solar farms provided 67,800 gigawatt-hours of elec-



tricity last year, according to the Electric Reliability Council of Texas, which is the power grid operator for most of the state. Power plants burning coal supplied 63,000 gigawatt-hours of power to ERCOT last year.

The Chronicle report notes that in 2019 solar supplied so little power to the ERCOT grid that it wasn't even included as a separate category in its annual pie chart of where the grid's power comes from. It is now the third-largest supplier to ERCOT, behind second-place wind and first-place natural gas. Coal has dropped to number four.

"It's a remarkable milestone," said Daniel Cohan, a Rice University professor who studies the state's energy transition. "I don't think anyone 10 years ago would have thought that solar would have surpassed coal this quickly."

TEXAS SET TO BAN SMOKEABLE CANNABIS THIS MONTH

Smokable cannabis products currently sold legally in Texas could disappear by Jan. 25 under new rules proposed by the Texas Department of State Health Services. According to the Texas Standard, DSHS has drafted new regulations for the hemp industry, "including child-resistant packaging, stronger warning labels, expanded testing, recall procedures and fee increases of roughly 10,000% for manufacturers and retailers."

Annual fees for hemp manufacturers would rise from \$250 to \$25,000 per facility, while retailers would see their registration fees jump from \$150 to \$2,000.

The proposed regulations would effectively outlaw most smokable hemp products.

DSHS last week heard from dozens of small hemp

business owners and cannabis users, many of whom said they support stricter packaging rules and age limits but oppose the ban on smokable products and the steep hike in licensing and registration fees.

"These proposed fees don't regulate small businesses, they eliminate them," Estella Castro, owner of Austinite Cannabis Co., told commissioners. "This proposal would force me to close, despite doing everything right."

Some speakers spoke in support of the proposed regulations, including a mother who said her son developed psychosis from using cannabis and required medial treatment.

DSHS EXPANDING ANTI-RABIES PROGRAM TO EL PASO AREA

DSHS is expanding its 32nd annual Oral Rabies Vaccination Program to the El Paso area while continuing its aerial bait distribution along the Texas-Mexico border. The rabies vaccine baits will be distributed by hand in targeted areas around El Paso.

"Our mission is to vaccinate wildlife along the borders of Texas to maintain herd immunity against rabies and keep new or previously eliminated rabies variants from becoming established in any part of Texas," said Kathy Parker, ORVP Director. "However, we continue to monitor all the counties of Texas for outbreaks and/or potential areas of rabies interest."

The baits do not pose threats to livestock, wildlife or pets. The project costs \$2 million annually and is funded by both state and federal agencies. Since the program began, no human cases of rabies attributable to the rabies variants found along the border have been confirmed in Texas.

The program covers 19 Texas counties: El Paso, Hudspeth, Culberson, Jeff Davis, Presidio, Brewster, Pecos, Terrell, Val Verde, Kinney, Maverick, Zavala, Dimmit, Webb, Zapata, Starr, Hidalgo, Cameron and Willacy.

TEXAS MOST POPULAR STATE TO MOVE TO

Texas is back on top of U-Haul's list of "growth states," according to the Austin American-Statesman. The company determines each state's net gain or loss by recording how many customers used one-way equipment in 2025.

This is the fourth time the state has topped U-Haul's rankings in five years. In 2024, South Carolina topped the list but fell to No. 5 last year. In second place is Florida, followed by North Carolina and Tennessee.

Coming in dead last in U-Haul's ranking was California.

Correction: An item in the Jan. 4 Capital Highlights reported the Texas business inventory tax exemption has been raised to \$125,000. That exemption applies to all business personal property accounts, not just inventory.

Gary Borders is a veteran award-winning Texas journalist. He published a number of community newspapers in Texas during a 30-year span, including in Longview, Fort Stockton, Nacogdoches, Lufkin and Cedar Park.

THE POSTSCRIPT By Carrie Classon

Tech Savvy



For the most part, I congratulate myself on being relatively competent at managing technology. I don't have an overwhelming fear of learning new apps or platforms and have even caught myself feeling a little smug when others profess terror at the prospect of updating their website or mastering a new program.

All smugness disappeared this week.

I got caught in a technology black hole over a \$20 bill. I owed a company \$20 for forwarding my email to me. This is something that should have taken less than a minute to resolve. Three days later, I was still battling.

The company was based in India. I won't bore you with the details of why it was based in India or how this company was chosen (I had plenty of opportunity to question the choice over the last three days), but it has provided excellent service, and I had had no reason to believe it wasn't a good choice. Until this week.

