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Statement on Supreme Court Ruling

This week, the Supreme Court of the United States ruled in favor of craft store giant, Hobby Lobby, in the historic case *Burwell v. Hobby Lobby Stores, Inc.* This 5-4 decision by the Supreme Court showed that President Obama has overstepped, yet again, with his Affordable Care Act (ACA).

Sylvia Burwell, the United States Secretary of Health and Human Services, attempted to protect the ACA by upholding the mandate that employers provide comprehensive healthcare for their employees, which implies that the plans should cover all forms of contraception. Hobby Lobby cited religious freedom, and argued that they should not be required to provide forms of birth control that contradict their religious values. A common misconception is that Hobby Lobby disagreed with providing contraception for its employees entirely; however, the company desired to reserve its rights to limit the types of contraception that their healthcare plan offers. The closely-held company, namely, owned by five or fewer people, expressed their religious freedoms to prevent the coverage of "life-terminating" contraception, due to their belief that life begins at conception.

SCOTUS ruled in favor of Hobby Lobby, stating that closely-held corporations have the ability to withhold aspects of healthcare coverage if they infringe on the religious beliefs of the company.

Barbara Green, co-founder of Hobby Lobby Stores Inc. expressed her delight at the decision, by stating, "The Court's decision is a victory, not just for our family business, but for all who seek to live out their faith. We are grateful to God and to those who have supported us on this difficult journey."

This ruling was a great victory for religious freedom in America and shows that the actions of President Obama's administration have been extreme and overreaching.

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STAAR® end-of-course results strong for Texas high school students

AUSTIN – High school students posted strong passing rates for the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR®) end-of-course exams in Biology, Algebra I and U.S. History, according to preliminary statewide results released today by the Texas Education Agency. The results reflect passing rates for the spring 2014 administration of STAAR and STAAR L. “It’s encouraging to see ongoing improvement in core subjects such as Algebra I and Biology as students and teachers adapt to the higher rigor of STAAR,” said Commissioner of Education Michael Williams. “Academic success for our students today strengthens the Texas of tomorrow.” Texas students are required to pass five end-of-course exams – Algebra I, English I, English II, Biology and U.S. History – in order to receive a high school diploma. In preliminary statewide results for the 2013–2014 school year for first-time testers, Texas students posted the highest statewide passing rate in Biology. The 93 percent passing rate also represented the largest increase (six percentage points) over results from the previous school year.

BIOLOGY	Difference From 2012-2013
2011-2012	86%
2012-2013	87%
2013-2014	93%
	+ 6%

The 2013–2014 school year represented the first time the STAAR U.S. History end-of-course exam was administered statewide. Students posted a passing rate of 92 percent. The next highest passing rate was seen among students taking the STAAR Algebra I end-of-course exam. Eighty-six percent successfully passed this exam, which was four percentage points above the results from the previous school year.

ALGEBRA I	Difference From 2012-2013
2011-2012	82%
2012-2013	82%
2013-2014	86%
	+ 4%

The 2013–2014 school year marked the initial use of a combined STAAR Reading and Writing end-of-course exam for English I and English II. Reading and writing had been tested separately in previous years. Passing rates in these two English Language Arts areas continued to lag behind other core subjects. For students taking the English I end-of-course exam, seventy-two percent passed. For the English II end-of-course exam, seventy-three percent of students passed. “Regardless of what a student plans to do after high school, reading and writing are fundamental elements of any job or career,” said Commissioner Williams. “We must work together to assure our students are in a position to express themselves beyond 140 characters after they leave high school.”

The Class of 2014 also represented the last group of students to take the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) as part of their graduation requirements. Of the 301,013 students who first took the TAKS Exit-Level assessments in spring 2013 and are still in Texas public schools today, 97 percent have met their assessment requirement for graduation. Only three percent (or 8,939 students statewide) still have one or more subject-area assessments left to pass. Students who did not pass required STAAR end-of-course exams or TAKS tests will have the opportunity to retake the tests July 7–11.

