



State Representative GARY VANDEAVER

August 2024 E-Newsletter



HD 1

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

District Update



Ground Floor Connective. Earlier this month, representatives of several area organizations gathered at the Texarkana City Hall to express appreciation and celebrate that the city has dedicated more than \$25,000 of its portion of the national opioid settlement to pay for a service coordination software called HopeHUB to be used by the local nonprofit Ground Floor Collective that helps families from "crisis to careers." Kristina Rivas-Jones, the Collective's director and co-founder, said she was honored to help lead the HopeHUB initiative and the grant will help

strengthen the work that the collective's community partners have already been doing. "It's going to strengthen those lines of communication between both sides of the state line, and between our organizations, and continue to help us help people move from that crisis, ultimately to that career that provides them a living wage right here in Texarkana," she said. The "partnership between the city and Ground Floor Collective holds potential and promise, empowering families to navigate difficulties with dignity," said Texarkana City Manager David Orr. (Photo, l - r include: David Orr - Texarkana City Manager, Sharon Elkins – District Director Representative Gary VanDeaver, Vashil Fernandez - Director of Planning & Community Development for the City of Texarkana, Robbin Bass - Deputy District Director for U.S. Rep. Nathaniel Moran, Paul Chapman Director for Restored Hope, Kristina Jones - 100 Families Alliance of Miller & Bowie Counties, and Bob Bruggeman - Mayor of Texarkana, Texas.)

Marvin Nichols Feasibility Review. The Texas Water Development Board (TWDB) was directed by the legislature last year to conduct a feasibility review of the proposed Marvin Nichols Reservoir. The draft review is scheduled to be posted to the TWDB website (<https://www.twdb.texas.gov/>) no later than the end of September.

Water availability, or lack thereof, in Texas has always been a big concern considering the state's ever growing population and frequent droughts. The legislature enacted legislation and voters approved in November 2023, the creation of the state's new Texas Water Fund. The funding for this program is distributed among several water specific programs at the TWDB including the Texas Rural Water Assistance Fund; State Water Implementation Fund of Texas (SWIFT); Economically Distressed Areas Fund; and many other loan and grant programs. The TWDB's website states: "The TWDB offers a variety of cost-effective loan and grant programs that provide for the planning, acquisition, design, and construction of water related infrastructure and other

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water quality improvements [totaling approximately \\$35.7 billion.](#)" Since the agency has so many financial assistance programs with varying rules and deadlines, the agency encourages interested parties to sign up for email notifications about its programs. Here is information on signing up for timely updates and email notifications:

1. Go to <https://www.twdb.texas.gov/>
2. Click on the green envelope icon at the top right corner as shown in this screenshot:



3. Register to receive the "TWDB Financial Assistance" and "TWDB General Information" email lists as shown in this screenshot:

State Update

Email Lists

- TWDB Conservation (monthly newsletter, educational information, and events)
- TWDB Financial Assistance (monthly newsletter, workshops and public meetings, and application information)
- TWDB Flood (monthly newsletter, flood planning information, flood risk, flood funding, National Flood Insurance Program, and events)
- TWDB General Information (monthly newsletter, Board meeting reminders, public comment, and events)

The information sent from the TWDB can be very helpful for not only individuals but local government officials as they look for resources to address local water situations.

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A look at housing in Texas. State comptroller, the Honorable Glenn Hegar, recently released an indepth study of available and affordable housing in Texas: *The Housing Affordability Challenge*. The report found that in 2023, the state was approximately 306,000 house units short in meeting demand with the greatest shortage in houses that are affordable for middle-income buyers. The report partially attributed the shortage to a lack of robust recovery in the housing market after the financial crisis in 2007-08. The state's ever-increasing population combined with fewer houses being built to keep up with the growth in demand contributed to the dramatic increase in home values between 2020 and 2022. While home values were rising so were interest rates and the cost of property-casualty insurance and property taxes. Texas A&M University's Texas Real Estate Research Center also reported that between 2019 and 2023, median home prices rose 40 percent. All of these factors have contributed to an ongoing lack of affordable, available houses not only in Texas but across a lot of the country. Find the report: <file:///C:/Users/h2540ac/Downloads/96-1999.pdf>.

