



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

September 2022

Around the District. Congratulations DeKalb ISD! Earlier this month, DeKalb Elementary School (DES) was recognized as a National Blue Ribbon School, making it only one of 31 Texas schools and one of only 297 such schools in the country for 2022. The U.S. Department of Education announced this year's exceptional schools on September 16, to recognize either a school's overall academic performance or its progress to close achievement gaps among student subgroups. This is quite an achievement for DES that received unacceptable performance ratings from the state in 2015-16 and 2018-19. Earning the Blue Ribbon designation just a few years after receiving those unacceptable ratings and while struggling with the challenges of the COVID pandemic, shows the dedication, hard work and commitment of everyone associated with DES. A big "thank you" and "job well-done" to all the students, parents, teachers, staff, administrators and board members who pulled together to make tremendous improvements in all the students' academic achievements.

DeKalb ISD officials in Austin. Some DeKalb ISD school board members and administrators were in Austin earlier this month participating in advocacy training sponsored by Raise Your



L-r: Clayton Little, Paul Barrett, Rep. VanDeaver, Dr. Chris Galloway, Emily Lee and Deann Lee.

Hand Texas (RYHT) a group that works to support Texas public schools.

The group's advocacy training program gives these school officials the tools they need to influence and guide state education policy before the legislature and agency. While in Austin, the group visited with Rep. VanDeaver in his Capitol office.

October Listening Tour meetings scheduled across House District 1. Rep. VanDeaver has scheduled his biennial Fall Listening Tour of meetings in October across House District 1. These meetings give Rep. VanDeaver the chance to hear directly from constituents about important issues they feel should be considered during next year's legislative session. These small group discussions have proved invaluable to Rep. VanDeaver over the years when constituents take the time to talk about their

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concerns before a legislative session. As a result of these discussions, he has filed and passed bills as a direct result of input from House District 1 constituents. He looks forward to seeing as many constituents as possible at these meetings in October.

Dates, times and locations for this fall's Listening Tour are as scheduled below:

Wednesday - October 12:

- **2 - 3:30 p.m.** - Red River County - The I&I Building, 229 North Walnut Street, Clarksville 75426
- **5:30 - 7 p.m.** - Lamar County - Paris Junior College, Bobby R. Walters Workforce Training Center, 2400 Clarksville Street, Paris 75460

Thursday - October 13:

- **12:30 - 2 p.m.** - Cass & Morris counties - Historic Cass County Courthouse, Second Floor Courtroom, 100 E. Houston Street, Linden 75563
- **5:30 - 7 p.m.** - Bowie County - Texarkana College, Truman Arnold Building, 2nd Floor, Patman Room; 2500 North Robinson Road, Texarkana 75599

Red River Army Depot (RRAD). The September issue of *Fiscal Notes*, a publication of the Texas Comptroller's office highlights the many contributions of the state's 14 military bases. The article, *Economic Impact of US Military in Texas*, shares information about each of these US Department of Defense bases and their unique niche in our country's military defenses and contributions to their local economy through direct employment of military and civilian personnel and the bases' infrastructure. These 14 bases cover over 1.4 million acres in Texas. Here is a link:

<https://comptroller.texas.gov/economy/fiscal-notes/2022/sep/military.php>. The report states that RRAD, which covers over 15,000 acres in Bowie County, contributed at least \$1.3 billion to the Texas economy in 2021. Here is a link to RRAD-specific data and information: <https://comptroller.texas.gov/economy/economic-data/military/2021/rr-army-depot.php>.

Texas Silver-Haired Legislature (TSHL). In 1984, the Texas Board on Aging adopted a resolution to establish the TSHL, and in 1985, the Texas Legislature adopted Senate Concurrent Resolution 37 to create this body to research issues important to and advocate on



TSHL Speaker Rhonda Rogers (Paris) and Rep. VanDeaver at his Capitol office.

behalf of older Texans. The current Speaker of the TSHL is Ms. Rhonda Rogers from Paris. In

May 2022, the group adopted 54 resolutions requesting action by the 88th legislature in 2023. Some of its most important issues for consideration include: increasing the personal needs allowance for Medicaid residents in nursing homes; authorizing a cost-of-living adjustment for retirees of the Teacher Retirement System of Texas; providing a 13th-month annuity payment for retirees of the Employees Retirement System of Texas; improving access to health care in rural Texas; improving the readability of the vote-by-mail application and documentation to reduce the rejection rate; and providing a grandparent

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conservatorship and support bill. These and many other resolutions adopted by the TSHL could greatly improve the lives of older Texans. Here is a link for more information: <https://www.tshl.org/>. Speaker Rogers visited Rep. VanDeaver's Capitol office this month as she delivered the group's legislative report. She encouraged older Texans to get involved with this effort to highlight important issues to the attention of the Texas Legislature so they can enact laws and appropriate funds to make a real difference. Thanks for all your hard work, Speaker Rogers!

