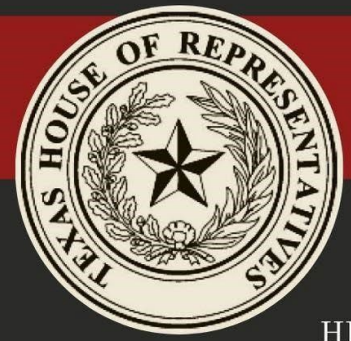




State Representative Gary VanDeaver



87th Legislature
Bowie | Franklin | Lamar | Red River

HD 1

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

October 2022

Around the District. Listening Tour events. I would like to thank people in House District 1 (HD1) for coming to my recent 2022 Listening Tour across the newly configured state House legislative district. When I first ran for office in 2014, HD 1 included Bowe, Franklin, Lamar and Red River counties, but last year's redistricting process redesigned all 181 legislative districts to include new areas in response to the state's growth in and redistribution of its almost 30 million residents. The new HD 1 now includes

Bowie, Cass, Lamar, Morris and Red River counties.

I want to give a special thank you to my local hosts for these



Rep. VanDeaver visited the Downtown Square in Paris after the Lamar County Listening Tour.

meetings that include the Honorable Ann Rushing (mayor, Clarksville); Dr. Pam Anglin (president, Paris Junior College); the Honorable Travis Ransom (county judge, Cass County) and Dr. Jason Smith (president, Texarkana College).

These and many other people helped my staff with our meeting arrangements, which helped them be the success they were.

Discussions. It was good to hear from my constituents about issues they feel are critical



Rep. VanDeaver visiting with nursing students from Texas A&M - Texarkana who attended the Cass County Listening Tour.

to be discussed by the legislature next year. Some of the issues discussed included opposition to Lake Marvin Nichols; runaway increases in property appraisals that drive up people's property taxes; access to and expansion of

broadband connections and improved internet services; illegal immigration and need for enhanced border security; infrastructure needs especially to roads across the district; growth in the number of solar farms in the area that are taking acreage away from agricultural production; improve school safety; eminent domain reform; ensure that rural areas

continue to have access to health care; regional workforce needs and training options; suggestions to address the teacher shortages; state testing and accountability systems; and needed curriculum reform and instructional materials. Given the concerns brought up during these meetings, the 88th legislature has a lot of work to do next year!

Education for a Strong Workforce. On Friday, October 14, about 75 area education and business leaders gathered at Texarkana College's Ledwell Workforce Training Center to hear about the strong ties between public and higher education and the area's regional workforce needs. Mr. Fred Markham, from



Rep. VanDeaver speaking to the local business and education leaders about the strength of the area's workforce programs.

Texarkana and the executive director of the Texas Pioneer Foundation, led the discussions with

presentations from:

- **Partnerships for Student & Employer Success:** Texarkana ISD superintendent Dr. Doug Brubaker and Texarkana College president Dr. Jason Smith.
- **2023 Legislative Session: Opportunities to Engage:** Ms. Becky Calahan, Philanthropy Advocates.
- **Importance of Education and Workforce Alignment:** Rep. VanDeaver.

Our region, like much of the rest of the United States, is experiencing a shortage of workers in many critical fields and professions. The discussions at Ledwell highlighted the integral tie between public and higher education institutions as they respond to the ever-changing job markets and workforce needs.

In addition to thanking Mr. Markham for his help making the day a success, I also want to thank Mr. Scott Norton with TexAmericas Center and Ms. Robbin Bass with the Texarkana USA Chamber of Commerce for helping host this event.

Congratulations Mount Vernon Music! The Mount Vernon Music Association recently informed my office that the Texas Commission on the Arts approved two grants for its 2022-23



season. These grants will go to the Mount Vernon Music's Youth Outreach program so it can "continue our work

bringing performances by professional musicians to residents of our underserved region." Thanks to all of the musicians who share their talents with the community in bringing live music directly to people in Northeast Texas.



L-r: TC President Smit; dual credit students: Micaih Scott & Zane Triplett; & Rep. VanDeaver at the Ledwell Center.

