



State Representative
Gary VanDeaver
November 2023 E-Newsletter



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

District Update



Comments on Marvin Nichols Reservoir due December 1. Earlier this fall, my office announced that the Texas Water Development Board (TWDB) was charged with conducting a feasibility study about the Marvin Nichols Reservoir and to submit its findings to the legislature by January 5, 2025. The TWDB opened a “request for information” period until December 1, so that interested parties can submit their comments for consideration as a part of this study. The TWDB is particularly interested in hearing from the public on these key issues: implementation timeline; associated costs; land acquisition considerations and the economic impact. Be sure to email your input and any supporting documentation no later than December 1, 2023, to: feasibility@twdb.texas.gov. If you are concerned about how Marvin Nichols will impact NE Texas, please do not miss your chance to submit information by the deadline. Here is a link for more information: <https://www.twdb.texas.gov/waterplanning/rwp/feasibility/index.asp>.



House District 1 – Christmas ornament. I want to thank local artist, Ms. Judy Jones from Wake Village, for creating this year’s ornament for the Christmas tree set up in the House Chamber. Her design captures beautiful trees being dusted with snowfall that sets a peaceful tone for the upcoming Christmas season. Ms. Jones is a talented artist, and I appreciate her creating this year’s ornament for HD 1.

Area bands perform well at state. Several marching bands from local high schools have gone above just performing before the Friday-night lights this fall with their successful performances in the UIL-state marching band contests. The UIL has a long and exciting history of educational excellence through competition and these participants are adding to that tradition.

- **Rivercrest High School Rebel Regiment Band** won First Place in the 2A contest.
- **Clarksville High School Tiger Band** won Second Place in the 2A contest.
- **Atlanta High School – Big Bad Band from Rabbit Land** won Third Place in the 3A contest.

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- **New Boston Lion High School Stride with Pride Marching Band** earned Sixth Place in the 3A Military Marching Band contest.
- **Redwater High School Dragon Band** earned Sixth Place in the 3A contest.
- **North Lamar High School Panther Band** placed Ninth in the 4A contest.

I want to congratulate everyone involved with these bands and their schools for the hard work and perseverance on their rise to the top! Whether marching on the field, driving the bus to and from events or cheering from the sidelines, everyone should be very proud of these programs that are vital to having well-rounded, robust educational programs and opportunities that contribute to the success of our kids and their future! Thanks to you all!

State Update

Enhanced border security bill passes. As ordered by the governor, the fourth called special session convened on November 7 and continues until December 6, 2023. During this time, the legislature passed Senate Bill 4 in response to the governor's call "*to do more to reduce illegal immigration by creating criminal offenses for illegal entry into this state from a foreign nation and illegal reentry or presence following denial of admission, exclusion, deportation, or removal; authorizing the removal of illegal immigrants from Texas; and providing indemnification and immunity for public officials, employees, or contractors in connection with the foregoing.*" The governor has not yet signed SB 4, but if he does, the new law gives law enforcement more tools to help stem the illegal immigration crisis at our southern border.

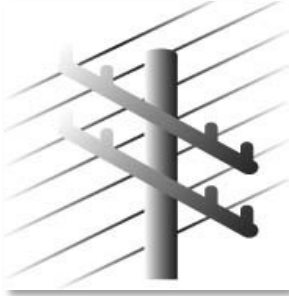
Constitutional amendment election results. Earlier this month, more than 2.5 million Texans or 14.4 percent of registered voters voted to give their stamp of approval to 13 of 14 proposed amendments to the Texas Constitution. The only one of the proposed amendments (Prop. 13) to fail was a proposal to raise the mandatory retirement age of state justices and judges from 75 to 79, on a vote of 37.31% (for) to 62.69% (against). The other 13 proposed amendments passed with a strong show of support especially for Prop 9 that gives certain retired educators a cost of living adjustment in their retirement benefits and for Prop 4 that raised the state's homestead exemption for property taxes from \$40,000 to \$100,000, and made other changes to the state's ad valorem tax system. Both of these propositions passed with over 83 percent voter support.



