



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

Around House District 1. Texas A&M University - Texarkana groundbreaking. Earlier this month on June 7, Texas A&M University - Texarkana broke ground on its two newest buildings - the Student Recreation Center and the Building for Academic & Student Success. The ground breaking ceremony was well attended and festive as local and state dignitaries spoke of their excitement about these new buildings. University President, Dr. Emily Cutrer, welcomed the crowd and praised the work of local state Rep. Gary VanDeaver and Speaker of the Texas House of Representatives, the Honorable Joe Straus, last session to secure the necessary funding through tuition revenue bonds (TRBs). Both Straus and VanDeaver talked about how invested the state of Texas and Texas A&M University System are in the educational and economic future of northeast Texas. Straus called A&M Texarkana an "emerging institution," while VanDeaver said "these building represent a brighter future for Texarkana and for the state of Texas because these buildings represent our commitment to improving educational opportunities for Texans." He went on to say that "we cannot regulate our way to a better Texas. We will not legislate our way to a better Texas. My friends, our best hope is to educate our way to a better Texas."



Rep. VanDeaver, Texas A&M - Texarkana President - Emily Cutrer, and Speaker Joe Straus at Texas A&M-Texarkana groundbreaking.

Stakeholder meeting - proposed watermaster for Sulphur River and Cypress Creek basins. The Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) held a stakeholder meeting on June 7, on whether or not to recommend the appointment of a watermaster for both the Sulphur and Cypress Creek River Basins. Approximately 20-25 people attended the meeting and heard presentations by TCEQ staff from Austin and Tyler who explained the state's watermaster program. Every five years, TCEQ is required to study those river basins that do not currently have a watermaster to see if conditions have changed significantly enough to warrant the appointment of one. TCEQ can appoint a watermaster, to be paid for by fees assessed on water rights holders, by petition of 25 or more water right holders; a court order; or if there is a threat to senior water rights who can make a "priority call." Currently, none of these conditions exist in either the Sulphur or Cypress Creek River basins. *Please note that comments about appointing a*



watermaster can be submitted to TCEQ through **June 24**. Comments can be mailed to TCEQ at the Watermaster Section MC 160, P.O. Box 13087, Austin, Texas 78711-3087 or e-mailed to watermaster@tceq.texas.gov. As of June 7, none of the comments received by TCEQ about the watermaster program favored the appointment of one. Here is a link to more information: https://www.tceq.texas.gov/permitting/water_rights/wmaster/evaluation. You will be able to find the two power point presentations presented at this meeting under the "stakeholder meetings" section. The TCEQ Commissioners will consider this issue at its August 24 meeting.

Texas Parks & Wildlife Department (TPWD). On June 22, the TPWD launched an awareness campaign to urge boaters to "Clean, Drain and Dry" boats to help stop the spread of giant salvinia, which is one of the worst invasive species and noxious aquatic pests. The TPWD reported that the economic impact of giant salvinia in Texas alone is over \$4 billion annually to the state's recreational and fishing industries. Invasive aquatic plants create dense mats of floating plants that have blocked waterways, impeding boating access and water conveyance for agricultural irrigation and municipal drinking water. Last session, the legislature increased its appropriation by \$1.1 million and added five new staff positions to help wage the war against these invasive plants. In East Texas, the TPWD has projects to combat these invasive plants at Lake Fork, Caddo Lake, Sam Rayburn Reservoir, Toledo Ben Reservoir, Houston County Lake, as well as other waterways across the state.



Happy July 4. Please make plans to join your family, friends and neighbors as our country celebrates its 240 birthday on July 4! As our state and country are currently facing many daunting challenges, now is a good time to realize just how far our country has come since declaring its independence in 1776 and to rededicate ourselves to the values and ethics that helped make us the greatest country on earth. Take a moment, also, to give thanks for the many blessings that have been bestowed upon each of us as Texans and Americans.

Around the Capitol. *Sulphur River Basin Authority (SRBA) & the Sunset Advisory Commission*. The Texas Sunset Advisory Commission (SAC) held its hearing on the SRBA on June 23, so that it can recommend any needed changes to the legislature when it convenes in January. The SAC spent time talking about their staff's recommendation to "sweep" the current SRBA board members who were appointed prior to 2016, and how such a move would affect SRBA's operations. Incoming SRBA president, Mike Sandefur, presented SRBA's recently adopted reorganization plan intended to address several of the concerns raised in the Sunset Commission staff report. The SAC will vote on its decisions relating to SRBA at its August 22 meeting. Here is a link to the self-evaluation report prepared last fall by SRBA and the recently released review of it by the SAC staff: <https://www.sunset.texas.gov/reviews-and-reports/agencies/sulphur-river-basin-authority>.

Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS). *Commercial driver license (CDL) skills test sites being consolidated*. Beginning July 1, DPS will consolidate its CDL skills test sites to just 25 locations around the state to comply with new federal guidelines effective later this fall that require larger testing areas to test drivers' skills at backing maneuvers, equipment inspections and a standardized layout. Please note that this consolidation just affects the skills testing portion of getting a CDL; Texans will still be able to take written tests, request renewals, get duplicates and make address changes at any driver license office in the state. For more information, visit: <http://dps.texas.gov/DriverLicense/CommericalLicense.htm>.

State iWatch Program. In response to the recent mass shooting in Orlando, FL., DPS is urging Texans to use its iWatch Program (www.iwatchtx.org) to report any potential crime and terrorist activities in their communities. The iWatch Program encourages Texans to a "if you see something, say something" approach to keeping Texans safe by reporting such behaviors as these: strangers asking questions about building security features and procedures; briefcase, suitcase, backpack or package that is left behind; vehicles being left in no parking zones at important buildings; chemical smells or fumes unusual for the location; people requesting sensitive information such as blueprints, security plans or VIP travel schedules without a need to know; purchasing supplies that could be used to make bombs or weapons, or purchasing uniforms without having the proper credentials; and taking photographs or videos of security features, such as camera and checkpoints.

TCEQ - Take Care of Texas. Summer energy tips. The Take Care of Texas program issued the following summer-time tips to help lower your energy bills while trying to stay cool:

- **Use a programmable thermostat.** Or adjust your thermostat during overnight hours or when no one is home. Try setting it to 78 degrees or warmer in the summer. Setting it to 7-10 degrees higher than you normally would for 8 hours a day can reduce energy consumption as much as 10 percent.
- **Maintain your air conditioner.** A properly functioning air conditioner is an efficient one. Replace filters every month or two during the cooling season. And that big hunk of metal outside? That's the evaporator coil. It needs plenty of airflow, so clean it once a year. Remove debris and trim foliage too, leaving at least two feet of space around it.
- **You can also take the burden off your air conditioner by using other methods to keep the heat down in your home:** Use **ceiling fans.** They circulate the air in the house and allow you to raise the thermostat setting about 4 degrees without discomfort. **Limit the heat from your appliances.** Cook outdoors on the grill, and try not to use the dishwasher, washer, and dryer during the heat of the day. **Move lamps, TVs, and other appliances away from the thermostat.** The extra heat they produce can cause the air conditioner to run longer. **Install efficient lighting.** It runs cooler. Only about 10 percent of the electricity that incandescent lights consume results in light — the rest is turned into heat. **Plant shade trees and install window blinds.** With less sunlight shining on your house, the internal temperature can decrease by three to six degrees in the summer and save up to 25 percent in cooling costs. Use energy-efficient window treatments and close them during the day to block direct sunlight. **Weatherize your home.** Find air leaks and seal them with caulk and weather stripping. **Seal your heating and cooling ducts.** Leaky ducts can reduce your system's efficiency by as much as 20 percent. Start by sealing ducts that run through the attic, crawlspace, or garage using duct sealant or foil tape. Then wrap the ducts in insulation to keep them from getting hot.

Visit TakeCareofTexas.org for more ways to conserve energy and water, reduce waste, keep the air and water clean, and save money.

House Appropriations Committee - On July 19th, there will be an interim committee meeting to receive an update from the DPS on the effectiveness of the use of the funds appropriated during the 84th legislative session for border security operations. The \$840 million investment allowed for the hiring of 250 new DPS troopers and allowed a 50-hour work week for all troopers. The increase of law enforcement and Texas military personnel along the Texas-Mexico border is intended to continue the fight against human trafficking and the flow of illegal contraband. Furthermore, DPS will provide an update on existing data and reporting on border security metrics, and recommend improvements to ensure the availability of accurate information in considering sustaining or increasing border security funds.

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.

"The Texas House of Representatives is an Equal Opportunity Employer and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age or disability in employment or the provision of services. This newsletter is available in alternate forms upon request. Please call 1-800-241-1163."