I couldn't log in to my account. That was the only problem. They did not have my phone number on record, and the only other means of verifying my account involved changing information in the directory of my website, and I knew—before I even tried—I was in over my head.

(I realize there are tech-savvy folks reading this right now and saying, "How hard could that be?" and I'm sure they are right; it was probably much easier than I imagined, but that does not mean it was not far more difficult than I could manage.)

So I wrote an email. The response I received provided an entirely new set of instructions for how to verify the account. I wrote back asking for clarification. A different tech person replied with an answer that appeared to bear no relation to the question I had asked.

I wrote back with more questions; they dutifully provided replies. Every email was signed by a different employee of this very large tech company in India. Every letter was exceedingly polite—and made not one bit of sense.

I parsed the letters carefully. I read them aloud. I looked for similar phrases as if I were looking for clues to find a buried treasure—although in this case, my treasure was the privilege of paying them \$20 and not having my email shut off.

Twenty emails later (this is not an exaggeration), I began to despair. I realized I had accomplished almost nothing in the last two days other than write emails to India. I had visions of an endless line of Indian technicians—stretching as far as the eye could see—ready to write pleasant replies to a witless woman in the U.S. As I exhausted the patience of one technician, another would step into his place, producing an infinite supply of unfailingly polite and utterly incomprehensible technical jargon.

I caved. I hired someone on Fiverr from Bangladesh to serve as an intermediary. With my permission, he took over my computer, figured out how to get into my account, arranged a Zoom call with the company and—after a scheduled Zoom call and yet one more phone conversation—I was able to pay the \$20.

"I don't suppose I could pay for more than a year?" I asked at the end of the final phone call.

"No, but this will take you all the way to the end of 2026!" the exceedingly cheerful company spokesman told me.

I have many wonderful expectations for 2026, but I am already working up a little dread for the year's end.

Till next time, Carrie

Advertisement for Star Courier newspaper, including contact information for the Barbers Hill and Dayton Press locations, staff names, and subscription rates.

Rotary Chili Feast Feb. 7,

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

July. The club has been more than just another meeting and the fundraiser also has meaning.

"Oh, I love it. I love it," she said. "It's been in my family and mine forever. That's just what we did on Tuesdays. We went to Rotary. My daddy never came home at lunch on Tuesdays because he was at Rotary."

For many years, Rotary did not admit women, but when they did open it up, Scott was there.

"Billy Smitherman was the first woman that joined and Beverly Culbreath was the first woman president. She was installed but died before she was

able to serve. She was in the hospital when we swore her in," she said. Culbreath died after a brave fight with cancer.

The club members no longer sing at the meetings.

"We're horrible singers," she laughed.

The 51st Chili Feast is on Saturday, Feb. 7 at St. Jude's Catholic Church on Main Street in Highlands and one familiar auction item will be back.

"The weekend trip at Lake Limestone is back and seems to be very popular," she said.

A chili meal will be served from 11 a.m. to 3

p.m. or until the chili runs out, according to Chili Feast chairman Connie Russell. The live auction and silent auction both take place starting at noon.

The club members continue to sell raffle tickets. There are 700 tickets available for a

\$100 donation. A ticket entitles patrons to two bowls of "Chester's Famous Recipe" chili, and a chance to win one of 17 raffle prizes, all worth more than the \$100 ticket price.

Club members are also selling Chili lunches only for \$10. Great for extra hungry folks, or to take home for later.

KEEP2CLEAN,

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

for public safety.

"We've always used our cameras for public safety purposes. We're now using our cameras for illegal dumping," Garcia said.

Precinct 2 residents, such as Michelle Bates, said illegal dumping in the area has only gotten worse over the years.

"It's definitely an eye-

sore. I mean, it brings a smell to things," Bates said. "People are very comfortable with it. They dump things right in front of you, right in plain view, on the end of streets, dead-end roads."

She said she hopes the Keep2Clean initiative brings real change to her community.

"[I want] them to actually follow through and get a break on it. Get it stopped, have people stop doing that," Bates said.

Residents can report illegal dumping by calling 311 or contacting Harris County Precinct 2 at 713-274-2300. More information is also available at the new Keep2Clean website.

TO ALL INTERESTED PERSONS AND PARTIES:

Shell Pipeline Company LP, has applied to the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) for renewal of Air Quality Permit No. 6856, which would authorize continued operation of the Refined Petroleum Dehydrator Facility located at 10030 Farm-to-Market 1942, Mont Belvieu, Chambers County, Texas 77580. Additional information concerning this application is contained in the public notice section of this newspaper.