Around the Capitol. Texas Commission on Community College Finance (TxCCCCF). In line with the discussions at

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Texarkana College that focused on workforce needs and regional educational resources, the TxCCCF adopted its final report on October 18. I was appointed by the House Speaker to serve on this commission during the interim between legislative sessions, and we were charged with doing a deep dive into how community colleges are funded, what their missions are, study challenges and roadblocks, as well as make recommendations to the 88th legislature. I am pleased with the work the commission did over the last year, and I am now more convinced than ever of the critical role that community colleges play in our state's higher education system. Their role is unique, and their structure gives them the ability to quickly to changing circumstances and needs when conditions in their regions call for additional programs and services to meet regional workforce and educational needs. They serve a crucial link between our public schools and higher education institutions working to provide dual credit programs that give high school students a head start on their lives and careers after high school. They also provide a quick way for post-secondary students to earn workforce credentials and certificates to enter or re-enter the workforce with enhanced skills or transfer to a four-year institution to earn their degrees. The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, the state agency that oversees higher education in Texas, recently adopted a new strategic plan called *Building a Talent Strong Texas (BTST)* that stresses the need for different educational options for all Texans to either finish the educational path they started after high school; learn new skills to be prepared for changing needs of industry; and to have more Texans prepared with an associate's degree from a community college, industry

certifications and college degrees. The *BTST* plan, while forward thinking, recognizes the critical services provided by community colleges.

As a product of Paris Junior College (PJC), I know the importance these schools have in finding a pathway for a productive future. I am grateful to the community colleges that serve my constituents in HD 1 and appreciate all the hard work and innovations at PJC, Texarkana College and Northeast Texas Community College in working with their local industries and public schools to ensure that our area has skilled employees who meet regional labor market demands while keeping our local economy attractive to new industries and responsive to the industries already here.

The key recommendations adopted by the commission propose changes for the colleges to be funded based on their outcomes; successful student transfers to four-year institutions; and enhance student aid opportunities. These changes will allow the colleges to earn necessary funding based upon their productivity in preparing students for the workforce and transferring students to four-year institutions to complete degrees. I look forward to working with my legislative colleagues in the House and Senate to adopt these important recommendations to ensure that community colleges can not only meet current workforce and educational needs but be ever prepared to quickly respond to changing needs.

Broadband Development Office (BDO). One of the most timely and critical pieces of legislation enacted in 2021, was House Bill 5 (87th, R) that

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established the state's Broadband Development Office (BDO) that was charged with:

- Creating a state broadband plan (June 15, 2022);
- Developing a federally compliant competitive financial incentive program (early 2023);
- Establishing a statewide availability map (January 1, 2023);
- Conducting outreach and digital literacy programs;
- Making recommendations regarding areas eligible for funding.

The BDO is housed at the state comptroller's office and has been met regularly to tackle its hefty "to do" list. The BDO adopted its plan in June, which can be found at:

<https://comptroller.texas.gov/programs/broadband/>.

The plan states that there are "2.8 million Texas households and 7 million people lack broadband access. Twenty three percent of Texans are unable to attend online classes, see a healthcare provider from their living room, fill out a job application online, start a business or access online marketplaces from their kitchen table. These barriers negatively affect Texans' quality of life and limit economic opportunities for people and the state overall."

Earlier this month, the BDO presented testimony to the House Committee on Appropriations about its work and updated the committee that the statewide maps showing where broadband service is and is not available will be released mid-December.

This map will be available to the public later this year at the BDO's website:

<https://comptroller.texas.gov/programs/broadband/>. Though much effort has been made since the BDO was established last year, the ongoing lack of broadband service across all areas of the state is such a critical concern the legislature will continue discussions next year.

Governor launches statewide campaign to educate and combat drug overdose deaths.

Earlier this month, Texas Governor Greg Abbott launched the "One Pill Kills" campaign to warn all Texans of the danger from illegal drugs. The governor said this "campaign to combat the growing national fentanyl crisis plaguing Texas and the United States." This announcement comes after Governor Abbott [directed](#) state agencies to ramp up efforts to combat the deadly fentanyl crisis last month. Actions by the state to address the unprecedented influx of this deadly drug into communities across the state.



"Fentanyl remains the single deadliest drug threat our state and nation has ever

encountered, killing four Texans every day," said Governor Abbott. He went on to say that "I am proud to announce the launch of the State of Texas' comprehensive 'One Pill Kills' campaign to remind Texans that just one pill laced with fentanyl can take someone's life. Together, we will protect more innocent lives from being lost to this deadly drug."

Key dates coming up in November. November is shaping up to be a very busy month with several important dates for you to put on your calendar, including:

- Friday, **November 4** - end of early voting for the upcoming General Election;
- Sunday, **November 6** - "fall back" and reset your clocks with the end of Daylight Savings Time;
- Tuesday, **November 8** - General Election - the ballot is full of local and state elections;
- Friday, **November 11** - Veterans' Day;
- Monday, **November 14** - start of bill filing for the 88th legislature; and
- Thursday, **November 24** - Thanksgiving.

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.