

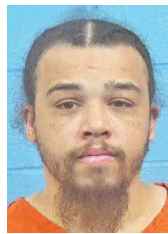
HILL COUNTRY NEWS

VOLUME 28, ISSUE 9

SERVING CEDAR PARK, LEANDER AND NORTHWEST AUSTIN SINCE 1968 ■ hillcountrynews.com

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 26, 2026

Judge gives 75-year sentence in 2020 Cedar Park standoff



JOSEPH DESEAN TAYLOR

STAFF REPORTS

GEORGETOWN, Texas — A visiting judge sentenced Joseph Desean Taylor to 75 years in prison Feb. 6 for a 2020 hostage standoff in Cedar Park that wounded three police officers. Taylor, 32, was found guilty Dec. 2, 2025, in a bench trial before visiting District Court

Judge Rick Kennon. The convictions covered five cases including three counts of aggravated assault with a deadly weapon on a public servant and two counts of aggravated kidnapping with a deadly weapon. Kennon imposed 75-year prison terms on each aggravated assault count and 10-year terms on each aggravated kidnapping

count. The sentences will run concurrently. Authorities said the case stems from an August 2020 call to the Cedar Park Police Department shortly before 3 p.m. The caller, identified in the release as Pasha Taylor, told dispatchers her son

See **STANDOFF**, page A6



FILE PHOTO / SCOTT W. COLEMAN

Texas officials have reported more than 111,000 applications received for its new school choice program. Applications opened on Feb. 4.

School choice programs grow in popularity — and cost

More than 100,000 apply for vouchers in Texas as states scramble to meet rising demand for newly expanded school choice initiatives.

BY: ROBBIE SEQUEIRA
STALINE

States are scrambling to meet rising demand for newly expanded school choice initiatives, pouring more money into the programs as waiting lists — and budget concerns — grow.

A further boost is expected next year, when the federal government rolls out a new policy allowing taxpayers to claim a tax credit for up to \$1,700 in donations to nonprofits that award private school scholarships to K-12 students.

Supporters tout such programs as a lifeline for parents desperate to get their kids out of failing public schools, while opponents have long warned that they drain resources from public education as students move from public schools to private ones.

For years, voucher and scholarship programs providing taxpayer dollars for private school tuition were limited to low-income or special needs students. In 2022, however, Arizona became the first state to allow all students to use public money for private school tuition. By next school year, at least 17 states are expected to have universal programs — making roughly half of U.S. students eligible to receive money, according to FutureEd, a think tank at Georgetown University.

As both universal and limited programs spread across the country, many families are eager to participate.

In Alabama, more than 36,000 students last spring applied for 14,000 spots in the state's new program, prompting Republican Gov. Kay Ivey to propose increasing its funding from \$180 million to \$250 million for the 2027-28 school year, when income limits will be eliminated.

In Oklahoma, Republican Gov. Kevin Stitt has proposed removing the budget cap on a scholarship program that turned away 5,600 students a couple of years ago because it ran out of money. And in Tennessee, Republican Gov. Bill Lee has proposed doubling the funding for a scholarship program that has a waitlist of about 34,000 students.

See **SCHOOLS**, page A4



ANNIE MULLIGAN FOR THE TEXAS TRIBUNE

Marina Hernandez helps students clean up for center time in her pre-K 2 classroom at Gingerbread Kids Academy on Sept. 26, 2024, in Richmond.

Texas Education Agency moves to correct 4,200 errors in Bible-infused curriculum

State Board of Education members criticized the publishing errors and postponed their vote on the agency's request until their next meeting.

BY JADEN EDISON
THE TEXAS TRIBUNE

The Texas Education Agency has to correct roughly 4,200 errors in a Bible-infused elementary school curriculum that was approved by the state two years ago, the State Board of Education said Friday.

Board members postponed voting on an education agency request to correct those errors during its final meeting of the week, saying they needed more time to review the corrections.

That includes 547 requests to replace images with "licensing issues," said Pam Little, the board's Republican vice chair. It also includes formatting errors, typos and incorrect page numbers.

Records obtained by The Texas Tribune through an open records request revealed additional complaints from educators about problems like missing pages, incorrect answer keys and books falling apart.

"What a waste of taxpayer dollars!" read one complaint to the Texas Education Agency. "This disaster has doubled the workload on my teachers, and as an administrator who saw the value in an aligned curriculum, I am embarrassed."

