



GARY

VanDeaver

State Representative

District & Capitol Report - 86th Legislature
House District 1 -
Bowie, Franklin, Lamar & Red River
counties
February 2020

Around the District. Region D approves IPP.

On Wednesday, February 26, the Region D Water Planning Group voted 23-0 to approve its Initially Prepared Plan (IPP) for the 2022 state water plan. The IPPs from the state's 16 regional water planning groups are to be submitted to the Texas Water Development Board (TWDB) no later than March 3, while the deadline to submit final regional plans is October 14, 2020. The TWDB currently anticipates adopting the 2022 state water plan in the summer of 2021.

The adopted IPP opposes the construction of the proposed Marvin Nichols Reservoir for at least the next 50 years. The plan is more than 1,400 pages and states that constructing the reservoir on the Sulphur River Basin between Mount Pleasant, Paris and Clarksville should not be included as a water management strategy in the next state water plan. The IPP can be viewed at <http://netmwd.com/regiond.html>. Public comments to the board suggested that other strategies including increased conservation efforts and alternative sources of water be explored; that mitigation come from the region requesting the new reservoir; that property owners should receive the maximum compensation possible; and that local governments and school districts get assistance for the recapture of lost resources, jobs or income. A five-hour public hearing is scheduled for April 14 at the Mt. Pleasant Civic Center for constituents who have not yet had an opportunity to be speak to the board. Board

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officials encouraged people to write and submit their comments online or by mail since the board members are not required to attend the meeting. Written comments will receive the same consideration as verbal comments. All written and verbal comments will be seen by Region D board members before they vote on a final plan to submit to the TWDB. Comments can be emailed to regiond@netmwd.com or mailed to Northeast Texas Municipal Water District, P.O. Box 955, Hughes Springs, TX 75656. The next regular meeting of Region D is scheduled for 1 p.m. on March 19, 2020, at the Region 8 Service Center in Pittsburg.

UT System announces study of medical school in Tyler. Though not in House District 1, I believe that all of Northeast Texas will benefit from a plan announced on February 6, by the Honorable Kevin Eltife, former state senator from our area and now chairman of the

Rep. VanDeaver joins several East Texas House colleagues (Schafer, Hefner & Clardy) at press conference announcing plans to study East Texas medical school.



University of Texas System Board of Regents, for the System to study the creation of a medical school at the University of Texas Health Science Center at Tyler. On February 27, the University of Texas System Board of Regents announced that it unanimously approved a proposal to establish a medical school at the UT Health Science Center at Tyler. The school will be the first of its kind in

Northeast Texas, providing a pathway for students to receive a comprehensive medical education there, and extending access to patient care, especially for individuals living in rural areas of the region.

White Oak Creek prescribed burn. Earlier this month, the Texas Parks & Wildlife Department (TPWD) notified my office that it will conduct prescribed burns in the White Oak Creek Wildlife Management Area between March and May 2020. The TPWD intends to post information on its website and use social media to keep the public informed. For more detailed information, visit their website at: http://tpwd.texas.gov/landwater/land/wildland_fire_management/.

Around the Capitol. Governor Abbott holds briefing on coronavirus; state preparations.

Yesterday, Governor Greg Abbott held a briefing on the coronavirus (COVID-19) that has



the world's attention as it spreads across the globe. Originating late last year in China, the virus has now spread to at least 32 countries. The National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) reports there are 80,000 cases of the virus worldwide with 2700 deaths reported. According to the Center for Disease Control (CDC), 14 cases have been diagnosed in the United States with an additional 39 people infected who were repatriated from high-risk locations for a total of 53 confirmed cases in the United States. In addition to the CDC, the governor's briefing included information from the state's Division of Emergency Management (TDEM) and the Department of State Health Services (DSHS). Governor Abbott stated at his press conference that there have not been any cases confirmed in Texas though state and federal agencies are closely monitoring and preparing for a spread of the virus to Texas. According to the governor's press release after his briefing:

"The state is taking precautionary measures to ensure the health and safety of all Texans. DSHS, the lead agency for response, activated the State Medical Operations Center (SMOC) in January. The SMOC serves as a touchpoint for any requests from local entities, and also ensures consistent collection, tracking and reporting of public health activities and data. DSHS is currently preparing state laboratories with testing capabilities for the novel coronavirus, and is updating public health response plans in the event of the spread of the virus. Multi-level and multi-agency coordination and communication efforts are practiced daily to ensure up-to-date information is flowing between federal, state, and local partners. DSHS is coordinating with TDEM, Texas Hospital Association, Texas Medical Association and state university systems with the purpose of providing educational materials and the latest developments in research and treatment methods for the virus. Additionally, DSHS and TDEM will begin bi-weekly meetings with all relevant state agencies at the State Operations Center (SOC) to discuss up-to-date emergency planning documents and how plans will be implemented. Agencies will also implement disinfecting measures at places like driver's license offices and schools, as well as ensure high-risk populations, such as those in daycares, nursing homes, assisted living associations, and health care facilities, are prepared and properly cared for.

