



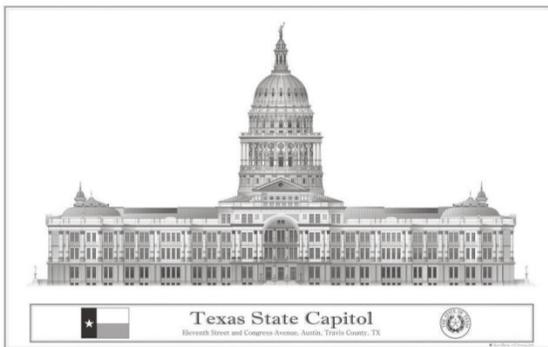
GARY

VanDeaver

STATE REPRESENTATIVE



House District 1 - Bowie, Franklin, Lamar & Red River counties
District & Capitol Report - 85th Legislature
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Rep. VanDeaver &
Texarkana Mayor Bob Bruggeman

and student services building. During the 2015 legislative session, I worked with my colleagues on the Appropriations Committee and Texas A&M University System officials to help secure the necessary funds for this new building that will be ready for students in the spring of 2019.

Texarkana College wins award. Congratulations to Texarkana College (TC) for winning the 2018 Leah Meyer Austin *Achieving the Dream* Award that recognizes TC for innovative programs that improve graduation rates.



TC's "Dream Team." Photo courtesy of Texarkana College.

The College raised the graduation rate 21 percent for first-time, full-time students and 18 percent for black students. To achieve these gains, TC worked

with *Achieving the Dream* counselors, faculty, staff, students and the community to chart a better path for

Around the District. Reading to Maud students.

Earlier this month, I had the joy and privilege to read



The Lemonade Wars (Jacqueline Davies) to Maud ISD third graders. The book is about a pair of competitive siblings and what happens when one of them will

skip 3rd grade and go directly to the 4th grade. The students were very attentive and appeared to enjoy the story.

Texas A&M - Texarkana building ceremony. I was very excited to participate in the "topping out" ceremony at TAMU - Texarkana for their new \$32 million academic

students to succeed and complete their education in a timely manner.

Visit to Stillhouse Rehabilitation & Healthcare Center.

Earlier this month, I visited the Stillhouse Rehabilitation and Healthcare Center in Paris to see how they meet the unique needs of their residents. I was impressed with their operations and was pleased to see how dedicated their staff is in working with the residents' daily routines.



Rep. VanDeaver shaking hands with Mr. Larry Moody, resident council

president, at Stillhouse in Paris. Photo courtesy of *The Paris News*.

Paris student wins award. My office was recently informed that Curt Fendley, a sixth grader at Crockett Intermediate School, was recognized as a Distinguished Finalist in the Prudential Spirit of Community Awards in their 23rd year to encourage student volunteerism. Curt is the founder of "Operation Empower," an after-school leadership program that mobilizes fellow Boys & Girls Club kids to work together on projects benefiting the club and community. Curt's group has worked on a variety of projects, from planning and implementing a STEM day camp to painting a food pantry's waiting area. Congratulations and good job, Curt!!

Efforts to keep our students and teachers safe. In light of the most recent, horrific school shooting in Florida that killed 17 students and teachers, I offer my condolences to the victims and their families. These tragic events occur much too frequently with devastating consequences for everyone associated with those schools and communities. Not only were 17 lives lost, the survivors of the shooting and the community are forever changed.

I cannot condemn the shooter, who has admitted the shootings, strongly enough and feel he should be prosecuted to the fullest extent allowed by law. Though I wholeheartedly believe that the shooter should receive the maximum punishment, I also feel that we are not doing enough to identify and treat students who are suffering from mental illness, toxic home environments and bullying that can push them to start shooting.

What can be done in Texas? I believe that Texas school district personnel are committed to and are ever vigilant about ensuring the safety of all children. School districts require visitors to campuses to sign in at a central office; they have safety drills and prepare students and staff how to respond to an active shooter on campuses. Schools have hired security guards and staffed their campuses with resource officers.

Students are encouraged to report to authorities if they hear about other students who have brought a weapon to the campus ("if you see something, say something"); however, the culture and environment of a campus has to be such that students feel connected and comfortable enough to want to keep everyone safe. Are all of these things enough? Apparently not, since school shootings happen all too frequently.