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Coming Soon Texas
January 19 at 12:44 PM

Highlands, Texas

WINGSTOP IS LANDING ON NORTH MAIN STREET: The "Lemon Pepper" is coming to Highlands! 🍋 Wingstop has filed permits to open a brand new location in the Highlands Shopping Center, taking over two suites in the retail strip.

The \$300,000 project involves the full interior renovation of a 1,948-square-foot space (Suites G & H).

Construction is scheduled to begin on February 15, 2026, with a target completion date of June 9, 2026.

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Barges commandeer river, raise health, safety alarms for ship channel communities,

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

unincorporated communities ranks among the worst in the country. While industrial facilities along the Ship Channel are often blamed, data from the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) indicates that barge operations released 5.1 million pounds of volatile organic compounds (VOCs) in 2023—28% more than the county's largest refinery. VOCs such as benzene and toluene are linked to increased cancer risks, with some neighborhoods facing cancer rates up to three times the national average.

Regulatory oversight is limited. Barges are not required to obtain air pollution permits or directly report emissions; instead, the TCEQ relies on self-reported data from industrial sites. Emissions from barges while traveling or moored are not systematically monitored by any agency, despite evidence that these releases are substantial. Experts and former regulators have noted that the true scale of emissions is likely underestimated, and the issue remains largely unaddressed.

Beyond air quality, the concentration of barges poses physical risks. Barges must navigate near an underwater Superfund site contaminated with dioxin and pass under the low Interstate 10 bridge. Past incidents include a 1994 barge collision that caused a gasoline fire, a 1997 dredging accident that released dioxin, and a 2019 storm that sent multiple barges crashing into the bridge

and Superfund site. These events highlight the potential for environmental disasters, especially during severe weather.

Despite these risks, the Port of Houston continues to expand barge access, citing economic benefits. The Ship Channel generates \$439 billion annually, representing 20% of Texas' GDP. Barges account for 90% of vessel traffic, and further growth is expected as the channel is widened and new petrochemical plants are built. Local officials acknowledge the industry's importance but express concern about inadequate risk management.

Harris County Commissioner Adrian Garcia, a Democrat who represents parts of Channelview and Highlands, sees the barge industry's growth as a sign of progress.

"Let me just give a shout-out to the barge companies," Garcia told Public Health Watch. "When I see barge activity and the growth of barges in the area, it just says our industry is still strong and it's growing and they're needed there."

Garcia said he'd like barges to use cleaner technology, but "in the meantime, you know, I can't regulate industry."

County Commissioner Tom Ramsey, who also represents the area, is more cautious in his support.

Ramsey, a Republican,

worked for decades as an engineer for companies along the Ship Channel. He knows how valuable Houston's industry is to Texas and the U.S. economy. But he also knows a looming disaster when he sees one.

"I like economic development ... but it ought to be done with an understanding of what the impacts are," Ramsey said. "When you put barge traffic north of I-10, knowing you've got a Superfund site, knowing that the bridge is probably lower than you would feel comfortable with ... well, you just have created a catastrophe."

Residents have limited influence over barge approvals, as Channelview and Highlands lack municipal governments. The Port of Houston controls leasing and exclusion zones, with little transparency or opportunity for public input. Recent efforts to restrict barge access have not addressed the most vulnerable areas near the I-10 bridge and Superfund site. Community advocates continue to push for greater oversight and protection, emphasizing the need for regulatory reform and public engagement.

Public Health Watch reporters David Leffler, Shelby Jouppi and Savannah Strott contributed to this article. The entire story may be found on our website.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Opinions expressed here are not necessarily that of this newspaper or its staff. YOUR OPINION is welcome. Send a letter for possible publication to Grafikpress Newspapers, 5906 Star Lane, Houston TX 77057 or an email to GRAFIKSTAR@aol.com. Please limit your words to about 200. Letters will be subject to editing. Thank you.

LEGAL NOTICE

LEGAL NOTICE

LEGAL NOTICE

TEXAS COMMISSION ON ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY



NOTICE OF RECEIPT OF APPLICATION AND INTENT TO OBTAIN AIR PERMIT (NORI) RENEWAL

PERMIT NUMBER 6856

APPLICATION. Shell Pipeline Company LP, has applied to the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) for renewal of Air Quality Permit Number 6856, which would authorize continued operation of the Refined Petroleum Dehydrator Facility located at 10030 Farm-to-Market 1942, Mont Belvieu, Chambers County, Texas 77580. **AVISO DE IDIOMA ALTERNATIVO.** El aviso de idioma alternativo en español está disponible en <https://www.tceq.texas.gov/permitting/air/newsourcesreview/airpermits-pendingpermit-apps>. This link to an electronic map of the site or facility's general location is provided as a public courtesy and not part of the application or notice. For exact location, refer to application. <https://gisweb.tceq.texas.gov/LocationMapper/?marker=-94.91,29.855&level=13>. The existing facility and/or related facilities are authorized to emit the following air contaminants: carbon monoxide, nitrogen oxides, organic compounds, particulate matter including particulate matter with diameters of 10 microns or less and 2.5 microns or less and sulfur dioxide.