Republican board member Audrey Young, who chairs the board's instruction committee, said Friday that her committee has seen a high number of corrections before, but not "in the 1,000s, plural," she said.

Four other publishers that submitted

correction requests, for comparison, reported a combined 16 errors.

Colin Dempsey, the education agency's director of district operations, technology and sustainability supports, told board members the roughly 4,200 edits span more than 2,100 components of the curriculum, known as Bluebonnet Learning. Bluebonnet, developed by the education agency, includes math and reading language arts in English and Spanish.

The corrections, Dempsey said, include fixes to relatively minor errors present across multiple units. Bluebonnet also has a significantly higher number of components than other

See **CURRICULUM**, page A6

Austin judge delivers time-served sentence in Russia export case

AUSTIN, Texas — An Austin federal judge sentenced Bulgarian national Milan Dimitrov to time served after he pleaded guilty to conspiring to violate the International Emergency Economic Powers Act in an illegal export scheme tied to Russia, federal prosecutors said.

Dimitrov, who had already spent about 38 months in custody, was sentenced Wednesday by U.S. District Judge Robert Pitman, according to the U.S. attorney's office and local reporting. Dimitrov pleaded guilty on Nov. 20, 2025.

Federal prosecutors said the scheme began after U.S. export con-

trols imposed following Russia's 2014 invasion of Crimea restricted direct shipments of certain sensitive electronics to Russia without a license.

According to court documents summarized by the U.S. attorney's office, Dimitrov started work in August 2014 at Multi Technology Integration Group EOOD, a Bulgaria-based company authorities said was created to help Russian end users acquire radiation-hardened and high-temperature circuits from a supplier in the Austin area.

Prosecutors said MTIG received a 16mB static random-access memory wafer from the Austin-area supplier

in January 2015. About a month later, MTIG entered a contract to deliver parts to the Russian engineering company OOO Sovtest Comp., they said.

Over the next three months, Sovtest transferred more than \$1 million to MTIG in three payments, prosecutors said. After the third payment, MTIG issued Sovtest an invoice for \$158,125, then shipped the parts to Russia in violation of U.S. export rules, the U.S. attorney's office said.

Prosecutors said that between

See **SENTENCE**, page A4



SHUTTERSTOCK

Microchips are shown on a production line at Advanced Semiconductor Foundry.

HAVE A NEWS TIP?
news@hillcountrynews.com

GET THE PAPER DELIVERED
hillcountrynews.com/delivery



February 26, 2026
8 pages in one section

\$1.50

Probate? *Voted Best Lawyer by Hill Country News Readers*

Divorce?

Wills?

Call for an appointment
512-918-3958
www.terrydavis.com

Terry Davis & Associates
ATTORNEY AT LAW

Stay Current And Informed... SUBSCRIBE TODAY!

HILL COUNTRY NEWS
Subscribe • Support • Advertise | In Print & Online
512-259-4449 | www.hillcountrynews.com

RESEARCH PEST CONTROL

NOW HIRING!
Please apply at researchpest.com

Locally Owned & Family Operated

512-258-5228 www.ResearchPest.com
Residential • Commercial

We Love To Keep Your Home Pest-Free!
Bugs • Rodents • Termites

Serving Cedar Park & surrounding communities for over 50 yrs

UT-Austin to consolidate race, ethnic, gender study programs

More than 800 students are pursuing degrees in the affected departments, which include African, Latino and gender studies.

BY SNEHA DEY
THE TEXAS TRIBUNE

In a sweeping restructure, the University of Texas at Austin will consolidate four departments, including African and African Diaspora Studies and Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies, college leaders told department heads Thursday.

The departments, along with American Studies as well as Mexican American and Latino Studies, will be consolidated into a Social and Cultural Analysis department. UT will separately consolidate Germanic Studies, Slavic and Eurasian Studies, and French and Italian into a new Department of European and Eurasian Studies.

The university has begun a curricula review to determine which majors and minors to continue offering under the two consolidat-

ed departments.

The restructuring is expected to be completed by September 2027, Save UT, a faculty group opposed to the merger, told members Thursday. A UT spokesperson has said there is no official timeline for the consolidation.

More than 800 students are pursuing majors, minors and graduate degrees across the departments, according to Save UT, a faculty group opposed to the merger. It's unclear how the changes will affect their coursework and path to degree completion, though university leaders are recommending students continue to pursue their degree programs.

