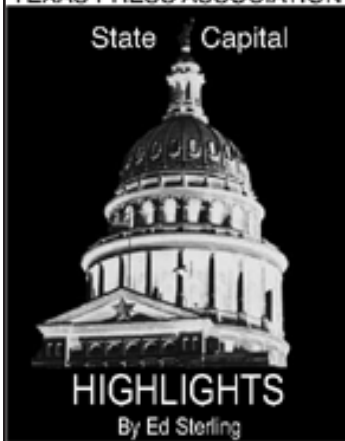


TEXAS PRESS ASSOCIATION



**Panel sets \$7 billion minimum for Rainy Day Fund**

AUSTIN — On Dec. 11, a Senate-House joint committee empaneled to adopt a sufficient balance for the state's "rainy day fund" approved \$7 billion as the floor for it.

Properly titled the Economic Stabilization Fund, the oil and gas tax-fueled pool of money was created by constitutional amendment in 1988 when oil was selling as low as \$10 a barrel, causing state coffers to run thin. Calculated at \$6.7 billion last August, the fund previously had no required minimum. The maximum the fund may hold is capped at 10 percent of the state's general revenue during the previous two-year budget cycle.

Proposition 1, passed by Texas voters on Nov. 4, was "The constitutional amendment providing for the use and dedication of certain money transferred to the state highway fund to assist in the completion of transportation construction, maintenance, and rehabilitation projects, not to include toll roads."

The measure requires the state to split the oil and gas revenue between the rainy day fund and state highway fund. Because of the booming oil and gas industry, some \$1.74 billion is to be transferred into the highway fund in 2015.

"This transfer will provide a much-needed boost to transportation, which affects everything from commerce and economic development to public

safety and our quality of life," said Sen. Jane Nelson, R-Grapevine, co-chair of the joint committee. "The floor also ensures that Texas has sufficient reserves for any unexpected difficulties in the future. It also allows us to address our vital infrastructure needs in a fiscally responsible way."

**TxDOT senses optimism**

Texas Department of Transportation last week announced the agency "is riding a wave of optimism as citizens, national transportation groups and stakeholders have noted great improvements in Texas just in time for state lawmakers to convene for the 84th Legislative session."

According to a Dec. 9 TxDOT news release, "Many have stated that transportation is a key issue for legislators in 2015, and by passing Proposition 1 with an 80 percent approval, voters have entrusted TxDOT with the job of addressing congestion and keeping our roads safe."

**Sales tax revenue is up**

State Comptroller Susan Combs on Dec. 10 reported state sales tax revenue in November of \$2.66 billion, up 10.7 percent compared to November 2013.

Combs said gains were led by oil and natural gas-related sectors and collections from retail trade and restaurants also rose strongly.

Cities, counties, transit systems and special purpose taxing districts will receive December local sales tax allocations totaling \$645.9 million, up 11.4 percent compared to December 2013, Combs added.

**School ratings released**

Texas Education Agency on Dec. 3 announced its release of the final 2014 state accountability system ratings for more than 1,200 school districts and charters and more than 8,500 campuses.

Final ratings are issued fol-

lowing an appeals process provided to districts and charters that contested the district or campus ratings originally announced in August, TEA explained.

Final 2014 ratings show 90.2 percent of the state's 949 school districts and 158 charters achieved the rating of "Met Standard."

**Alert: Lock your vehicle**

Texas Department of Public Safety on Dec. 11 encouraged drivers to take necessary precautions to protect their vehicles from possible theft during holiday season.

DPS Director Steven McCraw said, "December is one of the busiest months for auto thefts, and during this holiday shopping season, it is important that any valuables in a vehicle are out of sight."

According to the DPS, 5,395 automobiles, pickups and motorcycles were recorded stolen in December 2013, "making it the third-highest month for vehicle thefts that year behind July and August." In addition, more than 13,100 vehicle burglaries were reported and \$12.2 million in property stolen last December.

**Permit process speeds up**

Texas Railroad Commission on Dec. 11 announced its Information Technology Modernization Program is making the process for granting oil and gas drilling permits faster.

"Expedited permit processing was reduced from a peak of 30 days experienced with a surge in industry activity in the spring of this year to a one-day processing rate in November," according to the petroleum-regulating agency.

