



State Representative  
**Gary VanDeaver**  
April 2023 E-Newsletter



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

**District Update**



*Douglassville VFD with their new firetruck.*

**Douglassville Volunteer Fire Department (VFD) gets a new firetruck.**

After many years, the Douglassville VFD received a grant of over \$200,000 from the Texas Forest Service's Rural Volunteer Fire Department Assistance Program. These funds helped the department purchase a new firetruck that will help protect people and property in Cass County.

Representative VanDeaver said: "Congratulations to the community and department for receiving this grant from the Texas Forest Service that works hard every day trying to serve Texans. The new brush truck will

pay dividends for decades to come so the volunteer first responders can protect lives and property in this area."

**TxDOT urges Texans to pay attention while driving.** TxDOT recently informed my office that distracted driving is on the rise in Texas, and it is urging all Texans to pay attention on the road. Distracted driving deaths increased by 10 percent in 2022. Approximately one of every six crashes on Texas roadways last year was attributed to distracted driving. In the Atlanta District in 2022, there were 989 crashes that involved distracted driving, resulting in five deaths and 45 serious injuries. The Atlanta District includes Bowie, Cass, Camp, Harrison, Morris, Panola and Titus counties. Texting while driving is not only incredibly dangerous, but it is also a crime. Since September 1, 2017, it has been illegal to read, write or send a text while driving in Texas, and violators can face a fine of up to \$200.

Distracted driving crashes are 100 percent preventable. TxDOT offers these tips to help drivers steer clear of a potentially deadly situation:

- Always give driving your full attention—any distraction is dangerous.
- Put your phone away, turn it off or use an app or phone settings to block texts and calls while driving.
- Pull off the road entirely and come to a complete stop before you use your phone.
- Tell friends, family and coworkers you won't respond to texts or calls while driving.
- Avoid eating or drinking until you are parked.

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TxDOT's "Talk. Text. Crash." distracted driving awareness campaign is a key component of #EndTheStreakTX, a broader social media and word-of-mouth effort that encourages drivers to make safer choices while behind the wheel to help end the streak of daily deaths. November 7, 2000 was the last deathless day on Texas roadways.

**New sidewalks coming to New Boston.** According to TxDOT, new sidewalks are being constructed along Elm Street from Tapp Park to Front Street and along Lion Drive from College Street to Elm Street. A pedestrian bridge will be constructed at the creek crossing on the North side of Tapp Park. According to the contractor, crews will begin construction on Elm Street at Tapp Park, and work will occur between 7 a.m. and 6 p.m. Monday through Friday. Workers may also be present on some Saturdays.

The sidewalks will make the area around New Boston High School, Tapp Park and downtown more pedestrian-friendly and compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act. Though federal money is providing most of the funds for the construction of the sidewalks, TxDOT is overseeing the construction work according to Texarkana Area Engineer Tommy Bruce. The city of New Boston contributed a 20 percent match to receive funding for the project. Work is expected to last up to seven months, but the schedule is subject to change due to operational factors or inclement weather. The contractor will use roadway detours as needed during various phases of construction. Motorists and pedestrians are asked to obey warning signs and watch for workers in the area.



**Texas Historical Commission (THC) announces its *Living Texas History Week*.** The THC has announced that May 7 - 13 is this year's *Living Texas History Week* where Texans can visit locations around the state to learn more about the state's fascinating history. There are many locations with historic homes, inns, forts and other

interesting sites so today's Texans will know how their ancestors lived and loved Texas. According to the THC announcement, "There are tours and hands-on activities that will demonstrate how Texans of the past spent their daily lives at these historic sites." One of the sites featured during this week of Texas history is the Sam Bell Maxey House State Historic Site in Paris. Here is a link for more information from the THC website: [Texas Historical Commission](#)



*Rep. VanDeaver with Maud ISD superintendent.*

**Maud ISD superintendent testifies on behalf of HB 2808.**

I appreciate Dr. Chris Bradshaw, superintendent of Maud ISD, coming to the Capitol earlier this month as I laid out HB 2808 before the House Committee on Public Education. This bill relates to the finality of public school accountability determinations. Schools are graded on performance with a letter grade identical to a student taking a quiz. The issue that HB 2808 seeks to resolve is that a school's letter grade can change during the school year. This is equivalent to a student receiving a grade on a quiz one week and the next week, the teacher decides to change that grade. Superintendent Bradshaw provided the committee

with a real-life example of what happens when TEA decides to make changes without involving or informing school officials. HB 2808 is scheduled for floor debate before the House of Representatives on Friday, April 28.