"This is a sad day for UT students. Rather than bringing the state's next generation into the future, our leaders are taking a giant leap backwards," said Julie

Minich, professor of Mexican American and Latino Studies and English. "UT is reversing roughly fifty years of intellectual progress and innovation. If the goal is to make sure UT is no longer a global leader in higher education this is a great move."

Jim Davis, the president of UT-Austin, said the reorganization was in response to a review that found "some significant inconsistencies and fragmentation across the college's departments."

"Of course, students already enrolled in the departments being consolidated can continue to pursue their degree programs within the new departments while the curriculum review and departmental change is underway," Davis said in a notice to students, faculty and staff.

Ending the programs as sepa-



Students walk down Speedway street on Sept. 19, 2025.

MANOO SIRIVELLI/THE TEXAS TRIBUNE

rate departments comes as Texas universities face a growing political pressure to restrict how they teach race, gender and sexuality. Last month, Texas A&M eliminated its women's and gender studies program. Federal officials have also urged UT-Austin and a handful of other universities to sign a "compact" that promises preferential access to grants if they commit to defining sex as male or female based on reproductive function and overhauling or eliminating academic departments that are

hostile to conservative ideas.

There is no state or federal law prohibiting instruction on race, gender or sexual orientation at universities. Senate Bill 17, passed in 2023, banned diversity, equity and inclusion offices but explicitly exempted classroom teaching and scholarly research. Senate Bill 37 in 2025 shifted authority over curricula from faculty to governor-appointed regents, and although early drafts sought to restrict what could be taught, that language was dropped before final passage.

Georgetown teen court wins countywide mock trial competition

STAFF REPORTS

A Georgetown teen court team took top honors at a countywide Teen Court Competition hosted Feb. 5 by Williamson County Justice of the Peace Precinct 3, according to county officials.

The event brought together Teen Court programs from Justice of the Peace Precinct 2, Justice of the Peace Precinct 3 and Georgetown Municipal Teen Court for a day of mock trials designed to sharpen courtroom skills and promote civic engagement. Georgetown's program placed first, while the Justice of the Peace Precinct 3 Teen Court finished second, the county said.

Teen Court programs typically use peer-led proceedings to address youth misconduct and emphasize accountability and restorative justice. During Satur-

day's competition, students demonstrated courtroom procedure, advocacy and decision-making through mock trials, officials said.

County officials said the event also gave students from different programs a chance to collaborate and compete in an educational setting.

The competition relied on community volunteers who donated time on a Saturday, along with judges and attorneys from Williamson and Travis counties who served during the event and provided feedback to students, according to the county.

Organizers also thanked community partners, including MVBA and the YMCA of Greater Williamson County, which provided lunch and awards, officials said. Williamson County constables provided event security, according to the county.



Rouse High School journalism adviser Shelby Nickells, pictured with a group of students, was named a UIL Sponsor Excellence Award winner.

LEANDER ISD

Nickells wins UIL sponsor award

LEANDER, Texas — Rouse High School journalism adviser Shelby Nickells has been named a 2025 University Interscholastic League Sponsor Excellence Award winner, an honor given to 15 Texas sponsors for supporting student extracurricular programs, Leander ISD announced.

Nickells, who advises student journalists at Rouse High School, was recognized for her work coaching multiple UIL journalism events and helping build what the district described as a consistently competitive writing program.

"She has built a consistently competitive journalism and writing program, producing district, regional, and state-level achievers while leading and supporting the broader UIL academic program," the district said in its announcement.

Nickells has coached UIL copy editing, news writing, feature writing, editorial writing, headline writing and ready writing for the past six years, according to LISD. Since 2023, she has also served as the UIL academic coordinator at Rouse and has helped at invitational meets by proctoring and grading journalism events, the district said.

Rouse Principal Vincent Hawkins said the award reflects Nickells' impact on

students.

"Shelby embodies everything we want an educator to instill in our students," Hawkins said. "Her passion, dedication, and remarkable talent reflect the very best of our profession."

Nickells said she did not initially plan to become a teacher, but found the classroom was the right fit once she started.

"Helping students develop a passion in the field of journalism is the best thing in the world," Nickells said. She said watching students produce strong work — in writing, photography and design — has reinforced her commitment to preparing students for future newsroom work.

The Sponsor Excellence Award is intended to recognize sponsors who help students develop skills while keeping their sense of self-worth separate from competition results, according to UIL information included in the district release.

Nickells will receive \$1,000 and a commemorative item from UIL, LISD said.

UIL Executive Director Dr. Jamey Harrison, in a statement included with the award description, credited sponsors, coaches and directors with creating opportunities that can shape students' lives.

