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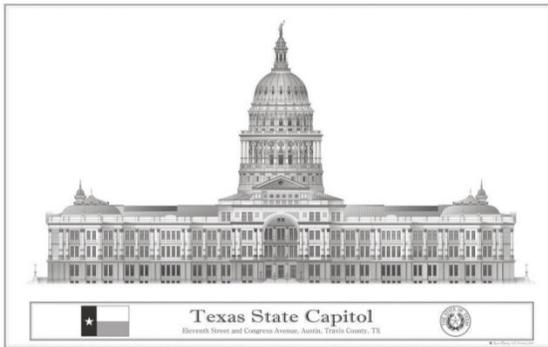
VanDeaver

STATE REPRESENTATIVE



House District 1 - Bowie, Franklin, Lamar & Red River counties District & Capitol Report - 85th Legislature

January 2018



Around the District. District office employee changes.

Earlier this month, Bart Brock, who has served as my District Director since 2015, took a job with the Texas Farm Bureau Insurance. I want to thank Bart for his service to my constituents and me and to wish him much success in his new position. Thanks, Bart! On February 5, Ms. Sharon Elkins is joining my staff as the new District Director in the office 20 hours a week. Previously, she was responsible for the library and media services at New Boston High School. Please feel free to contact her in the District office if there are matters of concern that you feel we can help resolve for you. Welcome, Sharon!

High caliber bullet-proof vests grants approved for some HD 1 cities and counties. During last year's regular session, I was proud to vote for Senate Bill 12 that provided \$25 million so cities and counties could

provide rifle-resistant vests to Texas police departments. The governor's office just awarded \$23 million to 453 different jurisdictions to purchase 32,842 rifle-resistant vests giving our police officers an extra layer of protection against high-caliber rounds of ammunition. In House District 1, Bowie County received 105 vests; New Boston received 12 vests; Red River County received 18 vests; and Wake Village received 15 vests.

SWEPCO announces rate increases. Beginning in February, Bowie and Franklin county customers of Southwestern Electric Power Company (SWEPCO) will see an increase in their electric utility rates. The Texas Public Utility Commission (PUC) on January 11, 2018, approved a final order granting the utility's rate increase request originally filed in December 2016, and retroactively approved beginning in May 2017. SWEPCO was authorized to increase its base rate and to add a surcharge for 10 months to recoup the funding the company would have received if the newly approved base rate had been in effect since May 2017. The new base rate is an increase of 8.9 percent, and the 10-month surcharge reflects a 7.9 percent increase.

TxDOT bridge railing upgrades. The Mount Pleasant office of the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) recently informed my office that work will soon begin to replace and upgrade bridge railings and guard rails on I-30 at Hayes Creek in Titus County and at Rain

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Creek in Bowie County. According to Mr. Bill Compton, TxDOT's area engineer in Mount Pleasant, the work should begin in April and take about two months to complete.

Are you registered to vote? Political parties in Texas will hold their primary elections this year on Tuesday, March 6. Not only are there local races of importance being voted on, but all statewide elective offices are also on the ballot this year. If you plan to vote in a primary election, you must be registered to vote no later than Monday, February 5, 2018. Early voting will be held between Tuesday, February 20 and Friday, March 2. If you have any questions, be sure to check with your county elections administrator for more information and voting locations.

Changes in requirements to vote by mail. Please note that in last year's regular and special legislative sessions, the legislature strengthened requirements and procedures for voting by mail due to some recent, serious violations of mail-in ballot voting. You must meet these eligibility criteria to apply to vote by mail: (1) you are 65 years or older; (2) you are disabled; (3) you will be out of the county on Election Day and during the period for early voting at the polls; or (4) you are confined in jail, but are otherwise eligible. Applications to vote by mail must be received by your county clerk or county elections administrator no later than the 11th day before Election Day; for the upcoming primary, that deadline is February 23. If you fax or email an application, you must also mail in the application to the county clerk or county elections administrator no later than the fourth business day after emailing or faxing your application. For questions and further clarification about the new procedures to vote by mail, contact your local county clerk or elections administrator.

Around the Capitol. Tax amnesty program announced.

Texas comptroller, Glenn Hegar, recently announced a tax amnesty program that will allow certain delinquent taxpayers a chance to forgo penalties and interest charges for taxes past due to the state prior to January 1, 2018. The *Texas Tax Amnesty Program* will run from May 1 - June 29, 2018, and only includes liabilities that

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have not been previously reported to the comptroller's office. For more information and details, here is a link: <https://comptroller.texas.gov/tax-amnesty/>.

Also from Comptroller Hegar. Earlier this month, the comptroller announced that sales taxes in December 2017 increased 12.3 percent over December 2016. Hegar noted that the increase reflected a continuing turn-around in collections from the "oil- and gas-related sectors as well-drilling and completion continued to rebound." This is good news for the Texas economy since "sales tax revenue is the largest source of state funding for the state budget, accounting for 58 percent of all tax collections." The comptroller testified before the Senate Finance Committee on January 30, that the state's economy is also growing due to repairing and rebuilding the many residences, businesses and other infrastructure damaged or destroyed by Hurricane Harvey. He went on to say that this "bump in economic activity" post-hurricane should last for another year to 18 months.

Texas Historical Commission (THC) announces internship program. The THC recently announced that it is accepting applications until March 16 for its Preservation Scholars Program. This program, according to the THC, "builds interest and awareness in historic preservation specifically among students from underrepresented cultural, ethnic and socioeconomic groups." Interns will receive a \$5,000 stipend for a full-time, eight-week internship. To apply, undergraduate and graduate students must be a U.S. citizen, currently enrolled in college as a junior or higher and have a 3.0 or higher grade point average. Students must be enrolled in a Texas college or university or a Texas resident attending an out-of-state school. More information can be found at: <http://www.thcfriends.org/preservation-scholars-program>.

Don't Mess with Texas Scholarship Contest announced.

April 20, 2018, is the deadline for any Texas high school senior (public, private, or home-schooled student) to apply for the "Don't Mess with Texas Scholarship" being sponsored by the Texas Department of Transportation. One \$6,000 and two \$2,000 scholarships will be

awarded in May to students planning to attend a Texas college or university in the 2018-19 academic year. According to TxDOT, the scholarships "recognize the achievement of high school seniors who take a leadership role in preventing litter in their schools and communities while working to build awareness for the "Don't Mess with Texas" initiative." To apply, visit: http://www.dontmesswithtexas.org/docs/DMWT_Scholarship_Application.pdf.

TEA announces "Grow Your Own" grant program. The Texas Education Agency (TEA) announced the availability of \$3 million in grant funding for school districts and charter schools to implement programs designed to increase the quality and diversity of their teacher work force. Approximately 100 grants will be awarded. Applications must be received by TEA by 5 p.m., on March 13, 2018, to be considered for funding. More information at: <http://tea4avoswald.tea.state.tx.us/GrantOpportunities/forms/GrantProgramSearch.aspx>

Social media. Please follow me on both my Facebook and Twitter accounts!

My office is here to help. I thank each of you for letting me serve you as your state representative. Please contact either the District office (903-628-0361) or Capitol office (512-463-0692) if there is anything you think we can do to help you.