**Update on Marvin Nicholas Reservoir.** During the floor debate on HB 1565, which is the "sunset" bill for the Texas Water Development Board (TWDB), I offered an amendment that required the executive administrator of the TWDB to conduct a feasibility study about constructing the Marvin Nichols Reservoir. The study would have reviewed associated costs, implementation timeline, land acquisition considerations and the economic impact of the construction of the reservoir. The construction of this reservoir will flood thousands of acres of agricultural land and hardwood forest, which is essential to the timber industry. This project will detrimentally affect the region's land and agriculture businesses and disrupt the lives of rural Northeast Texans. Unfortunately, my amendment requiring the feasibility study was tabled and not added to the bill that is now before the Senate for consideration. I have been communicating with my Senate colleagues about these concerns and will continue to do so.



*Rep. VanDeaver with members of the DeKalb ISD community.*

**DeKalb ISD visits the Capitol.** Recently, school officials from DeKalb ISD visited my Capitol office to discuss legislative concerns and issues. Talking with constituents from House District 1 is important so I can continue representing their interests and serving their needs to the best of my abilities.

## State Update



**Texas Water Development Board (TWDB) grant application deadline.** The TWDB recently informed my office about its Lead Service Line Replacement Program which has a May 23 application deadline. To be eligible for financial assistance, projects must be a lead service line replacement project or associated activities directly related to the identification (including service line inventories), planning, designing and replacing lead service lines. Any project funded under this appropriation involving the replacement of a lead service line must replace the entire lead service line, not just a portion unless a portion has already been replaced or is concurrently being replaced with another funding source. Eligible applicants for this grant include existing community Public Water Systems (PWSs) such as political subdivisions, nonprofit water supply corporations and privately-owned community water systems; non-profit, non-community public water systems; and state agencies. Here is a link for more information: [Lead Service Line Replacement Program](#).

**Update on the Texas Legislature.** The legislature has entered its last quarter with less than five weeks to go until "sine die," which in Latin means "without day." Sine die is the last day of the 140-day regular session, and the legislature must adjourn even if work remains to be done. The



governor, and only the governor, can call lawmakers back to work for a 30-day special session. If a special session is called, the governor sets its agenda and lawmakers can only pass bills on issues that are on the governor's "call." There is no limit on the number of special sessions that can be called by the governor. Stay tuned!

This session, House members filed 5,388 bills, while Senators filed 2,708 bills for a total of 8,316 bills filed. Most bills will not receive a committee hearing and will die when the session ends. On average, approximately a quarter of all the bills filed will become law.

As the session continues, you can track important events and watch committee hearings in [Texas Legislature Online](#). This website lets you watch live committee meetings and live business in both Chambers, learn about the legislative process and much more.



*Representative VanDeaver voting on House Bill 1.  
Photo: House Photography.*

**The budget.** The only piece of legislation required by the state constitution to pass each session is the state budget for the next biennium (two-year period). The constitution also requires that the comptroller of public accounts issue the Biennial Revenue Estimate (BRE) prior to the start of each session so that lawmakers will know how much revenue is available for the next budget. Additionally, the constitution requires our state budget to be balanced; prohibits deficit spending and complies with adopted spending limits.

Both Chambers adopt their own versions of the budget, and then a 10-member conference committee works out the differences. After nearly 12 hours of debate, the House passed HB 1, the \$302.7 billion budget to fund the state for the next two years. I am pleased to be one of the appointed House conferees this session and look forward to working with my colleagues to adopt a responsible, conservative budget that meets the needs of our growing state. The House version of the budget is in HB 1 found at this link: [House Bill 1](#).

Members of the HB 1 conference committee are:

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|------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| • Chair Greg Bonnen - Friendswood  | Vice-chair Joan Huffman - Houston    |
| • Rep. Mary Gonzalez - El Paso     | Sen. Robert Nichols - Jacksonville   |
| • Rep. Jacey Jetton - Houston      | Sen. Lois Kolkhorst - Brenham        |
| • Rep. Gary VanDeaver - New Boston | Sen. Brandon Creighton - Conroe      |
| • Rep. Armando Walle - Houston     | Sen. Charles Schwertner - Georgetown |

Once the legislature adopts the budget and before it is signed by the governor, it is sent to the comptroller for review to ensure that the budget balances with enough revenue coming in to fund each of the items in the approximate 1000-page bill. This budget reflects our conservative priorities and ensures our state's safer and more prosperous future. Here is a breakdown of the budget adopted by the House of Representatives:

- \$17.5 billion for property tax cuts.
- \$5 billion in new funding for schools.

