



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



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

**District Update**



*Rep. VanDeaver at Texarkana College for the TWC check presentation awards ceremony.  
Photo: Dori Ballard, Texarkana College.*

***Education & workforce efforts recognized.*** Earlier this month, Rep. VanDeaver spoke at Texarkana College during the presentation by the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) when it recently awarded JET Grants to area schools for their workforce training programs targeting high-demand occupations in our region. The Jobs and Education for Texans Grant Program (JET Program) provides grants to awardees to purchase and install equipment for career and technical education (CTE) courses or programs that lead to a license, certificate or post-secondary degree in a high-demand occupation. The high-demand occupations are determined in consultation with the Local Workforce Development Board to ensure the educational programs match-up with regional workforce needs. TWC

Commissioner Albert Trevino III made over \$1.4 million in grant presentations to: Redwater ISD; Texarkana College; Harts Bluff ISD and partner Northeast Texas Community College; Marshall ISD along with its partner Texas State Technical College; Waskom ISD and its partner Kilgore College; and Winnsboro ISD and partner Northeast Texas Community College. Rep. VanDeaver expressed appreciation and congratulations to the TWC, the school districts and their higher education partners in working on the JET Program to be able to offer even more skills and training opportunities that match the local workforce needs so that students are ready for a fulfilling career that can support their families and futures.

***Help keep kids safe in school zones.*** Now that schools are back in session, drivers and pedestrians need to be on high alert for increased traffic and the potential for accidents. The Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) reminds us that school zones can be a chaotic place with children dashing in and out of traffic, and unfortunately, crashes can and do happen. In 2022, there were 746 traffic crashes in Texas school zones, resulting in 23 serious injuries. The most common causes were driver inattention, speeding and failure to yield the right of way.

There were also seven people killed and 51 seriously injured last year in the 2,305 crashes involving a Texas school bus. Driver inattention and speed were also the top factors in those crashes. TxDOT urges drivers to slow down, pay attention and follow all traffic laws to keep children safe and avoid costly fines and tickets.

***TxDOT offers these tips for driving in school zones:***

- Be aware that traffic patterns around schools may have changed since last school year.
- Stay alert and put your phone away. Using a handheld electronic device while driving in an active school zone is against the law.
- Stop and yield for people in crosswalks.
- Always obey school zone speed limit signs. Remember, traffic fines increase in school zones.
- Drop off and pick up your children in your school's designated areas, not the middle of the street.
- Keep an eye on children gathered at bus stops.
- Watch for children who might dart across the street or between vehicles.
- Follow at a safe distance, keeping in mind that school buses make frequent stops.

***Tips for drivers sharing the road with school buses:***

- Follow at a safe distance, keeping in mind that school buses make frequent stops.
- Always stay alert for children around buses and remember that they may not always look for vehicles before crossing the street.
- Stop for flashing red lights or a stop sign on a school bus, regardless of which direction you are headed. Continue your trip once the bus has moved, the flashing lights stop flashing or the bus driver signals it is okay to pass.
- Violations can lead to a fine of up to \$1,250 for a first offense.

***Tips for children walking or biking to school:***

- Use sidewalks. If there is not a sidewalk, walk on the left side of the street, facing traffic.
- Cross the street only at intersections or marked crosswalks. Look left, right and left again before proceeding.
- Always obey crossing guards.
- Make eye contact with drivers before crossing the street. Never assume a driver sees you.
- Look for traffic when stepping off a bus or from behind parked vehicles.
- Always wear a helmet when riding a bicycle.
- Do not be distracted by electronic devices that take your eyes and ears off the road.
- Follow all traffic rules, signs and signals.

Rep. VanDeaver urges parents to frequently talk with their children about these safety tips when they are going to and from their school campuses every day. We all need to do what we can to ensure the safety of our children!

