



# State Representative Gary VanDeaver

February 2023 E-Newsletter



## 88th Legislature Report - House District 1 Bowie | Cass | Lamar | Morris | Red River

### District Update



*The official opening of the McCulloch Industrial Technology Center on 02/10/23.  
Photo: Texarkana College*

**TC opens a new training facility.** Texarkana College (TC) recently opened its new training facility for Electrical Technology and Heating, Ventilation, and Air Conditioning (HVAC) programs in the new McCulloch Industrial Technology Center. This new 15,000-square-foot building provides a state-of-the-art training facility that replicates the equipment used in today's residential, commercial, and industrial construction projects. The McCulloch family, the owners of Wholesale Electric Supply Company, Inc., donated funds to build the facility and helped provide training equipment for students. Thank you to the McCullough family for their generous donations and support.



*Rep. VanDeaver with students and faculty of Pleasant Grove High School*

**Rep. VanDeaver visits Pleasant Grove High School.** I was invited to address students at Pleasant Grove High School to talk about government. It is always an honor to witness students' bright curiosity and help them understand the importance of education and government.

**TxDOT announces record \$100 Billion 10-year transportation plan.** TxDOT recently announced a record 10-year, \$100 billion statewide roadway construction plan to increase the number of transportation projects to improve congestion, maintain roadways, and increase safety across Texas. The proposed 2024 Unified Transportation Program (UTP) is estimated to be \$15 billion more than last year's plan due to increased revenue from the state.

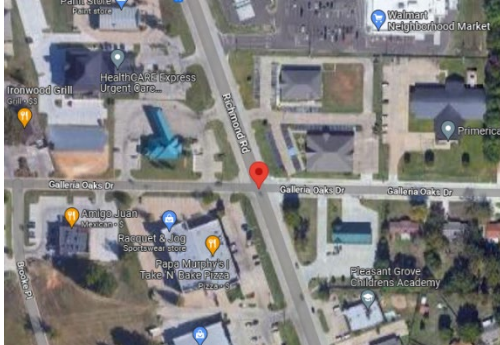
The nine-county Atlanta District of TxDOT has seven projects listed in the 2023 UTP. The projects have been approved for development because they either will reduce traffic congestion, connect state roads, or have strategic importance, such as for military and disaster deployment. Here is a list of these projects, projected completion timeline, and cost:

- Bridge replacement on Farm to Market Road 3419 over Interstate 30 in Red Lick, FY 2027-2032 (\$12,659,555).
- Several widening projects along U.S. 82 between DeKalb and New Boston for FY 2023-2026:
  - 0.1 miles west of 259 to FM 992 (\$17,653,439);
  - FM 992 to FM 1840 (\$6,959,679);
  - 1840 to Texas Highway 98 (\$26,088,732); and

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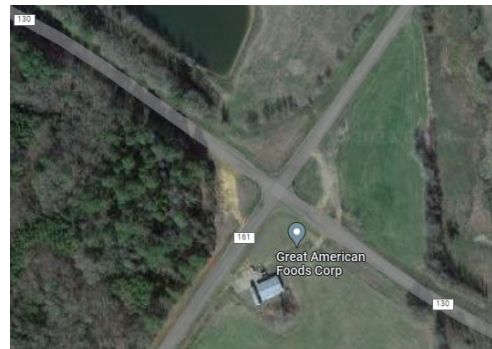
- 0.1 miles west of County Road 3403 to 0.1 miles west of U.S. Highway 259 (\$45,299,999).
- State Line rehabilitation, 0.2 miles south of Interstate 30 to U.S. Highway 67, FY 2023-2026 (\$15,105,999).

More information on the UTP projects is available [here](#).



*Intersection of Galleria Oaks Drive & Richmond Road, Texarkana.*

**TxDOT announces Texarkana intersection to receive new traffic signal.** The intersection of Galleria Oaks and Richmond Road is scheduled to receive a new traffic signal this summer, according to TxDOT. The city worked with TxDOT on the project to assist motorists turning left onto Richmond Road from Galleria Oaks during busier times of the day. Work is scheduled to begin in May and take about four months to complete.



*The intersection of Fm 161 and FM 130*

**TxDOT announces Rural Cass County intersection to become a four-way stop.** The intersection of Farm to Market Roads 130 and 161 will become a four-way stop beginning Wednesday, March 1. Previously, only traffic on FM 130 had to stop. Stop signs, pavement markings, and warning signs will be placed on FM 161. The stop signs will have flashing lights to help catch drivers' attention, and the stop ahead signs have been doubled in each direction. Motorists traveling through the intersection are advised to use extreme caution as drivers adjust to the new traffic pattern. Anyone having questions about the construction work or detour route can contact the TxDOT Atlanta District Traffic Office at 903-799-1480.

**RISD receives a \$495K grant from the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC).** Redwater ISD received a grant worth nearly \$495K from the Career and Technical Education Program division of the

TWC. The district used the funds to purchase new welding tools and remodel and expand the welding shop. The new equipment will allow training for students wishing to be future welders. RISD's superintendent, Dr. Kelly Burns said the school district is thrilled with the grant's possibilities.