- \$4.6 billion for border security.
- \$80 million to increase funding for the Alternatives to Abortion program.
- \$1.6 billion in additional funds for school safety
- \$3800 pay raise for teachers
- \$3.5 billion for cost-of-living pension increases for retired teachers.

After the conference committee has agreed on a version of the appropriations bill, it sends the bill back to both Chambers for a final up-or-down vote. The budget is one of the last bills adopted before the legislature adjourns.

**HB 8 update.** Earlier this month, HB 8 unanimously passed the House and is now in the Senate awaiting action. HB 8 makes historic changes in the community college finance system to distribute funding on measurable outcomes of their students and provide a guaranteed yield level of funding to help the smaller and rural colleges. HB 8 also recognizes the importance of non-credit courses and certifications to help Texans be the skilled workforce needed in so many of today's and tomorrow's career fields. The components in HB 8 are the result of the work of the Texas Commission on Community College Finance which worked for over a year studying how Texas community colleges operate. I was a member of the commission and am honored to be the author of HB 8.

**House considers priority bills.** Early in the session, House Speaker Dade Phelan identified bills that are a priority for the House to pass. This month, many of these bills have been acted upon by the House and sent to the Senate for further action. The priority bills for the House included issues ranging from school safety, broadband infrastructure, mental health, educator retention and more. The following are a few of these priority bills:

#### ***House Bill 3 – School Safety***

- Ensures proper school safety oversight from the Texas Education Agency and the Texas School Safety Center. It accomplishes this by aligning their roles and responsibilities to provide support and enforcement of school safety rules
- Requires at least one-armed security officer on every school campus. The bill also invests an annual \$15,000 into every campus for school safety measures.

#### ***House Bill 9 – Investing in Texas Broadband***

- Establishes the Texas Broadband Infrastructure Fund. This new fund seeks to expand the state's framework for improving broadband connectivity.
- Texas voters will need to approve the \$5 billion House Joint Resolution 125 to enact this bill.

#### ***House Bill 11 – Investing in Texas Teachers***

- Prioritizes Texas teachers by allocating over \$500 million for recruitment and retention strategies, including a pay increase for teachers.
- HB 11 further supports teachers by providing free public-school pre-kindergarten for children of Texas teachers, increasing flexibility for those educators in need of child care.

***House Bill 900 – The Reader Act***

- The bill prohibits Texas public school libraries from possessing, acquiring and purchasing explicit material for their shelves.
- Requires book vendors to be held accountable for selling explicit content to schools. Vendors will also be required to rate the content of all books they sell to school districts.

## 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!

**District Office**  
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(512) 463 - 0692

**State Representative Gary  
VanDeaver**  
[Email Gary](mailto:gary.vandeaver@legis.state.tx.us)

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### Useful State Government Websites

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Governor of Texas . . . . . [www.gov.texas.gov](http://www.gov.texas.gov)  
Texas Senate . . . . . [www.senate.texas.gov](http://www.senate.texas.gov)  
Texas House of Representatives . . . . . [www.house.texas.gov](http://www.house.texas.gov)  
State of Texas . . . . . [www.texas.gov](http://www.texas.gov)  
Texas Legislature Online . . . . . [www.capitol.texas.gov](http://www.capitol.texas.gov)  
Office of the Attorney General . . . [www.texasattorneygeneral.gov](http://www.texasattorneygeneral.gov)  
Health & Human Services Commission . . [www.hhs.texas.gov](http://www.hhs.texas.gov)  
Medicaid, Food Stamps, & TANF . . [www.yourtexasbenefits.com](http://www.yourtexasbenefits.com)  
Child/Elder Abuse Reporting . . . . . [www.txabusehotline.org](http://www.txabusehotline.org)

Texas 2-1-1 (United Way) . . . . . [www.211.org](http://www.211.org)  
Texas Education Agency . . . . . [www.tea.texas.gov](http://www.tea.texas.gov)  
Texas Department of Motor Vehicles . . . . . [www.txdmv.gov](http://www.txdmv.gov)  
Texas Department of Transportation . . . . . [www.txdot.gov](http://www.txdot.gov)  
Texas Department of Public Safety . . . . . [www.dps.texas.gov](http://www.dps.texas.gov)  
Texas Department of Insurance . . . . . [www.tdi.texas.gov](http://www.tdi.texas.gov)  
Texas Parks & Wildlife Department . . . . . [www.tpwd.texas.gov](http://www.tpwd.texas.gov)  
Texas Workforce Commission . . . . . [www.twc.texas.gov](http://www.twc.texas.gov)  
Texas Veterans Commission . . . . . [www.tvc.texas.gov](http://www.tvc.texas.gov)

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