



# 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

### February 2022

**Around the District. Meeting with city of Paris officials on housing issues.** Earlier this month, I met with officials from the city of Paris regarding constituent concerns about abandoned buildings, delayed demolitions and general blight in the Paris area. Present at the



*Pictured: Rep. VanDeaver, Grayson Path, Charles Edwards, Robert Vine, Mayor Portugal, Reginald Hughes and Mary Madewell.*

meeting were Mayor Paula Portugal; Mayor Pro-Tem Reginald Hughes; Paris City Manager Grayson Path; Grant

Administrator Charles Edwards and Assistant City Manager Robert Vine. It was a frank discussion about the specifics of constituent concerns, what has been done to address the concerns and what the state could do to help alleviate the issues. The key takeaways were to keep lines of communication open, to reward innovative practices, to consider citizen feedback and to be transparent with the community about what is going on.

**Nash Elementary School Tour.** This month,



*Pictured l - r: Asst. Principal Vaughn; Principal Luna; Asst. Principal Smith & Rep. VanDeaver.*

Nash Elementary School in Texarkana ISD provided a tour of the school with Principal Liliansa Luna, Assistant

Principal Jacquelyn Smith and Assistant Principal Carmelya Vaughn. The school is truly a beautiful environment full of great teachers, staff and children. The tour included bilingual classrooms and an opportunity to meet "Puff" the students' bearded dragon. They are doing a wonderful job on that campus.



### Redistricting Presentation at Noon Lions Club.

The February meeting of the Texarkana Noon Lions Club meeting was held

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at Reggie's Diner in Texarkana, AR. I gave a presentation on the redistricting process for the Texarkana area, legislative issues from 2021 and then opened the floor for questions. As a member of the New Boston Lions Club, it was great to connect with other service-minded folks.

**Atlanta ISD Education Foundation.** The Atlanta ISD Education Foundation's annual fundraiser - *Blue Jeans and Bling* was held February 12 in



*Pictured l - r: Kaitlynn Johnston, Grace Kelly, Rep. VanDeaver and Pam VanDeaver having fun at the Boots and Bling event.*

Texarkana. It was a terrific event that raised over \$80,000 in grant money for local schools in the Atlanta area.

***Ribbon Cutting in Honor of Inaugural Flight of United Airlines from Houston.***

This month saw a major milestone at the Texarkana Airport - an inaugural flight of a United Airlines route from George H. W. Bush Intercontinental Airport to the Texarkana Regional Airport. The route now connects this



region to one of the best, busiest and biggest airports in the entire world. The credit for this amazing new opportunity goes to airport

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officials, staff and United Airlines, but it was wonderful to be a part of a collaborative force for public good in Northeast Texas. Attending the ribbon cutting celebration included in the picture were: Mark Malone (Texarkana Chamber of Commerce president); Toby Engvisd (spokesperson United Airlines); Arkansas State Representative Carol Dalby; Rep. VanDeaver; and Mayor Bob Bruggeman (Texarkana, TX).

**Lifetime Membership Award from the Texas Association of Community Schools (TACS).** On February 16th, I was asked to come to the Akin Elementary School Library in Paris to receive the TACSs' highest honor - a lifetime membership award. Executive Director Barry Haenisch presented the award and then we got to participate in a class's library time. It was also so uplifting to see another beautiful and joy-filled elementary school with hard-working



*Akin Elem. students; Rep. VanDeaver & TACS Ex. Dir. Haenisch.*

teachers, administrators, parents, staff and students.



*Rep. VanDeaver showing students his socks.*

The students especially loved my silly Mickey Mouse socks!



**Nash Fire Department Visit.** Last week, the city of Nash Fire Department and city offices provided a tour and information about the



*Nash FD firefighters; Steve Rogers (Fire Chief); Hayden Moore, firefighter; Jessica Moore, city clerk; Rep. VanDeaver; Mayor Robert Bunch; City Administrator Doug Bowers; Police Chief Kelly Dial; and City Secretary Jennifer Studdard.)*

operations of their fire department. They have a wonderful facility with good people working very hard delivering high quality services in the area.

The fire department has set very high standards for its firefighters, and even during the tour, they went out on a call. It was great to learn just how dedicated Nash is to providing a wonderful local government service to its citizens.

### Texas Elementary Principals and Supervisors



*Pictured l -r: Supt. Sandra Quarles (D-LSISD); Supt. Jason Harris (Atlanta ISD); Mark Terry (TEPSA) and Rep. VanDeaver.*

### Association (TEPSA) meeting in Atlanta.

TEPSA members along with other school officials, principals and

administrators in Cass and Morris counties met to discuss educational and legislative issues. The main topics of concern were the burdensome time requirements of H.B. 4545 (87 R); problems with standardized testing; and teacher shortages in rural areas. It's never too

early to start talking about what bills and issues need to be researched and filed for the 88th session beginning in January 2023. Getting their feedback and perspectives was very beneficial.