"How to avoid infection with COVID-19:

The best way to prevent infection is to take precautions to avoid exposure to this virus, which are similar to the precautions you take to avoid the flu. CDC recommends these everyday actions to help prevent the spread of respiratory viruses, including:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap

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and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.

- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Stay home when you are sick.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces."

UPDATE. Teacher Retirement System of Texas



(TRS) rental costs. Last month, I shared information with you about plans the Teacher Retirement System of Texas had to lease office space in

downtown Austin for its investment management division (IMD) at \$326,000 a month in the new downtown *Indeed Tower* beginning in 2021. The 10-year lease was negotiated in 2018 at \$38.50 a square foot in the downtown Austin central business district Class A market. Needless to say, this arrangement upset not only TRS members but also legislators. At their board meeting last week, TRS changed its office space plans to stay in its current location at 816 Congress Avenue. TRS executive director, Brian Guthrie, told its board and members of the Senate Finance Committee at its meeting on February 25, that subsequent to signing the lease at Indeed Tower, additional space became available at their current location at 816 Congress. This space was not available when TRS signed its lease at Indeed Tower in 2018. On February 21, the TRS Board approved a seven-year lease extension at its current location. The House Committee on Pensions, Investments and Financial Services will also discuss this issue at its 10 a.m., meeting in Austin, on March 6. Yesterday, Houston-state Senator, John Whitmire, submitted a formal request to the

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state attorney general asking for an opinion on "whether or not potential real estate investments by TRS violate the constitution" and state law. The senator is also seeking a review by the state auditor's office of the system's real estate investments and partnerships.

More changes to TRS health insurance programs.

In addition to changing its space plans for their IMD at the meeting on February 21, the TRS board awarded new contracts for managers of the system's health insurance programs TRS-Care and TRS-Care Standard (for retirees) and TRS-ActiveCare (for current school employees). These changes are projected to save the system \$754 million over the next three to five years. According to the TRS press release, Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Texas will administer both the TRS-ActiveCare and TRS-Care Standard (plan for retirees under the age of 65 who do not qualify yet for Medicare). United Health Care will take over the management of the TRS-Care Medicare Advantage program and is projected to save \$314 million over the next five years. All of these programs have faced significant funding challenges over the years. According to TRS, the TRS-ActiveCare transition to Blue Cross Blue Shield will take effect on September 1, 2020. The other programs (TRS-Care Standard and TRS-Care) will transition to the new providers on January 1, 2021. For more details, visit: <https://www.trs.texas.gov/Pages/trsvendorchanges2021.aspx>.



Rep. VanDeaver and the 2019-20 FFA state officers on the Speaker's dais in the House Chamber; photo: House Photography.

Texas FFA Association.

Almost 700 FFA students spent two days at the Capitol in late February for their annual trip to Austin. These students

participated in general sessions, individual breakout sessions to learn about the different branches of state government, how to lobby the legislature and tour the historic Capitol building. I had the honor and privilege of addressing this year's FFA delegation in the House Chamber on their opening day ceremony at the Capitol.

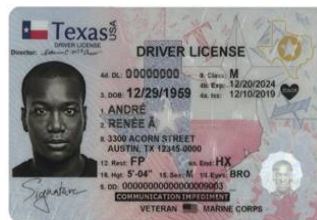
DPS announces new design for Drivers Licenses.

This week, the Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS) began issuing the newly designed Texas driver licenses (DL), identification (ID) cards and license to carry (LTC) cards to all Texans. Most notably, all of the cards will feature a new look with an updated design and enhanced security features. The DL/ID cards will also feature visible and discrete identifiers on the front. It's important to note that previously issued DLs are still valid until the expiration date listed on the card.

The new DL and ID cards will be made of polycarbonate material, which is more tamper-resistant and harder to reproduce, and feature laser engraving to provide an added layer of protection against alterations and forgeries. As part of the new design, there will be an identifier on the front of the card for those who have a health condition that may hamper their ability to communicate with others. The new design will also identify veterans and disabled veterans, along with their branch of service, on the front of the cards. Additionally, the new card features meet the American Association of Motor Vehicle Administrators national standards.

As with all the DL and ID cards DPS has issued since early October 2016, the new cards will be REAL ID compliant, as noted by the gold star in the upper right corner. Texans without a gold star on their current valid DL/ID card can visit [Texas.gov/goldstar](https://www.texas.gov/goldstar) to check their eligibility to

renew early or request a duplicate card that's REAL ID compliant.



New Driver's License design.



New Learner's Permit design.

As a reminder, beginning Oct. 1, 2020, you'll need a valid passport, U.S. military ID or a REAL ID compliant driver license (one with the gold star) to travel on commercial airlines or enter federal facilities.

As part of the redesign, the Texas License to Carry (LTC) Handgun cards will also debut a new look and new features, including laser engraving and a durable, tamper-resistant polycarbonate



New License to Carry design.

material. To learn more about the new card design and features, [visit](https://www.texas.gov) the DPS website.

2020 primary elections.

Remember that today, February 28, is the final day to vote early in the **2020 primary elections**. Next Tuesday, March 3, is Election Day; please be sure to do your civic duty and vote.



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.

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