Now it's time to get to work! Several of these propositions started new programs across state government so with the okay of Texas voters, state agencies are gearing up to start new or expand existing programs. Here is some key information post-Election Day for certain state agencies affected by the changes to the state's constitution:



Teacher Retirement System of Texas (TRS) – the cost of living adjustment (COLA) for certain retirees will be reflected in their January 2024 payments from the state and the increase is based upon when a TRS member retired. TRS will send notices to eligible recipients of the COLA about the upcoming adjustment. For more information about the COLA, details and answers to frequently asked questions can be found at: <https://www.trs.texas.gov/Pages/benefit-enhancements-2023.aspx>.



Texas Energy Fund created. In approving Prop 7, voters authorized the Public Utility Commission of Texas (PUC) to create the Texas Energy Fund in compliance with Senate Bill 2627 enacted earlier this year. SB 2627 authorizes the establishment of funding mechanisms to support the construction, maintenance, modernization and operation of electric generating facilities. This legislation recognizes the fact that not all of Texas, such as part of House District 1, is included in the state's main power grid, Electric Reliability Council of Texas (ERCOT). This bill allows for the use of funds in non-ERCOT areas to provide grants for transmission and distribution infrastructure and electric generating facilities for: (1)

facility modernization; (2) facility weatherization; (3) reliability and resiliency facility enhancements; or (4) vegetation management. Here is a link to SB 2627 if you want more details:

<https://tlis/BillLookup/Text.aspx?LegSess=88R&Bill=SB2627>.



TWDB upcoming financial assistance workshops. The TWDB will host two in-person workshops in December so their program coordinators can meet with regional project team members to discuss specific projects and answer questions about financial assistance programs for drinking water, wastewater, stormwater, flood infrastructure funding and more topics key for many towns and cities in House District 1. The workshop will provide a detailed overview of the following programs:

- Economically Distressed Areas Program (EDAP)
- Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA)
- Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (DWSRF)
- Clean Water State Revolving Fund (CWSRF)
- State Water Implementation Fund for Texas (SWIFT)
- Texas Water Development Fund (DFund)
- Flood Infrastructure Fund (FIF)
- Prop 6 (constitutional amendment) approved by voters this month that creates the Texas Water Fund to assist financing water projects in the state.

The workshops are scheduled on December 5, 1:30 p.m., in Missouri City and December 12, 1:30 p.m., in Wylie. To register in advance, please [click here](#). Please register **as soon as possible** as the venues may be subject to capacity limitations. General questions may be directed to your TWDB [Regional Project Team Manager](#).

Prop 8 created the Texas Broadband Infrastructure Fund. Continuing efforts begun in 2021, to address the state's digital divide that finds almost a quarter of Texans do not have access to high-speed internet, the legislature adopted House Joint Resolution 125 that was approved by voters this month as Prop 8, creating the Broadband Infrastructure Fund (BIF). The BIF's \$1.5 billion fund can only be used to expand access and adoption of broadband and telecommunications services, including the:

- Development, construction, reconstruction and expansion of broadband and telecommunications infrastructure or services;
- Operation of broadband and telecommunications infrastructure;

- Provision of broadband and telecommunications services; and
- Reasonable expenses of administering and managing the investments of the fund.

The state's Broadband Development Office (BDO), housed at the comptroller's office, created in House Bill 5 (87th, R) found that approximately 2.8 million households or almost seven million Texans currently lack broadband internet service. This lack of broadband service limits education, healthcare and employment opportunities that other Texans take for granted. The purpose of the new BIF is to overcome this inequity.

TxDOT's Connecting Texas 2050. Whether we are sitting in traffic as we try to get somewhere, driving across the state to go on vacation or sitting at home waiting on the next FedEx or Amazon delivery truck, all Texans are impacted by our state's roads, bridges and highways. The Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) is developing its next long-range plan and it wants your input on ***Connecting Texas 2050***



(<https://www.txdot.gov/projects/planning/ttp.html>). With help from the public and stakeholders, ***Connecting Texas 2050*** will assist in establishing the vision, objectives, performance measures, and strategic recommendations for the state's transportation system through 2050. To learn more and to participate virtually in the development of ***Connecting Texas***

2050, a statewide virtual public meeting remains open until December 15, 2023. By clicking [here](#), you can access the engagement platform where you can find information about the plan, take a survey, and provide written feedback.

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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