**Golden Apple Award.** At this year's Texas Association of School Administrators (TASA) Mid-Winter Conference, I was honored to receive "The Golden Apple Award" for Outstanding Service to Small and Mid-Sized Schools from the Texas Association of Rural Schools and the Texas Association of Mid-Size



*Greg Gibson TAMS Schools; Rep. VanDeaver; Senator Drew Springer (SD 30, Muenster); and Mike Lee (TARS).*

Schools. Without such organizations serving rural districts across the state, it would be easy for education policy to be dominated and dictated by large, urban

and wealthy districts. These organizations provide small and mid-sized communities with a voice in policy decisions, and I am grateful for their recognition and assistance.

**Mount Vernon Music (MVM).** The Mount Vernon Music Association received a \$600 grant from the Texas Commission on the Arts for its 2021-2022 season. MVM used these



funds to support its programming in January/February to bring Texas Touring Roster pianist Evan

Mitchell to the area. Without such support, MVM could not bring such outstanding musicians to perform in Northeast Texas.

Congratulations to and a big "thank you!" to MVM for all their hard work.

**Prescribed burn plans announced.** The Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) recently informed my office that it plans to conduct prescribed burns in the White Oak Creek



Wildlife Management Area between February and April 2022. A public notice about the burns will be published in the *Mount Vernon Tribune*

prior to the actual burn period. Local officials have also been notified to ensure that appropriate emergency services and local fire departments are on notice and prepared for any responses that might be needed.

#### ***Around the Capitol.***

**HHS news on recalled baby formula.** The Health and Human Services agency recently announced that there is a recall of powdered baby and toddler formulas with brand names Similac, Alimentum and EleCare. If you use powdered formula, check to see if your formula has been recalled at [similacrecall.com](http://similacrecall.com). If recalled, do NOT use it.

**TRS received additional funding for its health insurance programs.** In October 2021, the legislature passed [SB 8 \(87-3\)](#) that provided TRS with \$286 million in federal funding (ARPA) to reimburse COVID-19 expenses for TRS-ActiveCare (for active employees) and TRS-Care (retired employees). The legislature directed TRS to prevent premiums in these two programs from increasing **due to coronavirus-related claims**. Please note that the TRS board will set premiums for TRS-ActiveCare in April.

TRS-Care retiree premiums **did not increase** this year and have remained at the same levels since 2018. As a result of SB 8, eligible retirees enrolled in TRS-Care will receive a **one-time payment of \$448.12** that will be issued in March 2022. This is in addition to retirees' monthly TRS annuity and the [supplemental payment](#) (capped 13<sup>th</sup> check) provided in January of 2022 to eligible retirees. If you have questions, please use this link for more information [One-Time Payments for TRS-Care](#).

**Texas Prepaid Tuition Program Enrollment Deadlines Approach.** Texas families can lock in today's cost of undergraduate resident tuition and school-wide required fees at Texas public colleges and universities by enrolling their children in the tax-advantaged Texas Tuition Promise Fund® before the close of the current general enrollment period on Feb. 28. Complete plan information — including residency and other requirements, current prices, enrollment forms and more — is available online at [TuitionPromise.org](http://TuitionPromise.org), or by calling 800-445-GRAD (4723), option 5. To enroll children younger than 1 in the program at 2021-22 prices, the deadline is July 31. The next general enrollment period begins on Sept. 1, with new contract prices based on Texas public college tuition and school-wide required fee costs for the 2022-23 academic year. Go to the [Texas Tuition Promise Fund website](#) for information about [how to register to attend upcoming webinars](#).

**Nominate a student volunteer.** Do you know a student who goes above and beyond to make his or her school, other students and community better? The Texas State Board of Education (SBOE) recently announced an opportunity to nominate such a student for an

award and recognition in the 2022 Student Heroes Award. The Student Heroes Award program recognizes Texas public school students in Pre-Kindergarten through high school who voluntarily work to assist and/or



benefit their fellow Texas students. Award requirements include the following:

- The service, assistance, and/or good deed must be voluntary and not part of any curriculum, graduation requirement, class, or community project.
- The service, assistance, and/or good deed must benefit other students in Texas, either individually or collectively.
- The benefit may be to students of one campus, district, or community.

Nominations will be accepted through March 31, 2022, at 5:00 p.m. (CDT). Recipients of the awards will be announced in June. A plaque and medal will be awarded to each Student Hero by his or her State Board of Education member. Nomination forms and program guidelines are available [here](#). The online nomination form can be accessed directly [here](#). For more information, please email [heroes@tea.texas.gov](mailto:heroes@tea.texas.gov) or call (512) 463-9007.

**Don't forget to vote.** March 1, is Primary Election Day in the state of Texas with all



statewide officials on the ballot. Early voting ends on Friday, February 25. To date, news outlets have reported that almost 95 percent of registered Texans have **not**

voted. Do you part to be involved in your state and local governments by exercising your right to 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.