Central Texas teen wins national 100-word horror writing contest

STAFF REPORTS

AUSTIN — A Central Texas high school student has been recognized in a national writing contest that tasked young authors with creating a scary story in 100 words, according to Harmony Public Schools-Central Texas.

Jazmin Gonzalez Rodriguez, a 10th grader at Harmony School of Excellence, was named a winner in the Young Writers Contest series' Stranger Sagas Creative Writing Contest for students ages 10 to 18, the charter school network said.

Jazmin's entry, "I Don't Want What You Have I Wanna Be You," follows a narrator who discovers her own name on a missing persons list. In the story, the narrator describes feeling unseen by her family and ends with a line about being "just another name on that list."

"My name was on the missing persons' list," Jazmin wrote. "The date was from two weeks ago, and just when I tried to contact the entity, they told me that everything is gonna be alright."

The contest uses story prompts to help students begin writing and requires a strict 100-word limit, which organizers say pushes writers to make careful choices about plot and vocabulary, the school network said.

Winners receive prizes and may have their work published by Young Writers, an organization that promotes student writing, according to the school network.

Harmony Public Schools-Central Texas



Jazmin Gonzalez Rodriguez, a 10th grader at Harmony Public Schools-Central Texas, was named a winner in the Young Writers Contest.

COURTESY PHOTO

operates nine campuses in the Austin metro area, including locations in Austin, Cedar Park, Georgetown, Leander and Pflugerville, the network said.

Across Texas, Harmony Public Schools runs more than 60 college-preparatory charter schools serving grades Pre-K through 12, according to the network. Harmony is accepting applications for the 2026-27 academic year.

Start Earning Today
WITH BANK OZK!

<4.00%>
APY*

7-MONTH CD OR IRA CD** SPECIAL

<3.60%>
APY*

13-MONTH CD OR IRA CD** SPECIAL

Visit one of our Austin, Lockhart or Cedar Park locations or open an account online at ozk.com.**

Bank OZK
Greater awaits™

Member
FDIC
ozk.com

*Annual Percentage Yield (APY) effective as of the publication date. \$1,000 minimum deposit to open and is required to earn stated APY. Penalty for early withdrawal. IRA CD is subject to eligibility requirements. Offer not available to Public Funds, brokers, dealers and other financial institutions. Fees could reduce earnings. Offer subject to change without notice. Offer good at locations in Austin, Cedar Park and Lockhart, TX only.
**IRA CD must be opened in person and cannot be opened online.

Texans shouldn't expect Supreme Court ruling against tariffs to bring prices down soon, economists say

The order wiped out many of the Trump administration's tariffs, but Trump promised Friday to find other ways to restore them.

BY PAUL COBLER
THE TEXAS TRIBUNE

The U.S. Supreme Court on Friday struck down most of President Donald Trump's tariffs on imported goods, but experts said Texans should not expect prices to drop in the short term as questions around the nation's trade policy remain unanswered.

The court's ruling does not apply to some tariffs on goods like aluminum, steel and furniture. And Trump promised shortly after the ruling that his administration would use other laws to reimpose many of the tariffs that the Supreme Court deemed illegal, injecting a new round of uncertainty into international trade.

The ruling applies to roughly \$175 billion in import taxes that have been collected over the past year, and Texans should expect to see some relief from rising prices, economists said.

"There will be less upward pressure on prices, so there might be some relief in terms of prices not going down, but at least they aren't going up like before," said David Quigley, a professor of economics at the University of Texas at Arlington.

Importers along the Gulf Coast and the Texas-Mexico border have been expecting a ruling from the court, but the order was still sudden and sweeping. Jorge Torres, a licensed customs broker and president of McAllen-based Interlink Trade Services, said he spent much of Friday morning fielding questions from importers who work with his company.

"It's been emails, calls, and Whatsapp messages nonstop," Torres said. "When can we stop paying the tariffs? When are we going to get refunds? I just have to tell them to hang tight."

The importers have to be patient because the Supreme Court order still leaves much unanswered and comes after a year of sudden and constantly-changing tariffs on countries across the world, each forcing importers and customs brokers alike to recalculate their budgets.

The Supreme Court ruled that Trump's use of the International Emergency Economic Powers Act to impose those "reciprocal" tariffs was illegal, but the court did not say whether the import taxes paid since April need to be refunded.

