

State Representative Gary VanDeaver



HD 1



87th Legislature
Bowie | Franklin | Lamar | Red River

87th Legislature Report - House District 1 Bowie, Franklin, Lamar & Red River counties

September 2021

Around the District. Ramseur Baptist Church is 100 years old! Ramseur Baptist Church in Paris marked its centennial on Sunday, September 26, with a full house and much celebrating. I was happy to provide an honorary resolution marking the happy occasion, and information included in it noted that the church began "as a mission of the



Pastor John Brown, Ramseur Baptist Church in Paris. Photo: Tony Corso

First Baptist Church of Paris in the early 1900s" and "obtained its own charter in the fall of 1921; the 35 original members named their assembly the Ramseur Memorial Baptist Church after Fannie Ramseur, who donated land on 12th



Ramseur Baptist Church's centennial celebration on September 25, 2021.

Street for the church's first sanctuary." Today, the church's 250 members continue with "ministries that include special programs for people of all

ages, and the church remains focused on foreign missionary work, with 25 percent of its annual

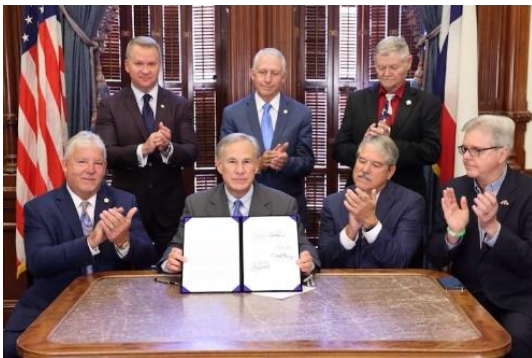
budget going to such endeavors." The current pastor, John Brown, began in 2005 and helps the congregation continue thriving in Paris. Congratulations and good luck for the next 100 years!

Infusion center opens in Nash. This week, Governor Greg Abbott announced that the Texas Division of Emergency Management (TDEM), in partnership with local officials, launched a new COVID-19 therapeutic infusion center in Nash. The infusion center began accepting patients on Tuesday, September 28, and has been provided with monoclonal antibodies to treat outpatient cases of COVID-19 with a doctor's referral. This treatment is available at no cost to the patient. Local partners include Bowie County, the city of Nash and the city of Texarkana. Thank you to everyone involved in this effort to bring this critical treatment to our area!

Around the Capitol. Ongoing Special Sessions. The second called special session of the 87th legislature convened August 7 and adjourned September 2, and the third called special session began September 20 and is still ongoing. In the second special session, four education-related bills passed and were signed by the governor; these included:

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Senate Bill 15 (Taylor, Bell K.) is the virtual learning bill so that school districts can utilize this tool to help students continue learning even if not physically in a classroom. SB 15 increases the scope of the state's virtual learning system by giving districts control and funding for operating online educational programming. I had the honor of being present at the ceremonial bill signing of SB 15 with Governor Abbott on September 23, but the bill was effective on September 9.



SB 15 bill signing with the governor and legislative colleagues. Photo courtesy of governor's office.

Another bill passed during the special session was the Family Violence Prevention Act, **SB 9 (Huffman, Dutton)**. A similar bill stalled in the regular session due to misinformation. Even though family violence has risen over the past few years, Texas public schools have not provided students with resources and information on how to keep themselves physically safe in relationships. The new version of the bill was cautiously crafted with parents at the focal point, and allows prudently designed instruction on child abuse, family violence and dating violence. The governor signed SB 9 on September 17, and it becomes effective December 2, 2021.

SB 3 (Hughes, Huberty) updated HB 3979 that passed in the regular session and relates to civics training programs. This bill was part of a marathon hearing in the House Committee on

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Public Education held on August 24 that began at 10:30 a.m. and adjourned at 6 a.m. on August 25. Several constituents reached out to me regarding this bill's affect on their classrooms, specifically that it could prohibit a teacher from even informing students of who their locally elected officials are and encouraging them to write letters to them. After much debate and reworking, SB 3 passed, creating a social studies teacher training program while also requiring the modification of the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS). SB 3 was signed by the governor on September 17, and it becomes effective on December 2, 2021. The Texas Education Agency (TEA) previously informed the legislature that its TEKS-adoption process can take over a year, with plenty of opportunities for parent and teacher input before the State Board of Education as it writes the new curriculum.

Finally, **SB 7 (Huffman, Rogers)** was passed, providing the long-awaited "13th check" to retired school employees under the Teacher Retirement System of Texas (TRS). This supplemental check can be up to \$2,400. Though the bill took effect on September 9, 2021, TRS said recipients will receive the 13th check in their January 2022 payment. Here is a link to a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) document if you have additional questions:

<https://www.trs.texas.gov/Pages/retirees-one-time-supplemental-payment-FAQs.aspx>.

In addition to these major education initiatives, the legislature also passed the following bills:

- **SB 4 (Lucio, Klick)** - increases prohibitions on drug-induced abortions.
- **SB 6 (Huffman, Smith)** - improves the bail system in order to promote public safety.

