



State Representative

Gary VanDeaver

February 2024 E-Newsletter



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

District Update

Grants awarded to local law enforcement agencies. In 2023, the legislature adopted Senate Bill 22 (88R) that established grant programs to provide salary assistance for rural sheriffs' offices, constables' offices and prosecutors' offices in counties with a population of 300,000 or less. The state comptroller's office, charged with administering the grant programs, recently informed my office that several law enforcement-related agencies in House District 1 have received grant funding. This program will be a lifeline to help rural counties retain staff and provide essential services. I am pleased to announce the following awards made to area agencies:



- **Sheriffs' offices.** Bowie County received a \$500,000 grant while Cass, Lamar, Morris and Red River counties each received \$350,000.
- **Prosecutors' offices.** Prosecutors have received the following grant amounts: Bowie County - \$275,000; Cass County - \$175,000; Lamar County - \$275,000; Morris County: \$175,000; and Red River County - \$175,000.
- **Constable grant.** Red River County received a constable grant of \$1,112.09.

Senate Bill 22 had broad bipartisan support in both the Senate and House of Representatives as shown by the unanimous vote in both Chambers to approve the final version of the bill. The legislature also appropriated over \$330 million to fund this program. I am very glad to have voted for SB 22, knowing it can help the dedicated men and women serving in our local law enforcement agencies.

Amazon coming to Paris. Ms. Maureen Hammond, executive director of the Paris Economic Development Corporation, recently announced good news that Amazon is coming to Paris for a new "last-mile facility." The facility, which will make use of an existing 48,000 square foot warehouse, is located in the southwestern part of the city with construction scheduled to start in the coming weeks. Ms. Hammond and other PEDC officials thanked local officials for working on this project to bring Amazon to Paris. Since 2010, Amazon has invested \$54 billion in Texas and employs 89,000 people in the state and operates more than 80 operations facilities across the state.

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State Updates



TxDOT Scholarship Contest now open. The annual **Don't Mess with Texas® Scholarship Contest** is now accepting applications for the 2024 school year. All Texas high school seniors currently attending public, private or home school, and planning to attend an accredited college, university or trade school in the fall 2024 semester are eligible to apply. Judges will select two winners based on applicants' proven results in leading projects or efforts focused on educating communities about the importance of keeping our state and roadways clean and litter-free. TxDOT will award up to \$10,000 in scholarships to students who help promote cleaning up their communities. "Don't Mess with Texas" has been educating Texans about litter prevention since 1986. The program includes annual "Trash-Off" community outreach events and the Adopt-a-Highway volunteer program. To apply for the **Don't Mess with Texas Scholarship Contest**, visit dntmesswithtexas.org. Applications must be received via online submission no later than 5 p.m., April 2, 2024.

DSHS strategic plan – consider providing input. The Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS) is one of those bedrock state agencies that my office frequently interacts with on behalf of constituents who have contacted us for help. At 2 p.m., on April 3rd, DSHS will be holding a public hearing to receive input from the public it serves about the agency's strategic plan for 2025-2029. Agency staff will review the draft strategic plan and listen to comments from the public who can either attend in person or virtually. DSHS's stated vision is "A Healthy Texas," while its mission is "to improve the health, safety and well-being of all Texans." Here is a link to more information about the public hearing process and how to sign up to either attend in person or virtually: <https://www.dshs.texas.gov/about-dshs/legislative-information>. It is vital for all Texans to have access to the services and resources needed to live healthy, vibrant lives, and DSHS can be a great resource.

Questions about insurance rate increases. My office has recently received several calls from constituents who are concerned about increases in their home and auto insurance premiums. Texas is a "file and use" state that allows providers to notify the Texas Department of Insurance (TDI) of a change in premiums and start using those rates on a date certain. Texas law also requires insurance companies to charge rates that are fair, reasonable and adequate for the risks they cover. TDI does not set insurance rates or premiums. Though TDI does not pre-approve rates in advance, the agency reviews rates for compliance with state statutes.

A policyholder who objects to the increase in their premiums can file a complaint with TDI. Here is a link to the agency's complaint process: <https://www.tdi.texas.gov/consumer/get-help-with-an-insurance-complaint.html>.

Here are some resources that you might find helpful when faced with changing auto insurance premiums:

- [Know how auto and homeowners’ insurance costs are calculated](#) - this has information about auto and homeowners rates.
- To learn more about auto insurance, check out our [Auto insurance guide](#).
- Use our [HelpInsure](#) website to shop for auto insurance.
- [Lower your car insurance rates: Tips for saving money](#)

Early voting ends Friday, March 1. According to the Texas Secretary of State’s website, Texas was the first state to allow voters to cast their ballots during a certain window of time before Election Day. Texas adopted this practice in the 1980s to make voting more convenient and accessible. Election Day is Tuesday, March 5. Here is a link that can help you find your poll location so you can weigh in on national, state and local races: [early voting information and poll locations can be found at "My Voter Portal."](#) Election Day voting hours are 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. at all polling places statewide. For questions regarding polling places, always consult your [County Elections Office](#).



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!

District office:

Bowie County Courthouse
 710 James Bowie Drive
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 (903) 628 – 0361

Capitol office

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 Austin, Texas 78768-2910
 512-463-0692

Email:

[Email Gary](#)

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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