In 2013, the legislature adopted House Bill 1009 that created a new category of law enforcement officers, known as school marshals, and allowed school districts to appoint certain employees as school marshals. Some school districts also have their own police force. Texas has also created the School Safety Task Force that studies best practices to help school districts keep students safe. Additionally, each school must adopt and implement an emergency operations plan with required employee training in how to respond appropriately given any emergency situation.

The governor recently directed the Texas Education Agency (TEA) to ensure that all districts complete and verify to TEA that they have completed their statutorily required school safety audits. The governor also directed TEA to post on its website a list of any school

district that has not completed the required safety audit within 45 days.

The Texas Legislature has also taken a deep dive in studying mental illness and reform legislation was passed in 2017. Additionally, the Speaker of the House of Representatives recently appointed a House Select Committee on Opioid and Substance Abuse. I know the work product from these committees may not directly affect why someone chooses to shoot up a school, but evidence to date seems to indicate that the shooters tend to be people who have serious emotional challenges.

Can we prevent all shootings? Of course not, but I think we need a better understanding of the issues that cause school shooters to feel so isolated, disaffected and alone to make them think that killing innocent children and adults in a school is, in their minds, the right thing to do.

The governor also directed TEA to work with his office, the DPS and the Texas School Safety Center to develop recommendations to be considered during next year's legislative session. As your state Representative, I will work very hard next session to provide local school districts, parents and teachers whatever tools they need to keep our precious children and grandchildren safe.

Around the Capitol. Texas 4-H Water Ambassadors Program. This new program, that targets high school students, is a summer program designed to give its participants knowledge and experience about water resources and infrastructure while touring the state of Texas. This program is a project of the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service in College Station. Applications are being accepted online through May 15 for high school students and can be found at <http://texas4-h.tamu.edu/projects/water/>. For more information, contact the program coordinator, David Smith, at 979-862-1989 or davidsmith@tamu.edu.

Free TCEQ workshop for public water systems. My staff just received word that the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) will offer free workshops for licensed drinking water operators and public water

systems in its Region 5* on February 28, from 12:30-4:30 p.m., at the TCEQ Tyler Regional Office, 2916 Teague Driver, Tyler. All public water systems must comply with the federal Revised Total Coliform Rule (RTCR), adopted by the TCEQ in March 2017. To register for the workshop visit the TCEQ website at: <https://www.tceq.texas.gov/assistance/water/pdws/revised-total-coliform-rule-workshops> For more information on the rule, visit the RTCR website at: <https://www.tceq.texas.gov/drinkingwater/microbia/revised-total-coliform-rule>. Licensed drinking water operators can receive up to 4.0 continuing education units for attending. For more information, call 1-800-447-2827 or Anne Marie Callery, Team Leader, TCEQ, Small Business & Local Government Assistance Program (512) 239-2342. *Region 5 includes 22 counties in Northeast Texas, including the four counties in House District 1: Bowie, Franklin, Lamar and Red River.

Texas State of Mind - opportunity for college students.

The Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute (MMHPI) has a summer internship opportunity, from June 4 - August 10, for undergraduate and graduate students who are interested in mental health policy. The objective of the program is to provide participation in high quality, nonpartisan and objective policy research and development to improve mental health services in Texas. Interested students should submit their applications as soon as possible since the MMHPI will begin making offers to students in mid-March. Interested students can get more information by emailing: internship@texasstateofmind.org.

SBOE's Student Heroes Awards. The State Board of Education (SBOE) is currently accepting nominations for its 2018 Student Heroes Awards that recognizes Texas public school students in grades pre-K through high school who voluntarily work to assist or benefit their fellow students. Fifteen awards will be given, and anyone can nominate Texas public school students. March 9, at 5 p.m., is the deadline to submit nominations, and awards will be announced in May. Forms and guidelines can be found at: http://tea.texas.gov/About_TEA/News_and_Multimedia/Awards/Student_Heroes.

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Information from comptroller's office - Texas Prepaid Tuition deadline & special edition of Fiscal Notes. The Texas Tuition Promise Fund, Texas's 529 program, allows participants to prepay college tuition and required fees have an upcoming enrollment deadline of February 28 for new enrollees. More information is available at <https://texastuitionpromisefund.com/> or by calling 800-445-GRAD (4723), option 5.

The comptroller's office has published a special edition of its *Fiscal Notes* about Hurricane Harvey and its immediate and long-term impact on the state economy. This issue of *Fiscal Notes* can be found at <https://comptroller.texas.gov/economy/fiscal-notes/>.

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.