Please note that TEA does not have district-level test results at this time. Those results are available from your local school districts and charters. Comparison charts of statewide results and summary charts provide greater detail on all STAAR results. To review state-level reports, visit the Texas Education Agency website at <http://www.tea.state.tx.us/staar/rpt/sum/>.

TxTag Toll Road Billing Services to be Easier, Faster for Texans

New toll billing system will provide 24-hour access to account information, automated payment options, text alerts, more. Customers using TxTag toll road billing services will soon have new and improved account access and payment options at their fingertips. The Texas Department of Transportation has hired Xerox to streamline all of the agency's toll billing operations to provide customers a more seamless and efficient account experience. "We've heard from our customers and look forward to offering improved TxTag billing services that will help them access their account information and pay a bill without waiting in long lines or on hold," said retired LtGen J.F. Weber, USMC, TxDOT executive director.

Specifically, the new toll billing system will offer faster customer service, simpler account maintenance, streamlined billing and more, including:

- All account charges will be in one, redesigned billing statement;
- Upgraded website will offer live chat support;
- New mobile website to manage your account on the go;
- Alerts available via text message;
- Simplified login to your online account;
- New automated phone system for making payments, updating account information, checking account balance and recent tolls;
- More options for AutoPay accounts;
- No reactivation fees.

Customers using TxTag save 25 percent on tolls. The tag can be used on toll roads across Texas. For more information or to get a TxTag, visit www.txtag.org. The new system is expected to be fully implemented by mid-summer, at which point another announcement will be sent to media. For media inquiries, contact TxDOT Media Relations at MediaRelations@txdot.gov or (512) 463-8700.

Fourth of July Events

The offices of Representative Dan Huberty will be closed Friday, July 4th

Kingwood Civic Club Parade

The Children's Fishing Rodeo will be on Friday, July 4th from 6 - 7:30 a.m. and is held at the Foster's Mill ponds at the corner of Kingwood Drive & Forest Garden. Kids age 15 and younger are invited to bring their fishing gear to the ponds and compete for trophies in different categories. No registration is required.

The parade will kick off at 10 A.M. from Creekwood Middle School on Sandy Forks, and end at Kingwood High school. Participants will need meet at corner of Feather Lakes and West Lake Houston Parkway at 7 am for lineup. Float judging will begin at 9 A.M.

Forest Cove Parade and BBQ

The lineup for participants begins at 9:00 am at the Forest Cove Community Center, (1025 Marina Drive, Kingwood). The parade starts at 10 A.M. The BBQ will follow the parade at the Community Center.

Tickets are \$10 for adults and \$4.50 for children under 10.

Town Center 4th of July Festival

Town Center will host a festival starting at 9 A.M. that includes live music, craft and food booths, kids jumping castles and even a bungee jump. The streets surrounding the park are closed for the events providing a safe, casual environment for families to stroll amongst the booths and exhibitors. At 9 P.M. the firework show will start.

Kings Harbor 4th of July Concert and Fireworks

At 6:30 P.M. the band Nightbird will start their free concert for the whole town to enjoy. Guests are more than welcome to bring lawn chairs to watch the performance as well as the fire work show. The fire work show will start at 9:30 P.M.

ACIA Parade Honoring the Stars and Stripes

Signup begins at 8:30 am at the Atascocita Library parking lot and the parade is scheduled to start at 9:00am.

The Parade will end at The Overlook (former Country Club) where Refreshments will be available and prizes will be awarded for decorated bikes, wagons, golf carts and pets.

There will then be another celebration at the Overlook from 6 P.M. to 10 P.M. The celebration will include slash stations for the kids, hot dogs, hamburgers, sausage on a stick, sno cones, nachos, soft drinks, and water.

Kingsley's Lookout will be open for adult beverages- cash bar.