



State Representative
Gary VanDeaver
 October 2023 E-Newsletter



88th Legislature Report - House District 1
Bowie | Cass | Lamar | Morris | Red River

District Update

Request for Information - TWDB – Marvin Nichols Reservoir feasibility study. Earlier this year, the legislature directed the Texas Water Development Board (TWDB) to conduct a feasibility study of the proposed Marvin Nichols Reservoir (MNR) and report its findings to the 89th Legislature when it convenes in January 2025. The TWDB “shall evaluate the feasibility” of the proposed MNR to analyze the implementation timeline, associated costs, land acquisition considerations and the economic impact of the proposed project.”



Graphic: Texas Water Development Board.

An October 31, 2022, article in the *Texas Tribune* (<https://www.texastribune.org/2022/10/31/texas-water-plan-reservoirs-climate-change/>) examines the impact of the proposed MNR and discusses the state’s ongoing growth and its affect on available water supplies amid

more frequent droughts and periods of extreme heat. The article states: “As the state’s population grows and climate change brings more severe droughts, some water experts and state lawmakers are pushing for a pivot to alternative and in some cases long-shot strategies including seawater desalination, rainwater harvesting or wastewater reuse rather than building reservoirs.” Throughout recent discussions, people have said that reservoirs are no longer the best approach to providing needed water resources when there are other alternatives to building reservoirs. Opponents of MNR have also cited the need for enhanced conservation efforts in Region C (D-FW area) in lieu of flooding thousands of acres of prime forest and farmland in NE Texas to build a reservoir where 80 percent of the water will be pumped 100s of miles away from its source.

TWDB’s December 1 deadline. Now is your chance to provide information to the TWDB as it is holding a “public input period” to gather data to conduct the required feasibility study. Submit your comments no later than **December 1, 2023**, along with any supporting documentation, to feasibility@twdb.texas.gov. The TWDB is seeking input and supportive information about the following: (1) implementation timeline; (2) associated costs; (3) land acquisition considerations and (4) economic impact. As of last week, the TWDB had only received statements of support and opposition to the reservoir’s construction but none in direct response to its request for information (see list of four items above).

The Literacy Council of Bowie & Miller Counties. *The Literacy Council of Bowie & Miller Counties.* My District Director, Ms. Sharon Elkins, recently attended an event for The Literacy Council of Bowie & Miller Counties (“the Council”). Dr. Jenny McCormack Walker, executive director of the Council, shared interesting

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statistics, challenges and successes. The Council is using its functional literacy education program to help adult area residents find success so they can meet local workforce needs, end generational cycles of poverty and become productive members of the community we all call home. The Council also provides programs to support literacy efforts for younger students and a robust outreach to families. The Council deserves a big “thank you” from all of us for their efforts and hard work helping people in our region!

Power provider selected for grant. Our local power provider in Northeast Texas, American Electric Power (AEP), has been selected to receive a \$27.8 million federal grant under the U.S. Department of Energy’s (DOE) Grid Resilience and Innovation Partnerships (GRIP) program to help improve service and build a more modern, responsive electric grid for customers across its footprint. A portion of the funds will be earmarked for Texas and will help reduce costs to customers in Northeast Texas as it works to enhance grid reliability. I was happy to provide a letter of support for AEP’s grant application, and I congratulate the company for working hard to ensure our area has the power it needs not only today but in the future!

The grant will help fund part of the cost to implement more advanced systems and new technologies to enhance their ability to reduce service interruptions and minimize the duration of outages through smart devices that optimize power delivery for customers. The systems also will allow operators to visualize, manage and control the electric grid as new distributed energy resources are integrated into the system.

This project supports AEP’s ongoing work to strengthen the reliability, resiliency and efficiency of the grid in a cost-effective way for customers. It will deliver significant benefits to customers across the company’s multi-state service territory including Texas. ***Congratulations AEP!***

State Update

3rd Special Legislative Session - Update. On October 9th, the governor convened the legislature into its third special session this year to pass legislation on several of his priority issues including legislation to: (1) provide education savings accounts for all Texas schoolchildren; (2) reduce illegal immigration by creating a criminal offense for illegal entry into this state from a foreign nation and authorizing all licensed peace officers to remove illegal immigrants from Texas; (3) impede illegal entry into Texas by increasing the penalties for certain criminal conduct involving the smuggling of persons or the operation of a stash house; (4) impede illegal entry into Texas by providing more funding for the construction, operation and maintenance of border barrier infrastructure; (5) concerning public safety, security, environmental quality and property ownership in areas like the Colony Ridge development in Liberty County, Texas; and (6) prohibit COVID-19 vaccine mandates by private employers.