Effects of ongoing drought & available federal & state resources.

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) has designated 174 Texas counties as natural disaster areas due to the ongoing drought this year. All counties in House District 1 are included in this designation and are eligible for possible assistance from the agency. This designation allows the USDA to extend emergency credit to producers who are recovering from natural disasters with their emergency loans. Here is a link to information about these emergency farm loans:

<https://www.fsa.usda.gov/programs-and-services/farm-loan-programs/emergency-farm-loans/index>.

In addition to these emergency loans, the Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA) also has programs available to help Texas farmers and ranchers. Here is a link to TDA's STAR Fund: <https://www.texasagriculture.gov/Home/Production-Agriculture/Disaster-Assistance/STAR-Fund/fbclid/IwAR3TtjAG-NPiRxVMBAHwyEwSXFy8Zu8X3ouUIEkdipzS33RUF8TQzZushbg>.

Around the Capitol. Texas Secretary of State urges Texans to register to vote. Secretary of State John Scott, appointed last year by Governor Greg Abbott, is urging all eligible Texans to register to vote for the upcoming November general election by the fast-approaching October 11th deadline. At a recent press conference, Secretary Scott provided important information about registering and voting in Texas. You are eligible to register as long as you are:

- A United States citizen;
- A resident of the county where you submit your voter registration application;
- At least 18 years old on Election Day.
- Not a convicted felon (you may be eligible to vote if you have completed your sentence, probation, and parole); and
- Not been declared by a court exercising probate jurisdiction to be either totally mentally incapacitated or partially mentally incapacitated without the right to vote.

Secretary Scott also gave information about completing the application. If you are a new voter in Texas, you have several options:

- Register to vote when obtaining a [Texas Driver License](#) or [Texas ID card](#) at the Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS);
- [Registering to vote online when renewing, replacing or updating your Texas Driver License or Texas ID card](#); or
- Complete, sign and send a [voter registration application](#) to your [county voter registrar](#).

If you are already registered to vote and simply need to update information - such as your address, name or identification number(s) - you [can do so online at Texas.gov](https://www.texas.gov).

Remember that this year's General Election Day is Tuesday, November 8. Early voting in Texas runs from Monday, October 24, through Friday, November 4.

Legislative committees work to finish efforts on interim charges. There have been many meetings of legislative committees since the spring and especially this month as they try to finish their "homework" assigned earlier this year by House Speaker, the Honorable Dade Phelan. Rep. VanDeaver has traveled to Austin for several meetings this month of the House Committee on Appropriations and the House Committee on Public Education. These two major committees traditionally have very heavy work assignments and this year was no exception. Some of the interim charges these committees have studied include: funding for border security; funding to air condition state correctional facilities especially for vulnerable populations; reviewing how school districts and the Texas Education Agency (TEA) have used federal Coronavirus Relief Funds; studying long-term capital needs of the Texas Parks & Wildlife Department; monitoring efforts of the Department of Family & Protective Service relating to foster care capacity; examining causes for chronic truancy; studying the effects of COVID-19 on student learning loss and ways to overcome this loss; examining impact of COVID-19 on students' mental health and ways

to provide mental health services to help students; studying teacher workforce challenges and ways to recruit, prepare and retain high-quality educators; and making recommendations to ensure career and technical education programs, partnerships and other opportunities are more accessible.

There are almost 40 individual House Committees and each one was given multiple interim charges by Speaker Phelan to make recommendations for the 88th session when it convenes next year. Legislators use the interim to delve more deeply into issues by listening to hours of public testimony and expert witnesses. Many of the bills filed each session have their basis in the interim committee work and study done each even-numbered year. Here is a link to House Committees for more information: <https://house.texas.gov/committees/>.

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. If you call either office and no one answers, please leave a voice mail so someone can return your call. There is currently only one person staffing each office, and they may be on the phone helping someone else or at a meeting when you call so it is critically important for you to leave a message.