



State Representative  
**Gary VanDeaver**  
 December 2024 E-Newsletter



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

**District Update**



*Rep. VanDeaver & Ms. Martin in front of the House Christmas tree. Photo: House Photography.*

**House District 1 Christmas ornament.** Ms. Ember Martin, a ninth-grade student at Pleasant Grove High School, designed and created this year's Christmas ornament depicting scenes from Northeast Texas. Ms. Martin's design highlights railroads, trees and wildlife. Earlier this month, she came to the Texas Capitol to see her ornament on the Christmas tree in the historic House Chamber. Inside the ornament are deer and other animals that live throughout Northeast Texas. Ms. Martin's ornament is the latest one created by constituents from House District 1 that have been a part of the House of Representatives Christmas traditions. I am very fortunate to live in an area with so many talented and artistic constituents. Thank you, Ember!



*Christmas ornament created by Ms. Ember Martin from House District 1. Photo: House Photography.*



**Municipal Court Judge retires.** Recently, I had the privilege of presenting a Texas flag flown over the Capitol to retiring Municipal Court Judge Mark Whitehouse in honor of his long and distinguished career serving the people of Clarksville from 2001 to 2024. The Honorable Ann Rushing, mayor of Clarksville, along with the city's Municipal Court prosecutor pro Tem, Mr. Dan Meehan, and Municipal Court Clerk, Ms. Bernice Armenta, also attended the presentation. Judge Whitehouse has also served as a deputy in both Lamar and Red River counties; Clarksville chief of police; a constable in Precinct 1 for 12 years; drove a bus for 16 years in Clarksville ISD; and served as the Bogata Municipal Judge from 2003 to 2019. Congratulations, best wishes and many thanks to a true public servant!

**Constituent input.** Recently, many residents of House District 1 have reached out to my offices to let me know their opinions on the many issues and challenges that will be a part of the 89th regular session of the Texas Legislature that convenes at noon on January 14, 2025. Some people have asked why previous enewsletters and the printed newsletter do not include certain topics, positions and issues.

"The Texas House of Representatives is an Equal Opportunity Employer and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age or disability in employment or the provision of services. This newsletter is available in alternate forms upon request. Please call 1-800-241-1163."

The Texas House of Representatives runs according to its adopted operating resolution, policies and procedures that direct what representatives, their offices and staff must do to comply or meet existing laws and policies. Each legislative session, these guiding documents are reviewed and amended prior to being adopted at the start of the regular session. The House Policies and Procedures manual has for many years included directives and restrictions to ensure that the state tax dollars that fund the operations of the House of Representatives (including staff, computers, phones, etc.) are used for state-related purposes only and do not promote political or personal issues. Some of the restrictions required of all House members state that the newsletter may **not**:

- Include derogatory or unfavorable comments about other Members or public officials;
- Contain references to political parties, party affiliations or participation in primary elections;
- Contain references to elections or candidates except references to constitutional amendment elections;
- Advocate passage or defeat of a measure; or
- Support or oppose a candidate for nomination or election to a public office or office of a political party or a public officer.

Because of these restrictions, my newsletters (printed and electronic) do not include political rhetoric, hear-say stories or accusations about issues, people, advocacy groups and so on. Instead, my newsletters focus on issues and events that are happening across House District 1 and information from state agencies or organizations to keep my constituents informed on issues that may be addressed or come before the legislature when it is in session. As often was said in the old television show, *Dragnet*, many years ago when Sergeant Joe Friday was interviewing witnesses, he wanted: "just the facts." The facts are the focus of my written communications, and I expect them to enlighten and inform my constituents. There are other forums where engaging in "political spin" is useful and appropriate, and I encourage people to take advantage of those other forms of communication.

There are almost 200,000 people who live in House District 1. Will we always agree, or disagree, on every issue? Of course not, but my focus and commitment in serving my constituents is to provide accurate and timely information while maintaining the highest level of integrity. I expect that of myself and demand it of my staff who work very hard to respond to and help the people who reach out to our offices every day.

## State Update

***Personal vehicle inspection requirement changes.*** Beginning on January 1, 2025, personal (non-commercial) vehicles will no longer have to have a vehicle safety inspection prior to renewing your vehicle registration. [Click here for more information.](#) All non-commercial vehicles in the state will still be subject to a \$7.50 inspection program replacement fee, which will be paid at the time the vehicle is registered with the [Texas Department of Motor Vehicles](#). Texans whose vehicles are registered in the state's 17 emission counties will still be required to have emissions tests. These counties include Brazoria, Collin, Dallas, Denton, Ellis, El Paso, Fort Bend, Galveston, Harris, Johnson, Kaufman, Montgomery, Parker, Rockwall, Tarrant, Travis and Williamson. All commercial vehicles will still need to get a vehicle safety inspection before registering the vehicle. These changes were enacted in 2023, when House Bill 3297 was passed by the legislature and signed by the governor.



Picture from the Capitol Complex construction project.

**Update on Capitol Complex Phase II project.** The Texas Facilities Commission (TFC) is overseeing the multi-year, multi-building project to build new state office buildings and public gathering spaces just north of the Capitol between 15th Street and the University of Texas at Austin campus at Martin Luther King Blvd. The focus of the planned development project is to consolidate state agencies in downtown Austin rather than having them spread across town. Several new buildings have been completed and state agencies have moved in to continue their work serving the needs of Texans. Two other buildings are being constructed on 15th Street between North Congress Avenue and Lavaca Street. Here is information about the project's master plan

where you can check out videos of construction progress and visualize yourself in these exciting spaces the next time you visit the Capitol: [Home | TFC-CCP](#). Click on this link if you want to take a tour of the Capitol Complex construction projects: <https://phase1.tfc-ccp.org/news-events/>; and use this link to see the ongoing construction:

[https://public.earthcam.net/tJ90CoLmq7TzrY396Yd88JkxJPz7ILezv9dPgrzrQZ0/tx\\_capitol\\_complex/tx\\_mall\\_-\\_congress/view\\_1](https://public.earthcam.net/tJ90CoLmq7TzrY396Yd88JkxJPz7ILezv9dPgrzrQZ0/tx_capitol_complex/tx_mall_-_congress/view_1).

**Staffing for the 89th session.** Ms. Erin Taravella has joined my Capitol staff and will serve as a policy analyst during the upcoming session. She is currently a graduate student at the Bush School of Government and Public Service, where she is studying public policy analysis with a focus in state and local government. Erin received her Bachelor of Science degree in Sociology from Texas A&M University and has always been drawn to community work and public service.



Born and raised in Nacogdoches, Texas, Erin is passionate about the unique challenges and opportunities facing rural areas. Her previous experience includes working for a collaborative partnership between the Hogg Foundation and Stephen F. Austin

University which focused on improving the wellbeing in rural communities. Erin is excited to continue working on issues that impact rural Texas while serving the people of House District 1. Welcome aboard!

## 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.

**District Office**  
Bowie County Courthouse  
710 James Bowie Drive  
New Boston, Texas 75570  
(903) 628 - 0361

**Capitol Office**  
Office: E1.304  
P.O. Box 2910  
Austin, Texas 78768-2910  
(512) 463 - 0692

**State Representative**  
**Gary VanDeaver**

[Email Gary](#)