

TEXAS PRESS ASSOCIATION

State Capital



HIGHLIGHTS

By Ed Sterling

President's annual address draws reactions

AUSTIN — Gov. Rick Perry and Lt. Gov. David Dewhurst posted similar takes on President Obama's annual state of the union address, televised live on Jan. 28.

Perry said, "Texas has shown that the way to economic prosperity and significant job growth is through individual freedoms and the free market. Tonight, we saw a president with the same old agenda and no real idea on how to govern."

Dewhurst suggested the president "should take a page out of the playbook for the Texas Miracle and cut taxes, slash spending, and reduce the regulations that kill jobs."

In contrast, freshman U.S. Rep. Pete Gallego, D-Alpine, on Jan. 29 posted his reaction, referring to the president's speech "a call to action" that "requires us to take steps forward, and we must do so together. Though trust is lacking, our courage must not fail us. If we fail today to grow the bipartisan momentum developed over recent weeks, we will miss a critical opportunity. To move the ball down the field, we all have to play on the same team. I will continue to play on the right team — America's team."

In other news, on Jan. 31, Perry reacted to the State Department's environmental impact study on the Keystone XL pipeline, a conduit being built to move petroleum-bearing tar sands from western Canada to terminals in

Nederland, Texas, near Port Arthur.

"If, as the president said in his state of the union speech, he truly wants this to be a year of action, there would be no better way to kick it off than authorizing construction of this important project."

Entities reach agreement

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency on Jan. 29 announced it had reached an agreement with the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality for approval of Texas' Flexible Permits Program for air pollution.

Under the federal Clean Air Act, the EPA was required to accept or reject Texas' air pollution rules within 18 months of the program's creation in 1994. The EPA, however, rejected the rules and disapproved the state's Flexible Permits Program in 2010, prompting Texas Attorney General Greg Abbott to file a legal challenge, asserting that the EPA failed to act within the allotted time period. In 2012, the U.S. Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals rejected the EPA's disapproval of the program.

TCEQ Chairman Bryan W. Shaw said the agreement, while conditional, "provides a resolution to implement both the court's opinion and the necessary legal requirements for EPA approval." Shaw added that at a Feb. 12 meeting TCEQ commissioners would consider proposing rule amendments to gain the EPA's full approval later in 2014.

Donor registry grows

The Glenda P. Dawson Donate Life Texas Registry is the state database of individuals who have officially indicated their decisions to donate organs and tissue to benefit thousands of people currently awaiting transplants.

Some 4.8 million Texans had registered as organ and tissue donors as of Dec. 31, Texas Department of Public Safety announced Jan. 30.

More than 11,000 individuals are awaiting organ or tissue transplants in Texas, the agency said.

SBOE OKs grad plan

A new high school graduation program that gives students added flexibility to follow their academic interests gained final approval from the State Board of Education on Jan. 31.

Last year, the Texas Legislature created the 22-credit Foundation High School Program that allows students to earn performance acknowledgments and four-credit endorsements in specific subjects, but left decisions about many details of the plan to the State Board of Education.

Last week, the board considered 34 amendments to the graduation plan and approved most of them, the Texas Education Agency reported. Details may be found at tea.state.tx.us <<http://tea.state.tx.us>>.

DPS reports total of arrests

Texas Department of Public Safety on Jan. 31 reported state troopers made 1,490 Driving While Intoxicated arrests during a holiday enforcement period that began Dec. 13 and ended Jan. 2.

More than 24,800 speeding citations, 2,960 seat belt/child safety seat citations, 1,070 fugitive arrests and 790 felony arrests also were made in those 21 days when drinking and driving and more motorists make roadways more dangerous. The cost of having enhanced patrols included funding from a Texas Department of Transportation grant, the DPS noted.

Registration period ends

Texas Secretary of State Nandita Berry, the state's chief elections officer, on Jan. 31 reminded Texans that Monday, Feb. 3, was the deadline to register to vote in time for the March 4 primary election.

Grand Jury Indictments Returned On January 27

Juan Arturo Martinez, 35, of Dimmitt was indicted for Possession of Controlled Substance, Penalty Group 1, under 1 gram - Drug Free Zone.

Angel Reynaldo Beanes, 26, of Hart was indicted for Possession of Controlled Substance, PG 1, under 1 gram.

Anthony Navarro, 25, of Dimmitt was indicted for Prohibited Weapon - Short-Barreled Firearm.

Francisco Cortez, 31, of Hart was indicted for Theft of Material consisting of Aluminum, Copper, Bronze or Brass, under \$20,000.

Francisco Cortez, 31, of Hart was indicted for Evading Arrest or Detention with Previous Conviction.

Ramon Aguero Jr., 29, of Dimmitt was indicted for Criminal Mischief, over \$1,500 - under \$20,000.

Fernando Marquez Aguero, 25, of Dimmitt was indicted for Aggravated Assault with a Deadly Weapon.

Lyle Alan Loudder, 50, of Dimmitt was indicted for Prohibited Weapon - Short-Barreled Firearm.

Rosas Explains City Water System Violations

Adrian Rosas, City of Hart's Public Utility Superintendent, told *The Pulse* on Tuesday that the notices sent to Hart residents regarding the City of Hart's Water System are required by the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ). He said that at no time were residents at any risk of tainted water.

Two notices were sent in January to residents.

One is about Chemical Monitoring, specifically Asbestos. Rosas said that he's contacted at various times through the year that a sample of water will be taken by an agency contracted with TCEQ. This sample is taken to a laboratory in Dal-

las. Rosas said that the lab, during the period of 2004-2012, did not report the results to TCEQ, and this error was recently discovered by TCEQ. The City did not follow up during this period to see if the results were reported.

And, because of a change in positions in the City's Utility Dept., chlorine monitoring reporting wasn't done from Jan. 1, 2013, to March 31, 2013.

The City is now up to date with all reports, according to the notices.

Rosas adds that water is sampled once a month and taken to the City of Amarillo's lab for E-coli testing.



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