

## TEXAS PRESS ASSOCIATION

State Capital



HIGHLIGHTS

By Ed Sterling

**Railroad Commission to hire seismologist**

AUSTIN — After meeting with Azle residents last week in a town hall style meeting last week, Texas Railroad Commissioner David Porter called for his agency, which regulates the oil and gas industry, to hire a seismologist.

Azle residents told Porter about the effects of earth tremors felt at their homes and businesses, and their ongoing safety concerns over seismic activity that has increased locally along with an increase in oil and gas industry activities over the last several years.

"It is imperative that the commission remain engaged and involved in gathering more evidence and data into any possible causation between oil and gas activities and seismic events," Porter said in his Jan. 7 statement. "Commission rules and regulations must be based on sound science and proven facts. In order to do so, I propose the commission hire an in-house seismologist."

**Perry makes proclamation**

January 2014 is Crime Stoppers Month in Texas, Gov. Rick Perry proclaimed Jan. 7. Every year, according to the proclamation, "the month of January is dedicated to raising awareness of Crime Stoppers' successes and inspiring more Texans to get involved."

Perry said anonymous tips have led to more than 180,000 arrests and \$1 billion in property recovered and narcotics

seized since the beginning of Crime Stoppers programs in 1976.

**Shoppers' app is promoted**

Texas Department of Agriculture on Jan. 6 announced an upgraded version of its free "GO TEXAN" application, a way for smartphone users to track their visits to wineries, farmers markets, pick-your-own farms, nurseries and florists, and share their experiences on social media.

Agriculture Commissioner Todd Staples said, "This is an easy way for those who enjoy local products to support Texas businesses and track their visits, simply by pulling out their smartphone."

**Interim director is named**

Texas Transportation Commission on Jan. 7 announced its selection of James Bass as interim executive director of the Texas Department of Transportation, effective Jan. 17.

Bass succeeds Phil Wilson at the post. Wilson last fall was named general manager of the Lower Colorado River Authority. Bass has been serving as chief financial officer of TxDOT.

**Governor swears Berry in**

On Jan. 7 Nandita Berry of Houston was sworn in by Gov. Perry as the 109th Texas Secretary of State.

"I am honored to be appointed by Gov. Perry and look forward to serving Texas as secretary of state," Berry said.

As secretary of state, Berry is one of six state officials who comprise the state's executive department of the state of Texas. Her duties now include serving as the chief election officer for the state, the governor's liaison on border and Mexican affairs, and Texas' chief protocol officer for state and international matters. And, the office manages the business and public filings for Texas.

Berry is a graduate of Mount Carmel College in Bangalore, India, a bachelor's degree from

the University of Houston and a law degree from the University of Houston Law Center. Prior to her appointment, Secretary Berry was senior counsel at the Locke Lord law firm in Houston, and she was an in-house counsel for a Fortune 500 company.

**Please resign, senators say**

State Sens. Rodney Ellis, Sylvia Garcia and John Whitmire, all Democrats from Houston, on Jan. 7 called on state Finance Commission Chair William J. White to voluntarily resign from office.

In asking for the resignation, the trio of senators called attention to a Dec. 29 story in the El Paso Times that included comments White made disparaging consumers of payday loans, and noted that White is vice president of Cash America, a payday loan company, a type of company that is regulated by the Finance Commission.

Ellis said White's comments "severely call into question his ability to put his outside employment aside and truly look out for Texas consumers."

**Revenue increases again**

Texas Comptroller Susan Combs, the state's chief financial officer, on Jan. 8 announced that state sales tax revenue in December was \$2.25 billion, up 3.9 percent compared to December 2012.

"Consumer spending in retail trade contributed to the latest gain in state sales tax collections," Combs said. "Other sectors such as telecommunications also contributed to the monthly growth, and state sales tax revenue has now increased for 45 consecutive months."

In her Jan. 8 announcement, Combs said she would send cities, counties, transit systems and special purpose taxing districts their January local sales tax allocations totaling \$573.5 million, up 8.1 percent compared to January 2013.

## MARK YOUR CALENDARS

Commodities Marketing Workshop Jan. 23

DIMMITT — The Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service will conduct a commodities marketing workshop from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Jan. 23 at First United Bank, 201 N. Broadway in Dimmitt.

"This program will offer a unique opportunity for producers from across our region with an interest in the futures market," said Nancy Andersen, AgriLife Extension agent in Castro County. "We are excited to welcome Richard Brock from the Brock Report to Castro County as our keynote program speaker."

"Brock is a well-respected market professional who heads a team of experts who monitor the markets daily, thus enabling them to advise producers on emerging trends. Their information, strategies and advice provide producers and agribusiness professionals another perspective in their decision-making process."

Andersen said Brock is president of Brock Associates, a commodity marketing consulting firm headquartered in Milwaukee, Wis., that provides price forecasting and strategies for sales and purchasing programs to farmers, agribusiness firms and the food industry.

Individual registration, which includes lunch, is \$10 due upon arrival. For more information and to RSVP, contact the AgriLife Extension office in Castro County at 806-647-4115.

**Two Hart High School Grads Receive Degrees**

CANYON, TX—Teresa Montemayor and Hayley Clevenger graduated from West Texas A&M University on Dec. 13, 2013. The ceremony was held at First United Bank Center. Both women are Hart High School graduates.

Montemayor, the business manager at Hart ISD, received her Bachelor of Business Administration in Accounting; she reports she is working on obtaining her master's degree from WTAMU. She is married to Jose Montemayor.

Clevenger got a Bachelor of Arts in English. She is the daughter of Scott and Michelle Clevenger of Hart, the granddaughter of Marie Clevenger and the late Duane Clevenger of Hart, and great-granddaughter of Deryl and Joan Clevenger, also of Hart.

The University awarded 518 baccalaureate degrees, 104 master's and three doctoral degrees.

**"Our Family Serving Your Family"****Mike & Eva Mullins • Funeral Directors/Owners****647-4444****Dimmitt****809 Butler Blvd.*****Castro County's only locally owned and operated funeral home.***

- More conveniently located for Hart residents.
- Pre-need, monuments, cremation and full traditional services to meet everyone's needs at affordable prices.
- Se habla español