Both the Texas House and Senate have been working on their versions of bills on the governor’s call for this special session that ends November 7. Last week, the House was in a marathon 18-hour session convening at 10 a.m. on Wednesday but not adjourning until about 4 a.m. the next morning. Three of the bills passed by the House included the following priority issues:



SB 4 (Flores; Guillen). Our communities have seen the negative impacts of drug and human smuggling for too long. SB 4 raises the mandatory minimum sentences for these crimes. This bill is a major step forward in the fight to secure our border and lock up criminals who are endangering Texans. I am proud to have voted for SB 4, which is now on its way to the governor's desk after the Senate accepted changes made by the House of Representatives.

HB 4 (Spiller, et al) – *Illegal Entry from a Foreign Nation!* Earlier this year, the legislature appropriated \$5.1 billion toward securing the Texas border to station Texas military and DPS troopers on the border, to build the wall and install buoys and razor wire. Where the federal government has failed in securing our southern border, Texas is stepping up its efforts to deter criminal activities, such as drug and human smuggling, and their harmful effects on vulnerable populations and Texas citizens. House Bill 4 builds on action taken earlier this year to give our law enforcement and state military more funding and tools to keep Texans, their families, homes, properties and businesses safe. HB 4 is now scheduled for a public hearing on November 1, in the Senate Committee on Border Security.

HB 6 (Jetton, et al) – *Building the Wall!* Earlier this year, I was proud to support the state budget, which allocated \$5.1 billion to securing the Texas-Mexico border, including \$650 million to continue construction of physical barriers. Recent months of increased border activity led the governor to make border security a priority this special session. I am proud to be a coauthor of HB 6 and to have voted for an additional \$1.5 BILLION to build the border wall. The bill has been referred to the Senate Finance Committee that is hearing its version, SB 6, on Monday, October 30.

Other actions. The Texas House has also heard testimony about alleged and possible criminal activities at Colony Ridge in Liberty County, as well as passed **Senate Bill 7** that prevents private employers from enacting COVID restrictions or mandates on their employees. This special session ends on November 7, which is also the state's General Election Day.

November 7 - General Election Day. Texas voters head to the polls on Tuesday, November 7, to voice their opinion on 14 proposed amendments to the Texas Constitution that were approved during the regular session this year. Earlier this fall, my office mailed my constituents a hardcopy newsletter that listed these proposed amendments along with background information about each item. Use this link to research the proposed amendments for more information: https://www.tlc.texas.gov/docs/amendments/analyses23_condensed.pdf. Please note that the email with this e-newsletter will also have an attachment that is a copy of the information included in the previously mailed, hardcopy newsletter.

Early voting underway. The early voting period for the November 7th General Election began on Monday, October 23, and runs through Friday, November 3. Make plans now to either vote on Election Day or take advantage of early voting locations throughout your county. Polls will be open on Election Day from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m., but contact your county voter registrar for information about times and locations to early vote.

Contact Information

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 or the Capitol office if there is anything we can do to help you. Follow me on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram for more updates!

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Useful State Government Websites

- Governor of Texas www.gov.texas.gov
- Texas Senate www.senate.texas.gov
- Texas House of Representatives www.house.texas.gov
- State of Texas www.texas.gov
- Texas Legislature Online www.capitol.texas.gov
- Office of the Attorney General . . . www.texasattorneygeneral.gov
- Health & Human Services Commission . . www.hhs.texas.gov
- Medicaid, Food Stamps, & TANF . . www.yourtexasbenefits.com
- Child/Elder Abuse Reporting www.txabusehotline.org
- Texas 2-1-1 (United Way) www.211.org
- Texas Education Agency www.tea.texas.gov
- Texas Department of Motor Vehicles www.txdmv.gov
- Texas Department of Transportation www.txdot.gov
- Texas Department of Public Safety www.dps.texas.gov
- Texas Department of Insurance www.tdi.texas.gov
- Texas Parks & Wildlife Department www.tpwd.texas.gov
- Texas Workforce Commission www.twc.texas.gov
- Texas Veterans Commission www.tvc.texas.gov

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