A refund of the \$175 billion estimat-



The Supreme Court on Friday struck down most of President Donald Trump's tariffs on foreign goods.

ed to have been collected by the federal government could provide some relief on prices for consumers, but refunds would likely go directly to importers who have already passed costs down along the supply chain to their U.S. customers, said Ed Hirs, an energy fellow and economics professor at the University of Houston.

As of Friday, Texas importers are still paying the tariffs while they await guidance from Customs and Border Protection, which could come as soon as Monday, Torres said.

"There's a lot of anxiety and desperation from importers wanting to stop paying the tariffs and get the refund," Torres said. "By the same token, the administration is not going to cross its hands, and we might get hit from tariffs by other sections ... Hopefully things will stabilize but for now we're still going to see that uncertainty and complexity."

Trump hinted Friday afternoon that many, if not all of those tariffs would return.

"Other alternatives will now be used to replace the ones that the court incorrectly rejected," Trump told reporters at the White House. "We have alternatives, great alternatives. Could be more money. We'll take in more money, and we'll be a lot stronger for it."

Speaking Friday at the Economic Club of Dallas, Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent laid out more specific alternatives for the president's tariffs, including a law already in use that allows tariffs on specific products deemed a threat to national security. Trump has used that law, Section 232 of the Trade Expansion Act of 1962, to impose tariffs on steel, aluminum, furniture and automobile parts.

"I always found when I was in the private sector ... it was very good to separate signal from noise, and a lot of the noise is that Trump's tariffs were defeated," Bessent told the economic

club. "The only thing that was defeated is the ability for IEEPA to collect even \$1 of revenue."

Items like couches, kitchen cabinets, canned food and soda will see prices remain elevated due to Section 232 tariffs. Those import taxes on metals will also continue to drive up costs for Texas' most important industry, oil and gas, where the cost of maintaining and buying new equipment has risen over the past year.

The steel and aluminum tariffs are also hurting Texas' manufacturing industry because they have caused both domestic and international steel to become more expensive, said Mike Willis, executive director of the South Texas Manufacturers Association.

"What the industry typically does is hike the price of their U.S.-made steel and aluminum to mask the tariffs because they can," Willis said. "So all the other downstream manufacturing companies that use steel and aluminum have to pay more ... It's impacted dramatically a lot of domestic manufacturing companies."

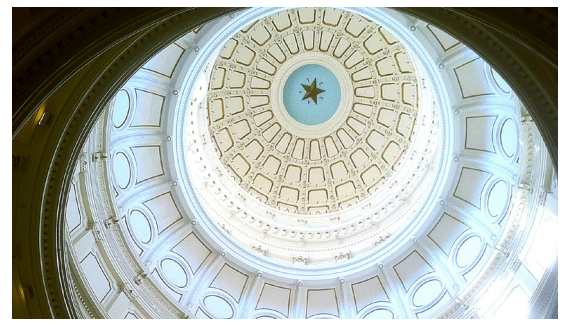
During his White House press conference, Trump said he would sign an executive order imposing 10% "global tariffs" in response to the court's ruling.

Lori Mullins, president of the Houston Customs Brokers and Freight Forwarders Association, said she thinks importers are in for a "bumpy ride" in the coming months but are prepared to deal with more uncertainty after the past year.

"(A tariff) is still being touted as ... being collected from a foreign country," Mullins said.

"These are American companies, American taxpayers, it is a tax on goods that Americans purchase. Because tariffs are paid by U.S. importers, it's ultimately going to be felt through the economy."

— Joshua Fechter contributed to this story.



CAPITAL HIGHLIGHTS

Early voting ends Feb. 27

Early voting in the March 3 primary ends on Friday, Feb. 27. Texas Secretary of State Jane Nelson announced that Texas has 18.7 million registered voters for the primary.

When casting a ballot in person, voters are required to show identification. Cell phones are prohibited in a room in which voting is taking place. However, voters can bring written notes and printed sample ballots into the polling location for reference.

During the primary elections, voters must indicate which party's primary they wish to vote in, though Texas law does not require voters to register with a party before casting a ballot.

Crossing over during primary season is not allowed. For example, if a voter casts a ballot in the Democratic primary, that person cannot vote in a runoff election in the Republican primary, and vice versa.

Talarico gets boost from Colbert drama

Both Democratic U.S. Senate candidate James Talarico and his primary opponent, U.S. Rep. Jasmine Crockett, agree that Talarico got a boost from the brouhaha stemming from the refusal of CBS to allow talk show host Stephen Colbert to air an interview with him. The interview was instead posted on YouTube, where it has, to date, garnered more than seven million views. Talarico reported raising more than \$2.5 million in fundraising off what he called an attempt to censor him, the Houston Chronicle reported.

