



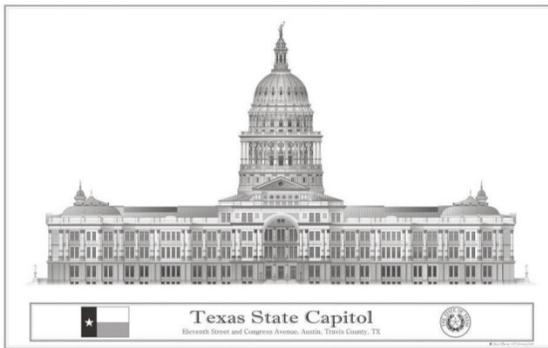
GARY

VanDeaver

STATE REPRESENTATIVE



House District 1 - Bowie, Franklin, Lamar & Red River counties
District & Capitol Report - 85th Legislature
October 2017



mechanics, warehouse worker, production supervisors, and warehouse receiving leaders.



Pictured above: Rep. VanDeaver with Paris Junior College and Campbell Soup Company representatives.

Around the District. Texas Workforce Commission.

Campbell Soup Company has partnered with Paris Junior College to provide job training using a \$499,984 Skills Development Fund grant from the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC). The grant will benefit workers in the Northeast Texas area.

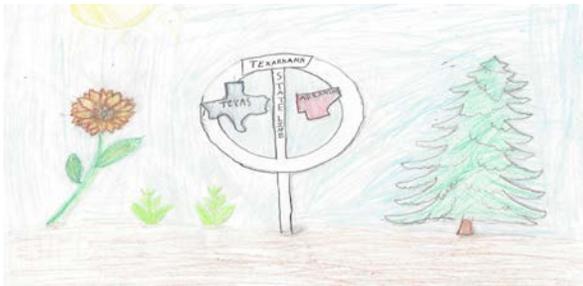
Governor's Small Business Forum in Texarkana.

On Thursday, October 26, Texarkana was host to Governor Abbott's Small Business Forum. These forums are sponsored by the governor's office, the Texas Workforce Commission and local partners to bring small business owners together with business experts to hear about financing opportunities, hiring skilled employees, bidding on government contracts, and marketing tips. I was pleased to welcome everyone to this great networking opportunity.

This grant will be used to provide customized training to 486 new and incumbent workers for industry-related topics with focused instruction on ammonia refrigeration, boiler equipment, case packing, and rotary pressure sterilizer training. Trainees will include inspection and quality technicians, safety technicians, team leaders, operation workers, filling and packing machine operators, maintenance workers, electronics

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Christmas Ornament 2017 Contest winner - As in years past, I have invited students at various levels of education to submit a design for a Christmas ornament that will hang on the tree in the Chamber of the Texas House of Representatives. This year's winner is Natalie Robinson, a fourth grader, from Redwater Elementary School. Congratulations, Natalie! I not only want to thank Natalie, but also all of the students and their teachers who participated in this year's ornament contest. Here is Natalie's design that she will recreate on a glass Christmas ball:



Prescribed burns - reminder. The Texas Parks & Wildlife Department (TPWD) will be conducting prescribed burns in the Pat Mayse Wildlife Management Area between October 20, 2017 and January 18, 2018. The TPWD cautions that residents and visitors may see smoke in neighborhoods and on roads so it urges caution when driving and reminds drivers to use their headlights and to slow down when smoke is present. If you have any questions, please contact Eric Clewis, with TPWD, at 903-905-2207 or eric.clewis@tpwd.texas.gov. You can also sign up to receive text messages in advance of the burns by texting 81010 and including the message "@pmburn."

Early voting underway. Early voting for the November general election began this week and runs through Friday, November 3. The November

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general election date is Tuesday, November 7. Make plans to either vote early or on election day between 7 a.m. and 7 p.m. at your regular polling places.

Retired school employee health care (TRS-Care). The legislature made some dramatic changes to the health insurance program for retired public school employees earlier this year that take effect on January 1, 2018. My office has received several phone calls about these changes. This year, the legislature contributed \$1.3 billion toward TRS-Care for the next biennium, but even with this large infusion of funding, structural changes were necessary to keep the program from collapsing or shifting all of the cost to retirees. As a retired superintendent, I understand how unsettling these changes can be. If you have questions about the new program beginning in January, you can call TRS at 1-888-237-6762. One of the changes made was to separate TRS-Care into two parts with a separate structure for retirees not eligible for Medicare (prior to age 65) and those retirees with Medicare. TRS is holding a series of webinars on Oct. 31, Nov. 7, Nov. 8, and Nov. 9; more information about webinar times and instructions can be found on the TRS website at https://www.trs.texas.gov/Pages/healthcare_benefits_events.aspx. You will need to select a webinar based upon your eligibility for Medicare.

Around the Capitol. November constitutional amendment election. In the last two months' E-newsletters, I have provided information about constitutional amendments in Propositions 1-5, so here is a brief summary of Props 6 & 7:

Proposition 6 - (SJR 1) - The constitutional amendment authorizing the legislature to provide

for an exemption from ad valorem taxation of all or part of the market value of the residence homestead of the surviving spouse of a first responder who is killed or fatally injured in the line of duty.

Proposition 7 - (HJR 37) - The constitutional amendment relating to legislative authority to permit credit unions and other financial institutions to award prizes by lot to promote savings.

Here is a link to the House Research Organization's (HRO) analysis of the amendments:
<http://www.hro.house.state.tx.us/pdf/focus/amend85.pdf>.

Speaker issues interim charges. House Speaker Joe Straus issued more than 230 interim charges to all House committees to study issues and make recommendations before the 86th Legislature convenes in January 2019. Every House Committee is to study at least one interim charge related to the long-term impact from Hurricane Harvey in addition to numerous other issues challenging the state's future ability to provide needed services to a growing and diverse population of almost 28 million.

Earlier this fall, the Speaker asked all House members for their suggested ideas for what should be studied. I am glad that three issues that I suggested have been incorporated into the set of interim charges including a study of the funding structure of the health insurance program for retired school employees known as TRS-Care; monitoring school districts' local option homestead exemptions; and, the impact felt in rural areas of the state where local hospitals have closed.

Additionally, the Speaker appointed a 13-member Select Committee on Opioids and Substance Abuse

that will study this growing epidemic and the very complex issues relating to substance abuse. I am grateful to Speaker Straus for appointing me to this Select Committee. Here is a link to the complete set of interim charges:

<http://www.house.texas.gov/media/pdf/interim-charges-85th.pdf>.

As always, you can keep up with legislative activities and committee meetings through the Texas Legislature Online link at:
<http://www.capitol.texas.gov/>.

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 office (903-628-0361) or Capitol office (512-463-0692) if there is anything you think we can do to help you.

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