This application was submitted to the TCEQ on January 6, 2026. The application will be available for viewing and copying at the TCEQ central office, TCEQ Houston regional office, and the Sam and Carmena Goss Memorial Branch Library, 1 John Hall Drive, Mont Belvieu, Chambers County, Texas beginning the first day of publication of this notice. The facility's compliance file, if any exists, is available for public review in the Houston regional office of the TCEQ. The application, including any updates, is available electronically at the following webpage: <https://www.tceq.texas.gov/permitting/air/airpermit-applications-notices>

The executive director has determined the application is administratively complete and will conduct a technical review of the application. In addition to the renewal, this permitting action includes the incorporation of permits by rule related to this permit. The reasons for any changes or incorporations, to the extent they are included in the renewed permit, may include the enhancement of operational control at the plant or enforceability of the permit. **The TCEQ may act on this application without seeking further public comment or providing an opportunity for a contested case hearing if certain criteria are met.**

PUBLIC COMMENT. You may submit public comments to the Office of the Chief Clerk at the address below. The TCEQ will consider all public comments in developing a final decision on the application and the executive director will prepare a response to those comments. Issues such as property values, noise, traffic safety, and zoning are outside of the TCEQ's jurisdiction to address in the permit process.

OPPORTUNITY FOR A CONTESTED CASE HEARING. You may request a contested case hearing if you are a person who may be affected by emissions of air contaminants from the facility. If requesting a contested case hearing, you must submit the following: (1) your name (or for a group or association, an official representative), mailing address, daytime phone number; (2) applicant's name and permit number; (3) the statement "[I/we] request a contested case hearing;" (4) a specific description of how you would be adversely affected by the application and air emissions from the facility in a way not common to the general public; (5) the location and distance of your property relative to the facility; (6) a description of how you use the property which may be impacted by the facility; and (7) a list of all disputed issues of fact that you submit during the comment period. If the request is made by a group or association, one or more members who have standing to request a hearing must be identified by name and physical address. The interests the group or association seeks to protect must also be identified. You may also submit your proposed adjustments to the application/permit which would satisfy your concerns.

The deadline to submit a request for a contested case hearing is 15 days after newspaper notice is published. If a request is timely filed, the deadline for requesting a contested case hearing will be extended to 30 days after mailing of the response to comments.

If any requests for a contested case hearing are timely filed, the Executive Director will forward the application and any requests for a contested case hearing to the Commissioners for their consideration at a scheduled Commission meeting. Unless the application is directly referred to a contested case hearing, the executive director will mail the response to comments along with notification of Commission meeting to everyone who submitted comments or is on the mailing list for this application. The Commission may only grant a request for a contested case hearing on issues the requestor submitted in their timely comments that were not subsequently withdrawn. **If a hearing is granted, the subject of a hearing will be limited to disputed issues of fact or mixed questions of fact and law relating to relevant and material air quality concerns submitted during the comment period.** Issues such as property values, noise, traffic safety, and zoning are outside of the Commission's jurisdiction to address in this proceeding.

MAILING LIST. In addition to submitting public comments, you may ask to be placed on a mailing list for this application by sending a request to the Office of the Chief Clerk at the address below. Those on the mailing list will receive copies of future public notices (if any) mailed by the Office of the Chief Clerk for this application.

AGENCY CONTACTS AND INFORMATION. All public comments and requests must be submitted either electronically at www14.tceq.texas.gov/epic/eComment/, or in writing to the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality, Office of the Chief Clerk, MC-105, P.O. Box 13087, Austin, Texas 78711-3087. Please be aware that any contact information you provide, including your name, phone number, email address and physical address will become part of the agency's public record. For more information about the permitting process, please call the TCEQ Public Education Program, Toll Free, at 1-800-687-4040 or visit their website at www.tceq.texas.gov/goto/pep. Si desea información en Español, puede llamar al 1-800-687-4040. You can also view our website for public participation opportunities at www.tceq.texas.gov/goto/participation.