Talarico trailed Crockett by eight points in a University of Houston poll released earlier. No polling has been released since the video went viral.

Federal Communications Commission Chairman Brendan Carr said in January that he was considering requiring TV talk show hosts to offer equal airtime, but that has not been made official. Talk shows have long been exempted from that rule.

Crockett said last week the attempt to ban the interview only amplified it.

"It probably gave my opponent the boost he was looking for," Crockett said.

The winner of the Democratic primary will face the winner of the GOP primary, which pits incumbent U.S. Sen. John Cornyn against Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton and U.S. Rep. Wesley Hunt.

Most Texans arrested by ICE have no convictions

The Trump administration's deportation campaign promised to target gang members, murderers, and other criminal offenders. However, a review of federal data shows a lower percentage of people targeted had criminal convictions than in former President Joe Biden's final year in office, according to the Chronicle.

Federal agents arrested about 54,000 people in Texas during Trump's first nine months of office, more than double the number during a similar period under Biden. But the share of those with criminal convictions fell from about 60% under Biden to under 40% under Trump.

Over a third of the arrests made by ICE under Trump involved people with no criminal convictions and no pending criminal charges, compared to 13% under Biden.

"The statistics show the indiscriminate nature of the Trump administration's policies around trying to meet its self-defined quotas of 3,000 arrests per day," said Adriell Orozco, senior policy counsel at the American Immigration Council.

Texas' weekly ICE arrests increased by 135% during that same time frame.

Texas sues Dow, claiming 'habitual' pollution violations

The Texas Attorney General's office has sued Dow Chemical Co., alleging hundreds of water pollution violations at its industrial complex at Seadrift, across from the Aransas Wildlife Refuge.

The Texas Tribune reported that Dow, North America's largest chemical manufacturer, has been in "habitual non-compliance" with pollution permits.

A spokesperson for Union Carbide Corp., which operates the Seadrift complex for Dow, said the company "works closely with state and federal regulators to ensure compliance with all existing laws and regulations."

The state's lawsuit follows a 60-day notice of intent to sue filed in December by a local environmental activist. The state's suit could supersede that pending litigation, according to The Tribune.

January was drier, warmer than normal

Two thirds of Texas is now in drought, according to hydrologist Mark Wentzel with the Texas Water Development Board. That is up 13 percentage points from late December.

"The small improvements in temperature and precipitation we saw in January weren't enough to end drought expansion in our state," Wentzel wrote.

Meanwhile, both the 2026 Old Farmer's Almanac and the Farmers' Almanac's long-range spring outlooks for Texas are calling for warmer and wetter weather in Texas, the Austin American-Statesman reported.

"April will bring warm temperatures (5 degrees above average), while May will cool off slightly (1 degree above average)," meteorologists Bob Smerbeck and Brian Thompson wrote in their forecast explanation. "Rainfall will be above normal, and watch for a tropical storm in late May."

Wildfire season just around the corner

Texas A&M Forest Service has put the current wildfire preparedness gauge at Level 3, which means, "wildfire activity is impacting several regions of the state as the result of drought, dry vegetation or frequent fire weather events."

Several wildfires broke out last week across the Panhandle as humidity levels dropped and winds gusts rose up to 65 mph.

Last Tuesday the service responded to nine wildfires affecting more than 18,000 acres. As of Sunday burn bans were in place in 151 Texas counties, covering all of the Panhandle and most of Central and West Texas. The wildfire potential is expected to increase this week as dry, windy conditions continue.

Gary Borders, a veteran award-winning Texas journalist, compiled this report. He published a number of community newspapers in Texas during a 30-year span, including in Longview, Fort Stockton, Nacogdoches and, once upon a time, the Hill Country News in Cedar Park. Email: gborders@texaspress.com.

Survey finds Texas small business optimism tops in U.S.

STAFF REPORTS

Texas small business owners reported higher optimism than the national average last summer, according to a newly-released survey-based report from the National Federation of Independent Business.

The Texas Small Business Economic Trends report, released Feb. 18 by NFIB's Research Center, puts the state's Small Business Optimism Index

at 101.1 for April through September 2025. That is 3.2 points higher than the national average, NFIB said.