Commissioner David Porter said that in addition to the improved technology, the agency has hired additional temporary staff "to help meet the demands of the rising drilling permit applications and to assist our hardworking permanent staff."

# CASTRO COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE REPORT

**Persons Arrested & Booked into Jail, December 8-14, 2014**

*All information of persons arrested and booked into the Castro County Jail are open records.*

12/08- Gary Doyle Ramage, 55, of Muleshoe was arrested by the Sheriff's Office on a Castro County warrant for Driving While Intoxicated, 3rd or More.

12/08- John Lafuente Jr., 55, of Dimmitt was arrested by the Sheriff's Office on a Castro County warrant for Possession of Controlled Substance, PG 1, over 1 gram-under 4 grams.

12/08- Mario Alberto Sanchez, 17, of Dimmitt was arrested by the Dimmitt Police on a Castro County warrant for Burglary of a Vehicle.

12/09- Michael Vance Swinburn, 38, of Dimmitt was arrested by the Dimmitt Police for Driving While Intoxicated, 1st Offense.

12/09- Billy Trent Day, 22, of Hereford was arrested by the Texas Highway Patrol for No Drivers License and Possession of Drug Paraphernalia.

12/09- Hunter Niel Mason, 22, of Dimmitt was arrested by the Texas Highway Patrol for a Castro County warrant for Manufacture/Deliver Controlled Substance PG 1 over 1 gram-under 4 grams-Motion to Adjudicate Probation and on-site Possession of Drug Paraphernalia.

12/10- Joe Reyes Jr., 43, of Dimmitt was arrested by the Sheriff's Office for Possession of Controlled Substance, PG 1, under 1 gram.

12/10- Celia Arguijo Reyes, 50, of Dimmitt was arrested by the Sheriff's Office for Possession of Controlled Substance, PG 1, under 1 gram.

12/11- Christopher Rene Enriquez, 29, of Dimmitt was arrested by the Dimmitt Police for Driving While License Invalid with Previous Conviction and Possession of Marijuana, under 2 ounces, in a Drug-Free Zone.

12/13- Michelle Silva, 39, of Dimmitt was arrested by the Sheriff's Office on a Castro County warrant for Theft over \$50-under \$500, Fail to Appear.

12/14- Willard Phillip Eubanks, 21, of Lubbock was arrested by the Dimmitt Police for Possession of Marijuana, under 2 ounces.

**Calls for service or reports taken between December 8-14, 2014.**

12/09  
\* At 5:56 p.m., Texas 194 & FM 168, Hart, unsafe bicyclist reported.

12/10  
\* 5:24 p.m., 1 mile east of Dimmitt on Texas 194, reckless driver reported;

\* At 9:14 p.m., 300 blk U.S. 385, 911 hang up call reported.

12/11  
\* At 7:56 p.m., south of Dimmitt on U.S. 385, reported vehicle accident vs. deer.

12/12  
\* At 7:25 a.m., FM 168 & Texas 194, Hart, railroad lights going off with no train;

\* At 10:34 a.m., U.S. 385 & FM 3215, assist the Dimmitt Police with traffic accident;

\* At 12:11 p.m., Texas 194 & U.S. 385, assist the Dimmitt Police with traffic accident;

\* At 8:19 p.m., 400 blk Ave C, Hart, reckless driver reported;

\* At 9:47 p.m., 100 blk U.S. 385, reports of minors drinking;

\* At 9:54 p.m., 100 blk Coronado Road, Coronado Acres, domestic disturbance reported.

12/13  
\* At 9:00 a.m., 10 miles north of Nazareth on FM 168, livestock reported on roadway.

\* At 1:30 p.m., 300 blk NW 6th Street, Dimmitt, warrant service-arrest made.

12/14  
\* At 10:43 a.m., 600 blk W. Jones, Dimmitt, assist Dimmitt Police with domestic disturbance;

\* At 11:02 a.m., 1900 blk CR 622, problems with person;

\* At 12:22 p.m., FM 168 north of Nazareth, intoxicated driver reported;

\* At 12:51 p.m., CR 620 & U.S. 385, report of over turned carport on utility pole;

\* At 11:25 p.m., 300 blk NW 6th, Dimmitt, assist Dimmitt Police & Fire with structure fire;

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