Further information may also be obtained from Shell Pipeline Company LP, 300 Jefferson, Pasadena, Texas 77506-3145 or by calling Mr. Christopher Sherman, Environmental Advisor at (832) 337-1726.

Notice Issuance Date: January 14, 2026

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Dave Bautista, Left, and Jason Momoa star in 'The Wrecking Crew.'

'The Wrecking Crew'

'Die, My Love' (R) — Whether you're a fan of twisty psychological films or not, this film is just a treat for millennials and Gen-Zers who grew up watching Robert Pattinson in the 'Twilight' films and Jennifer Lawrence in 'The Hunger Games' films. Playing love interests opposite each other, Pattinson and Lawrence respectively portray young couple Jackson and Grace right after they move to Montana from New York. The audience soon learns that Grace is pregnant with their first child, but after Grace gives birth, the film is told from Grace's fragmented and distorted point of view as she slowly descends into madness due to the stress of becoming a mother. It is chock-full of tough-to-watch, unforgettable emotional moments that remind us why Lawrence is one of the greatest of her genera...

tion. Out now. (MUBI) 'His & Hers' (TV-MA) — Netflix has got the formula down on how to crank out series after series that still leave viewers on the edge of their seats. This new mystery-thriller series starring Jon Bernthal ('The Amateur') and Tessa Thompson ('Hedda') is only six episodes long, but with its two talented leads and a small-town setting, it's already become popular on the streaming service. Thompson plays reporter Anna Andrews, who returns to her old hometown of Dahlonega, Georgia, to investigate a murder. While there, she bumps into her estranged husband, Detective Jack Harper (Bernthal), who has been assigned to the case himself. (What a coincidence!) No doubt that the spouses' suspicions of each other will escalate the tension to another lev...

el! Out now. (Netflix) 'The Wrecking Crew' (R) — Any movie that is led by both Jason Momoa ('A Minecraft Movie') and Dave Bautista ('Trap House') is sure to be a testosterone-filled action flick with goofy moments in between to keep audiences shouting at their screens for more. Momoa and Bautista play two half-brothers: Jonny (Momoa), a "loose cannon cop," and James (Bautista), a "disciplined Navy SEAL." After their father is murdered in a suspicious hit-and-run in Hawaii, the brothers team up to figure out the root of the murder and keep the rest of their family from also being threatened. 'The Wrecking Crew' premieres on Jan. 28. (Amazon Prime Video)

In Case You Missed It

'Chestnut' (NR) — This drama film features Natalia Dyer in a much different tone than how we are used to seeing her as Nancy Wheeler in 'Stranger Things.' She plays Annie, a shy aspiring writer who is stuck in Philadelphia after graduating from college; however, at the end of the summer, a move to Los Angeles awaits her. In the weeks up until then, Annie meets a pair of best friends — wild child Tyler (Rachel Keller) and the mysteriously sweet Danny (Danny Ramirez) — and begins spending all her nights with the charming duo. When she suddenly finds herself with confusing feelings for both Tyler and Danny, Annie wonders whether she's subtly being told by the universe to stay in Philly or to run as fast as she can to L.A. Out now. (Plex)

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Highlands Rotary Club serves 100 seniors at Community Center,

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1



ENTERTAINMENT

Amber Waves



Weekly SUDOKU grid and difficulty instructions

HOCUS-FOCUS comic strip and puzzle instructions

January 26, 2026 Posting Date

King Crossword

Crossword grid with Across and Down clues

Trivia test by Fifi Rodriguez

- 1. HISTORY: When did the Easter Rising insurrection take place in Ireland?
2. GEOGRAPHY: What is the capital of India?
3. MEDICAL TERMS: What is a common name for lateral epicondylitis?
4. MOVIES: The 'Back to the Future II' characters travel forward in time to which year?
5. LITERATURE: What color is the badge of courage in Stephen Crane's novel about the Civil War?
6. GAMES: How many points is the center red bullseye on a dartboard worth?
7. ANIMAL KINGDOM: What is a group of floating otters called?
8. AD SLOGANS: Which car company used the slogan 'Drive your dreams'?
9. TELEVISION: What is husband Darrin's profession in the 'Bewitched' sitcom?
10. SCIENCE: What part of the brain controls hunger?

Answers for King Crossword and Trivia test

1. 1916; 2. New Delhi; 3. Tennis elbow; 4. 2015; 5. Red; 6. 50; 7. A rat; 8. Toyota; 9. Advertising executive; 10. Hypothalamus