"While this data is a useful tool for evaluating the economy on a national scale, no state can be defined by national numbers alone," Holly Wade, executive director of NFIB's Research Center, said in a statement. She said the state-specific report is intended to

See **OPTIMISM**, page A4

TEXAS SMALL BUSINESS SNAPSHOT (NFIB)

- Optimism Index (Apr.-Sept. 2025): 101.1
- Above national average by: 3.2 points

BUSINESS HEALTH (TEXAS VS. U.S.)

- Excellent: 17% vs. 11%
- Good: 48% vs. 54%
- Fair: 29% vs. 29%
- Poor: 6% vs. 5%
- Top problem: Labor quality (Texas 28%; U.S. 19%)
- Regulation as top problem: Texas 3%; U.S. 8%
- Uncertainty: NFIB says 2025 set a record on its Uncertainty Index



• WILLIAMSON COUNTY — WILCOTX.GOV

The Williamson County Commissioners Court is the county's governing body. Commissioners meet beginning at 9:30 each Tuesday morning at the Williamson County Courthouse in downtown Georgetown. Agendas and packets are available, and the meetings are streamed live, on the county's website. Meetings are open to the public. If you wish to speak, arrive early and register.

• LEANDER INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT — LEANDERISD.ORG

Leander ISD Board of Trustees meet the second and fourth Thursday each month at Lippe Instructional Materials Center located at 1775 W. New Hope Dr.,

Building B at 6:15 p.m. Meetings are open to the public. If you wish to speak, arrive early and register. Agendas, board meeting packets and a live stream are on the district's website.

• LAGO VISTA INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT — LAGOVISTAISD.NET

Lago Vista ISD Board of Trustees meet at 6:15 p.m. on the second Monday of the month at 8039 Bar-K Ranch Road in Lago Vista. Meetings are open to the public. If you wish to speak, arrive early and register. You can find agendas and board meeting packets on the district's website.

• CITY OF CEDAR PARK — CEDARPARKTEXAS.GOV

Agendas and minutes for all boards and commissions are available, and many meetings

are streamed live, on the city's website.

• CEDAR PARK CITY COUNCIL

Meets at 6 p.m. the second and fourth Thursday of each month at City Council Chambers, 450 Cypress Creek Road, Building 4. Council agendas and packets are available on the city's website. Meetings are open to the public. If you wish to speak, arrive early and register.

• CITY OF LEANDER — LEANDERTX.GOV

Agendas and minutes for all boards and commissions are available, and City Council meetings are streamed live, on the city's website.

• LEANDER CITY COUNCIL

Meets at 6 p.m. the first and

third Thursday of each month in the City Council Chambers, Pat Bryson Municipal Hall, 201 N. Brushy Street. Council agendas and packets are available on the city's website. Meetings are open to the public. If you wish to speak, arrive early and register.

• CITY OF LAGO VISTA — LAGOVISTATEXAS.ORG

Agendas and minutes for all boards and commissions are available on the city's website.

• LAGO VISTA CITY COUNCIL

Meets 6:30 p.m. the first and third Thursday of each month in the Council Chambers at City Hall, 5803 Thunderbird Drive. Council agendas and packets are available on the city's website. Meetings are open to the public. If you wish to speak, arrive early and register.

SCHOOLS

from page A1

“Last year, we gave families school choice with the Education Freedom Scholarship program, because parents know best,” Lee said in his State of the State address last month. “Growing the program would open the doors of opportunity for thousands more children statewide.”

South Carolina Republican Gov. Henry McMaster and Missouri Republican Gov. Mike Kehoe also are seeking more money for school choice programs.

“So far what we’ve really seen is legislatures looking to expand the programs,” said Andrew Handel, director of education and workforce development at the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC), a membership group for conservative state lawmakers that has pushed for choice programs nationwide.

“The ESA [education savings account] is the gold standard. It’s the one that gives parents the most flexibility,” he said, referring to programs that allow parents to use the money for other education-related expenses in addition to tuition. “The best states are where the funding for those school choice programs is tied directly to their state education formula. That ensures that no matter how many families apply, you’re always going to have the money there.”

But in Arizona, the first state with a universal program, Democratic Gov. Katie Hobbs has become an outspoken critic.

Hobbs last month criticized the program, approved under her Republican predecessor, as an “entitlement program” that “continues to operate unchecked, squandering taxpayer dollars with no accountability.” She has proposed scaling back the program to its original scope, when it was limited to children with disabilities and military families.

The program serves more than 100,000 students — about 1 in 10 K-12 students — and cost the state about \$872 million in fiscal 2025, according to the Grand Canyon Institute, a nonpartisan think tank. In addition to offering vouchers to pay private school tuition, it allows money to be spent on certain school supplies.

