



House District 1 - Bowie, Franklin, Lamar & Red River counties
District & Capitol Interim Report
March 2016

Around House District 1. Disaster declarations. Over the last month, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) announced that Red River and Franklin counties are eligible for FEMA Public Assistance (PA) as a result of the severe winter storms in late December and early January. The PA is now available to state and local governments and certain private nonprofits to supplement recovery efforts and reimburse a minimum of 75 percent of the cost of eligible projects that can include the repair of roads, bridges, water control facilities, buildings and equipment, utilities and parks and recreational facilities. Applicants apply through the state of Texas using a Request for Public Assistance (RPA) form alerting FEMA that an applicant will seek assistance from the agency. State Public Assistance personnel will soon conduct briefings for applicants on how to prepare projects for submission. For more information on Texas recovery, visit www.fema.gov/disaster/4255 and the Texas Division of Emergency Management website, <https://www.txdps.state.tx.us/dem>.



Watermaster program being studied. The Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) has announced that it was studying the Sulphur and Cypress Creek River Basins to see if either one of these river basins needs to have a watermaster appointed. There are currently four watermasters in Texas: Rio Grande; South Texas; Concho (a segment of the Colorado River Basin); and the Brazos River from Possum Kingdom reservoir and areas downstream. Texas Water Code §11.326 (g)(1) requires the executive director to study water basins that do not have an appointed water master every five years to see if such a position should be appointed. Neither of these two river basins currently have an appointed watermaster. The findings of this study will be submitted to the legislature prior to the beginning of the 85th Legislature in January 2017.



Watermasters provide active daily water management to help resolve conflicts between water rights holders and determine who can divert water based upon their rights. Additionally, a watermaster will evaluate any threats to senior water rights and consider a history of complaints submitted to TCEQ's regional offices. There will be a public hearing on this study in the area later this summer; as soon as the date and location are announced, my office will disseminate that information. More information about this program can be found at https://www.tceq.texas.gov/permitting/water_rights/wmaster/evaluation.

TCEQ is just now reaching out to current water rights holders, other stakeholders, domestic and livestock users, river authorities, agricultural, industrial and environment organizations, the general public and other interested parties to identify information that should be considered during its evaluation. Written comments may be sent by **March 25, 2016**, to Amy Settemeyer, TCEQ, Water Availability Division, Watermaster Section, MC-160, P.O. Box 13087, Austin, Texas 78711-3087.

Donate Life Texas Registry. The Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS) recently announced that its *Donate Life Texas Registry* added more than one million new donor registrants in 2015, bringing the total of enrollees in the program to more than eight million Texans. According to DPS, there are more than 13,000 Texans waiting to receive an organ or tissue transplant. Texans can register for the Donate for Life program at their local DPS office when applying for or renewing a driver's license or identification card, as well as enroll online at www.donatelifetexas.org.

National Agriculture Day. March 15 was National Ag Day that promotes awareness of the impact of Agriculture and its role in modern society. Lone Star Ag Credit, which is part of the nationwide Farm Credit System, supports the goal of National Ag Day. The program encourages every American to: understand how food and fiber products are produced; the role agriculture plays in providing safe, abundant and affordable products; value the essential role of agriculture in maintaining a strong economy; and acknowledge and consider career opportunities in the agriculture, food and fiber industry. Being a cattle raiser and hay grower himself, Rep. VanDeaver spoke to guests about how agriculture has played such a significant part in his life.



Rep. VanDeaver attending the National Ag Day breakfast presentation held in Clarksville.

Around the Capitol. Texas Central. A briefing was held earlier this month on an exciting new high-speed transportation project to connect North Texas/Dallas and Houston. A private company is in the planning stage to develop and build a 240-mile set of rail tracks covering the distance in just 90 minutes. In 2015, total development funding topped \$254 million. During its four-year projected construction phase, the company will employ about 10,000 workers and when completed, the rail line will employ about 1000 people full time with an estimated payroll of approximately \$80 million a year. Follow the progress of this project at <http://www.texascentral.com/>.

Interim committee meetings. As a reminder to the notice in the February E-newsletter, the Joint Interim Committee to Study TRS Health Benefit Plans will hold a public hearing to discuss TRS-Care (the health insurance program for retired school employees) at 2:30 p.m. on March 30. You will be able to watch the hearing from this link: <http://www.house.texas.gov/video-audio/>. At 1 p.m., on April 13, the committee will discuss TRS Active-Care (the health insurance program for active school employees).

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.

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