- **SB 8 (Bettencourt, Meyer)** - allows homestead exemptions to apply immediately after purchase.
- **SB 12 (Bettencourt, Meyer)** - creates property tax relief for 65+ or disabled homeowners.
- **HB 9 (Bonnen, Nelson)** - appropriates \$1.8 billion to border security.
- **HB 20 (Cain, Hughes)** - prohibits censorship on social media.

During the current third called special session, the governor's call to the legislature includes such issues as redistricting; appropriating federal funds from the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (ARPA); prohibiting students from competing in UIL competitions designated for the sex opposite to the student's sex at birth; prohibiting vaccine mandates; prohibiting dog tethering; addressing additional bail reform measures and providing additional but temporary property tax relief.



Texas Rent Relief (TRR).

The TRR Program has distributed more than \$830 million in rental and utility assistance to more than

139,000 Texas households impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. An additional \$105 million is approved and in the payment process. To date, TRR has reached 92 percent of Texas counties with relief funds. Applications can be submitted online at <https://texasrentrelief.com/> or over the phone by calling the Texas Rent Relief hotline at 833-9TX-RENT (833-989-7368). Tenants and landlords can also use these resources to check their application status. Landlords will only see the status of their tenant's application once their application IDs are linked in the system. Helpful videos about how to apply and guides on the

payment process can be found at: <https://texasrentrelief.com/forms-resources/>. An overview of understanding the status of an application can be found at: <https://texasrentrelief.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Application-Status-Chart.pdf>.

Missing some cash or other unclaimed property?

Since the inception of the state's unclaimed property program in 1962, the comptroller's office has returned more than \$3 billion in unclaimed property to rightful owners. The state



is currently holding more than \$6 billion in cash and other valuables in this program. These belongings include things such as forgotten utility deposits or other refunds, insurance proceeds, payroll

checks, cashier's checks, dividends, mineral royalties, dormant bank accounts and abandoned safe-deposit box contents. Businesses generally turn property over to the unclaimed property program after it has been considered dormant for one to five years. If you think you are missing some of these assets, you can search online for the unclaimed property and begin the claims process by visiting the comptroller's unclaimed property website, ClaimItTexas.org, or call 800-321-2274 (CASH).

Texas economy doing well. Earlier this month, the comptroller's office announced it was sending over \$900 million in local sales tax allocations to cities, counties, transit systems and special purpose taxing districts. This amount represents 20.9 percent more than in September 2020. These allocations were based on sales made in July by businesses that report tax monthly. For details on September sales tax allocations to individual cities, counties, transit systems and

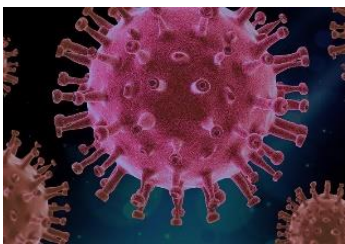
special purpose districts, visit the comptroller's [Monthly Sales Tax Allocation Comparison Summary Reports](#).



The comptroller's office also reported total sales tax revenue for the three months ending in August 2021 was up 16.5 percent compared to the same period a year ago. Sales tax is the largest source of state funding for the state budget, accounting for 59 percent of all tax collections. Texas collected the following tax revenue in August:

- motor vehicle sales and rental taxes — \$625 million, up 33 percent from August 2020 (before May 2021, that source of revenue had never topped \$500 million);
- motor fuel taxes — \$331 million, up 15 percent from August 2020;
- oil production tax — \$405 million, up 85 percent from August 2020;
- natural gas production tax — \$215 million, compared to negative \$15 million in August 2020, attributable to substantial refund payments in August a year ago;
- hotel occupancy tax — \$65 million, up 112 percent from August 2020; and
- alcoholic beverage taxes — \$135 million, up 96 percent from August 2020.

Updated vaccine information. The Department of State Health Services (DSHS) announced that the Center for Disease Control and Prevention



(CDC) recently recommended certain groups receive a vaccine booster shot at least six months after a person

received the second Pfizer dose. For more

information, see the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine Booster Shot page on the [CDC website](#).

Constitutional amendment election. Texas voters head to the polls on November 2, to express their support or opposition to the proposed constitutional amendments adopted by the legislature earlier this year. My office recently mailed to constituents a newsletter with background information about the proposed amendments. If you did not receive this information, access information at <https://tlc.texas.gov/docs/amendments/analyses21.pdf>. The last day to register to vote in this election is Monday, October 4.

Texas Rural Communities grant programs. My office was recently contacted by Texas Rural Communities (TRC), a nonprofit organization serving rural Texas, about its upcoming round of grant programs available for funding. The TRC has roots from the 1930s' federal government's response to the Great Depression; here is a link to learn more about the group:



<https://texasrural.org/>. For a copy of application criteria, here is a link: <https://texasrural.org/grants/application-process/> or contact info@texasrural.org. October 29 is the application deadline for eligible non-profit 501(c)(3) organizations. Previously funded projects have ranged from after-school programs to food banks.

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.