



State Representative
Gary VanDeaver

November 2024 E-Newsletter



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

District Update

Texarkana's Hotel Grim transforms into the Lofts at the Grim. After many years of decline, dreams and much hard work, the historic luxury Hotel Grim in downtown Texarkana has been transformed into the Lofts at the Grim to provide 90 apartments available to tenants with an income of 60 percent or less of area median income, adjusted for family size. The Grand Opening of the Lofts at the Grim was held on November 21, with a ribbon cutting ceremony and other festivities commemorating the rebirth of this iconic building. Rep. VanDeaver has supported this project from its beginning and provided testimony about these local efforts to transform this building into what it is today when he appeared before the Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs in support of the project's application for a federal low-income housing tax credit, which was later approved. At the ribbon cutting, VanDeaver said that "Texarkana has now had one of its iconic building restored to its former glory, and that's a good thing."

Ørsted's Mockingbird Solar Center in Lamar County. Also on Thursday, November 21, Rep. VanDeaver joined Lamar County officials to celebrate the commencement of the Mockingbird Solar Center, a 468-megawatt solar project, and a celebration of the Smiley Meadow Preserve with almost 1000 acres of land donated by Ørsted to The Nature Conservancy. Besides creating clean energy, the project is also an economic boost to the county and will bring in future property tax revenue that will help, as VanDeaver said, "local governments provide services without having the funds come out of local property taxpayers' pockets." The project is a \$500 million investment in the county and will help power the equivalent of 80,000 homes and businesses in Texas.



Celebrants at the Commencement of Mockingbird Solar Center, Lamar County. Photo provided by Ørsted.

During the construction of the Mockingbird Solar Center, over 550 construction jobs were created with most of those positions filled with local hires, and it also supported local businesses in procuring materials for and during the construction including: 200 square hay bails from Pfifer Farms; approximately \$150,000 of purchases from local hardware stores; \$35,000 in various food trucks and catered meals and 199,000 tons of material purchased from Drake Construction. It will be exciting to see how this solar farm benefits the Texas energy grid as the state responds to an ever-increasing demand for more energy from new homeowners and businesses.

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Rep. VanDeaver and Rev. James Anthony Morris at the Rotary Club meeting.

Wilbur Smith Rotary Club. In late October, Rep. VanDeaver spoke to the Wilbur Smith Rotary Club, in Texarkana, to provide a legislative update and discussed possible funding for upgrading the runway at the Texarkana Regional Airport, deliberations in East Texas over water rights and school vouchers. He also talked about the situation on the border and the politics involved in finding a solution to the problem. The Wilbur Smith Rotary Club's website, (<https://rotarytxk.com/>), says that the club has been making a difference in the world and community since 1917 by adhering to the Rotary Club's principles since its founding in 1905:

- The development of acquaintances as an opportunity for service;
- High ethical standards in business and professions; the recognition of the worthiness of all useful occupations; and the dignifying by each Rotarian's occupation as an opportunity to serve society;
- The application of the ideal of service in each Rotarian's personal, business and community life; and
- The advancement of international understanding, goodwill and peace through a world fellowship of business and professional persons united in the ideal of service.

State Update

Bill filing has started for the 89th legislature. November 12, 2024, was the first day that legislators could file bills for consideration during the regular session of the 89th legislature that convenes on January 14, 2025, and adjourns on June 2, 2025. There were a record number of bills filed on the first day with 1,511 bills and resolutions filed between the House of Representatives and the Senate. Bill filing ends on the 60th day of the session, which is March 14, 2025. Here is a link to the Texas Legislature Online so you can keep up with bills filed, committee hearings and floor action: <https://capitol.texas.gov/>. To date, Rep. VanDeaver has filed six House Bills (HB) for consideration next year including:

- **HB 1108** - relating to motorcycle profiling by peace officers;
- **HB 1109** - relating to exemption from certain motor fuels taxes for counties in this state;
- **HB 1115** - relating to the employment of honorably retired peace officers as school district security personnel and the applicability to those officers or certain law governing private security;
- **HB 1117** - relating to an exemption to the fishing license requirement for certain residents engaged in fishing in public waters;
- **HB 1118** - relating to the creation of a Texas Commission on Assessment and Accountability; and
- **HB 1469** - relating to the County Court-at-Law of Bowie County.

Our office has more bills being drafted, and we are working with stakeholders to craft legislation in a number of other areas. Please feel free to reach out to the office if you have any questions on these bills.

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The Alamo Cenotaph in San Antonio.

Restoration of the Alamo. Over the last several years, our office has received numerous emails, phone calls and letters from concerned constituents who fear the ongoing restoration project of the Alamo will destroy or damage that sacred space. The project is under the authority of the state's oldest agency, the General Land Office (GLO), and its current commissioner, the Honorable Dawn Buckingham, M.D. Commissioner Buckingham frequently updates the legislature about the restoration project and upcoming efforts to not only preserve the Alamo, but to make sure it is structurally sound for generations to come. Much of the concern expressed to our office centered around the Cenotaph that in previous

restoration plans would have relocated the monument from its current placement. Commissioner Buckingham says that is no longer going to happen. In April, Commissioner Buckingham informed legislators and state leaders that the Cenotaph would undergo a thorough analysis of its condition looking for needed fixes to preserve the "Spirit of Sacrifice." Her November report highlights needed restoration with some of the conditions needing urgent attention. Work will begin in early 2025 with completion anticipated next fall. Texans can rest assured that the commissioner is adamant that the monument will never be moved and is dedicated to ensuring its preservation. The GLO has a live camera link where Texans can follow this restoration project by visiting <https://www.thealamo.org/cenotaph-live-cam>. There is also an FAQ document at this same link.

End the Streak - TxDOT's effort to end deaths on Texas highways. The last deathless day on Texas roads was November 7, 2000, but since that date more than 87,000 people have been killed on Texas roads. Last year, 4,289 people were killed on Texas roads, and so far in 2024, Texas is averaging 10 roadway deaths a day.



TxDOT is joining with the Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS), to hand out cards reminding drivers of the following safety tips while driving on Texas roads:

- Drive safe speeds;
- Buckle up;
- Move over or slow down;
- Get a sober ride; and
- Avoid distractions.

As we head into the Thanksgiving and Christmas/New Year's holiday season, it is essential to know and practice these tips. With your help, all Texans will be able to join with family, friends and loved ones to celebrate and welcome 2025.



Happy Thanksgiving!! As we prepare to celebrate Thanksgiving, I want to express my heartfelt thanks for my family, friends and constituents who I work hard to serve every day. I am so blessed to live and work in our part of Texas where we care about and help one another to be the best that we can possibly be. I wish you and your family a blessed and safe Thanksgiving.



LD Alex Maldonado in the House Chamber.

Rep. VanDeaver announces new Legislative Director (LD). Rep. VanDeaver is pleased to announce that as of the end of November, Mr. Alex Maldonado has joined the Capitol office as our new Legislative Director. Alex's previous Capitol experience includes working in the Texas Senate, working for the Texas House Committee on Appropriations and serving a stint in the governor's office. Alex was born and raised in Austin, Texas, and earned his Bachelor of Arts from Texas State University. He is also currently working on his Master's Degree in Public Administration from there as well. Alex is passionate about serving others through public policy and is thrilled to be able to work for the people of House District 1.

Contact Information

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
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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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