Policymakers at the local, state and federal levels are struggling to find solutions to this problem to ensure there are enough affordable homes available. When the 89th legislature convenes in January, I suspect many proposals to be offered as possible solutions to the state's current housing shortage and property tax challenges. Hopefully, we will be able to agree upon solutions that work best for all Texans in the housing market.

TxDOT teaming up with law enforcement to fight drunk driving. The Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) recently released information stating that one person is killed every eight hours in alcohol-related crashes in Texas. TxDOT recently launched its "*Drive Sober. No Regrets.*" campaign in conjunction with the upcoming Labor Day holiday to remind Texas drivers that drunk driving is 100 percent preventable as are the crashes that result when Texans choose to drink and get behind the wheel. TxDOT Executive Director Marc Williams states that "if you plan to celebrate Labor Day by drinking, make sure you arrange a sober ride using a rideshare, taxi, public transit or a designated driver." TxDOT is working with law enforcement agencies across the state as they boost efforts to identify and arrest drunk drivers from August 16 through September 2. Over Labor Day in 2023 according to TxDOT, "there were 334 DUI-alcohol related traffic crashes over the Labor Day holiday weekend, resulting in 14 fatalities and 35 serious injuries." Let's all commit to a safe and sober Labor Day!

Secretary of State Nelson takes measures to stop noncitizens from voting. The Honorable Jane Nelson, Secretary of State (SOS), recently released a statement outlining Texas's efforts to combat illegal voting. The Texas Legislature tightened its voting laws in 2021 and again in 2023 to "prohibit noncitizens from registering and voting in any Texas election." Secretary Nelson went on to say that "providing false information on a voter registration form subjects applicants to criminal penalties, including jail time and a fine. It is a second-degree felony for a noncitizen to vote in Texas." The state also recently announced that it has purged 1.1 million people from the state's voting rolls because they were either dead, their addresses could not be verified or they were noncitizens. I agree with Secretary Nelson who said: "Voting is a sacred right that must be preserved for citizens who qualify under our elections laws." I supported the legislation to strengthen the registration and voting laws and believe that "we need to make it easy to vote, but hard to cheat." These new laws do just that and help ensure the integrity of our elections.



Texas Music Incubator Rebate Program (TMIR). The Texas Music Office recently announced that its tax rebate program for qualifying music venues and festival promoters in Texas, will begin accepting applications for Fiscal Year 2024 from **September 1, 2024 through November 30, 2024**. The TMIR Program was created in 2021 in Senate Bill 609 to help support the live music industry in communities

Contact Information

across the state. The 88th legislature appropriated \$20.2 million for the program to provide qualifying music

venues and festival promoters in Texas a full or partial rebate of their mixed beverage gross receipts taxes or sales taxes attributable to the sale of beer and wine in the *prior fiscal year (September 1, 2023, to August 31, 2024)* of up to \$100,000. More information about this innovative program can be found at <https://gov.texas.gov/music/tmir>.

Labor Day. For many, Labor Day marks the official beginning of fall even though no one is unpacking their sweaters and winter coats yet. The Friday night lights are back on, and Game Day Saturdays stir passions and excitement for many across Texas as people gather at tail gate functions in support of their favorite teams. Fall colors and cooler weather will eventually arrive, hopefully before Halloween and Thanksgiving. During this transition between seasons, let us stop to recognize the struggles that lead to the creation of Labor Day to acknowledge and show appreciation for the tremendous contributions by American workers. In June 1894, the US Congress established the first Monday in September as “Labor Day.” Our jobs, workforce and expectations have changed dramatically over the last 130 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 2) to consider your contributions in making us the society we are and be proud of your labors. Thank you for a job well done!

Social Media. Please follow me on my Facebook, Twitter and Instagram accounts for more updates!

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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Useful State Government Websites

Governor of Texas www.gov.texas.gov

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

Texas 2-1-1 (United Way) www.211.org
Texas Education Agency www.tea.texas.gov
Texas Department of Motor Vehicles www.txdmv.gov
Texas Department of Transportation www.txdot.gov
Texas Department of Public Safety www.dps.texas.gov
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