## State Update

***Legislative activities.*** This month, for the first time since January 2023, the legislature is not in either a regular or special session. The regular session adjourned on May 29, but the governor

immediately called back-to-back special sessions so the legislature could continue its work to deliver on promised results for Texans. In mid-July, the legislature agreed to a legislative package delivering property tax cuts for homeowners and businesses. Texas voters also get to weigh-in on the proposed property tax cuts during the constitutional amendment election this November. The governor is expected to call another special session later this fall, probably in October, to focus on school vouchers and other education-related issues.



*Rep. VanDeaver working in the House Chamber during session. Photo: House Photography.*

***US-Mexico border visit.*** Earlier this month, Rep. VanDeaver along with other House members and legislative staff accompanied DPS officials to the Texas- Mexico border at Eagle Pass. There has been so much hype, fake news and misinformation about what is really happening at the border that Rep. VanDeaver personally made the trip to see what is happening for himself. This session, the legislature

appropriated \$5.1 billion for Operation Lone Star during the 2024-25 biennium, which is an \$800 million increase in funding from the current state budget. Numerous state agencies including the governor's office, Texas Military Department, Department of Public Safety and the Department of State Health Services will receive these funds for their role in addressing the many challenges at the border.



*Rep. VanDeaver standing beside the Rio Grande River near Eagle Pass. Photo: DPS.*

***Proposed constitutional amendments.*** The legislature approved 14 joint resolutions during the regular and special sessions that will be on the November 7, General Election ballot. Many of you may have already received the constitutional amendment newsletter recently sent to residents of House District 1, and if you have not yet received the hardcopy newsletter, it should soon be coming to your mailbox.

The Texas Legislative Council prepared an in-depth summary of the above proposed changes to the state's constitution originally adopted in 1876 and amended over 500 times in the last 147 years. This summary includes references to the joint resolution, a detailed summary and comments by supporters and opponents and can be found on the TLC website at:

[https://tlc.texas.gov/docs/amendments/analyses23\\_condensed.pdf](https://tlc.texas.gov/docs/amendments/analyses23_condensed.pdf).

***Planning to vote?*** If you plan to vote on these propositions this November or any upcoming elections, you must be registered to vote and have an approved form of identification. The deadline to register to vote this November is Tuesday, October 10. Here is a link to the Secretary of State's website for more voter-related information: <https://www.votetexas.gov/register-to-vote/update-voter-registration.html>.

***DPS driver's license offices closed Friday – September 1.*** DPS announced this week that its Driver License Division will be updating their system over the upcoming Labor Day weekend

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and all offices across the state and call center will be closed. Additionally, customers will not be able to use their online system during this system update. Offices will reopen and resume normal operations on Tuesday, September 5, 2023, after the Labor Day holiday.

***Texas Veterans Commission approves \$30 million grant program.*** Earlier this month, the Texas Veterans Commission approved approximately \$30 million in funding for its Fund for Veterans' Assistance (FVA) grant program. The FVA awards reimbursement grants to eligible organizations, local governmental agencies and Veterans Service Organizations that provide direct services to veterans and their families. Grant applications will open October 2, 2023, and close December 4, 2023. If interested in applying or need more information about these grants, here is a link for more information: <https://www.tvc.texas.gov/grants/>. Veterans who need assistance can find the organizations providing help in their area at the link to the [FVA Directory](#). Organizations and services listed in the directory receive support from the FVA grants.

***Labor Day history.*** What began as individual efforts across various US cities and states in the 1880s to acknowledge and show appreciation for the tremendous contributions by American workers, the US Congress adopted an act on June 28, 1894, making the first Monday in September "Labor Day." Our jobs, workforce and expectations have changed dramatically over the last 129 years, but the US workers are still the lifeblood of our economy that contribute to our country's way of life and economic well-being. We would not be where we are as a state and country without the daily contributions and blood, sweat and tears of our workforce. Take a moment this Labor Day (Monday, September 4) to consider your contributions in making us the society we are and be proud of your labors. Thank you for a job well done!

## 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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Austin, Texas 78768-2910  
(512) 463 - 0692

**Rep. VanDeaver**  
[Email Gary](#)

## Useful Government Websites

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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