## State Update

**Bill filing continues.** I have filed seven additional bills since last month for a total of 16 House bills filed so far. Here is the link to Texas Legislature Online where you can follow a bill's progress, watch committee hearings and see what is happening on the floor of the Texas House and Senate:

<https://capitol.texas.gov/> Here is information about these bills:

1. [HB 2456](#) - Relating to the employment of honorably retired peace officers as school district security personnel and the applicability to those officers of certain law governing private security.
2. [HB 2558](#) - Relating to the authority of the TexAmericas Center.
3. [HB 2710](#) - Relating to school district purchasing of and contracting for goods and services.
4. [HB 2725](#) - Relating to truancy; increasing a criminal penalty.
5. [HB 2808](#) - Relating to the finality of public school accountability determinations.

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6. [HB 3009](#) – Relating to the health care providers authorized to examine a person to determine whether the person is incapacitated for purposes of certain guardianship proceedings.
7. [HB 8](#) - Relating to the administration, coordination, and support of public higher education, including the public junior college state finance program and an Advanced Career and Education (ACE) scholarship program for students enrolled in dual credit courses.



*Rep. VanDeaver during the Texas Commission on Community College. Photo: House video/audio*

**Comments on HB 8.** I was proud to file **House Bill 8** on February 28, and I look forward to working with my colleagues in the House and Senate to enact the first significant change in 50 years to the funding structure of our public junior colleges. House Bill 8 builds on the work of the Texas Commission on Community College Finance that met during the recent interim doing a deep dive into not only how the colleges function but also how to strengthen their role in workforce education in Texas. House Bill 8 reflects the commission's recommendation that funding for the colleges focus on measurable student outcomes aligned with state and regional workforce needs.

Serving on the commission was very rewarding, and I look forward to seeing that HB 8 is passed into law so that Texas's economic growth continues, and that Texans are prepared with the credentials and skills for rewarding careers allowing them to prosper and take care of their families

**Rep. VanDeaver appointed to House Committees.** Last month, Texas House Speaker Dade Phelan appointed members to serve on House Committees this session. I was pleased to be reappointed to House Committee on Appropriations, which I have served on since my first term in 2015. The chair of this committee, the Honorable Dr. Greg Bonnen, appointed me to serve as the chair of the Article III subcommittee that oversees the development of budget recommendations for education in Texas.

I was also appointed to serve on the House Committee on Pensions, Investments, and Financial Services that has jurisdiction over the state's banking system including credit unions, savings and loan associations, bonded indebtedness, privacy, identity theft, and issues relating to the benefits of the state's public retirement systems including the Teacher Retirement System (TRS) and the Employees Retirement System of Texas (ERS).

"I want to thank Speaker Phelan for showing continued confidence in me with the committee assignments this session. As a member of the House Committee on Appropriations, we have a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to wisely use the state's historic \$33 billion budget surplus in a thoughtful, conservative way to make the lives of Texans not only better today, but also better tomorrow. Not only will we look at ways to lower Texan's property tax burdens, but we'll also look to see where these funds can address long-delayed infrastructure needs."

One of the major issues facing the legislature this session is the need for a cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) for retired school employees. The committees that I have been appointed to will play key roles in delivering a COLA for these former school employees who worked for years at low wages with the promise of a comfortable retirement. "As a former superintendent and now as a legislator, I have heard many heart-wrenching stories from retirees who have to choose between buying food or medicine; paying rent vs. paying insurance premiums. Hardworking Texans should not have to make such choices. I hope the legislature can make much-needed changes this session to help people."

**Texas Mental Health Creative Arts Contest Seeking Entries.** The Health and Human Services Center (HHSC) has shared information with my office about the 2023 Texas Mental Health Creative Arts

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Contest. It is accepting entries, until March 10, across all age groups for original artwork, writing, and photography. The contest aims to bring attention to Mental Health Awareness Month in May and to help fight mental health stigma through the contest's theme: "Why Does Mental Health Matter to You"? The contest is hosted by HHSC, the Texas System of Care, and the Texas Institute for Excellence in Mental Health at The University of Texas at Austin.

"One of the goals of this art contest is to normalize and promote that your mental health is just as important as your physical health," said Kaylah Topasna, Texas System of Care youth engagement specialist in the HHSC Office of Mental Health Coordination. "Creativity has been proven to increase positive emotions, lessen depressive symptoms, reduce stress, decrease anxiety and even improve immune system functioning." The art contest aims to normalize the discussion of mental health while promoting connection, education, awareness and empowerment. For many participants, it is an opportunity to express complex emotions through creative outlets.

Submissions will be judged on originality, creativity and how well they express the contest theme. Winners from each category and age group will receive prizes and have their work displayed and published on the [Texas Mental Health Creative Arts Contest website](#). The contest, first held in 2013, received over 600 submissions in 2022. For more information, including past winners, rules and how to submit, [visit the Texas Mental Health Creative Arts Contest website](#).

**THECB releases free college and career planning tool for families.** The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) has shared with my office a new tool called [Tomorrow Ready Texas](#) to help parents and guardians support their teens with college and career planning. The tool provides Texas families with the resources they need to support their child's success after high school – in college, a career, or military service.

Tomorrow Ready Texas includes step-by-step action plans for families with teens in 8th through 12th grade. Families can customize these plans to match their child's specific interests and goals and stay on track with deadlines, milestones, and career goals. The free resource also includes specific information for families of students with disabilities. Parents who sign up for a free account gain easy, one-stop access to expert advice, articles, reminders, and checklists, as well as information about upcoming deadlines for applications, financial aid, and course selection. Tomorrow Ready Texas was developed by Texas OnCourse, THECB's college and career planning initiative for counselors and advisors, in collaboration with the Texas Workforce Commission.

## Contact Information

**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 or the Capitol office if there is anything we can do to help you. Follow me on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram for more updates!

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