A recent audit by the Arizona Department of Education found that about 20% of Empowerment Scholarship Account dollars were used for unauthorized purchases, including iPhones, lingerie, jewelry and other luxury items, according to documents obtained earlier this month by the television station 12News in Arizona.

At least 45% of the kids receiving aid in Arizona were never enrolled in public schools, 12News recently reported. In some states, the percentage is even higher: In the 2023-24 school year, about two-thirds of the students participating in scholarship programs in Arkansas and Iowa were already attending private schools.

Those numbers have handed ammunition to critics who argue that universal programs are creating two parallel education systems, both funded by taxpayers.

“Every state that’s passed a voucher system has had to slow down its per-pupil funding for public schools,” said Joshua Cowen, a professor of education

“So far what we’ve really seen is legislatures looking to expand the programs.”

ANDREW HANDEL
Director of education and workforce development at the American Legislative Exchange Council

policy at Michigan State University. “Whether they take it directly out of school aid or fund it from another pot, it’s all the same budget.

“STATES CAN’T AFFORD TO RUN TWO SYSTEMS.”

The waiting lists prove that many families would like to send their children to private schools, but it’s difficult to determine whether they get a better education there: Unlike public schools, private schools can turn away students, and in many states private school students don’t take the same standardized tests, so comparing academic performance is difficult.

Patrick Wolf, a professor at the University of Arkansas who studies school choice programs, noted that in his state, students with disabilities made up 48% of first-year participants. The percentage declined to 36% the second year, but that was still nearly three times the rate of disability in the general population.

Wolf argued that choice programs can help public schools by providing competition, forcing them to adapt.

“The traditional public schools can lose students who didn’t really want to be there, and that can be a pressure release valve,” he said. “What we’ve seen when private school choice programs launch is that public school test scores often go up slightly.

“The competitive effects are either neutral or positive,” he said. “They communicate more effectively with parents. They offer new programs targeted to the kinds of students they’re afraid might leave.”

GOING BIG IN TEXAS

Earlier this month, Texas launched what is likely to be the nation’s largest school choice program.

The new pre-K to 12th grade scholarship program is open to any U.S. citizen or immigrant in the country legally (public schools are open to everybody), but funding will be capped at \$1 billion for the 2026-2027 school year. If state lawmakers choose to spend more in future years, the cost could rise to nearly \$5 billion by 2030, according to a legislative fiscal note. The state’s current biennial budget is close to \$340 billion.

Most participating students who want to attend a private school will be eligible for about \$10,470 per year, while students with disabilities can receive up to \$30,000. Families who want to homeschool their child can get \$2,000.

This year, Texas will give priority to students with disabilities, families with lower incomes, and children enrolled in public and charter schools. Starting

next year, the guidelines will be adjusted to favor the siblings of current students and new applicants.

Strongly backed by Republican Gov. Greg Abbott, the program drew more than 42,000 applications when it opened on Feb. 4, according to state officials. As of Feb. 18, the state had received a total of 111,000 applications. Texans can apply through March 17.

Travis Pillow, a senior official overseeing implementation, said the state partnered with Odyssey, a vendor that has administered similar programs in other states, to automate eligibility verification using state IDs and federal tax returns, since Texas does not have a state income tax.

Officials say more than three-quarters of applicants were verified the same day they applied, a benchmark they argue is critical to maintaining momentum and public confidence.

Pillow said Texas lawmakers are required to consider waitlist numbers in future appropriations decisions, and early demand could shape whether the program expands beyond its initial \$1 billion allocation.

FEDERAL TAX CREDIT

Meanwhile, a provision of the broad tax and spending measure President Donald Trump signed in July could create a significant new source of funding for families who want to send their kids to private school — but only in states that choose to participate.

The measure creates a new federal tax credit for people who contribute to nonprofits that award private school scholarships to K-12 students. Taxpayers in any state can get the tax credits, but only by donating to organizations in participating states.

Last month, federal officials announced that 23 states had opted in to the program; all of them, except for Virginia, are led by Republicans. However, the federal list did not include Colorado, where Democratic Gov. Jared Polis said in December that his state also would participate. North Carolina Democratic Gov. Josh Stein also has said he will opt in. The Democratic governors of New Mexico, Oregon and Wisconsin have said their states will not participate.

In Pennsylvania, where one of the nation’s largest state-level tax credit scholarship programs already operates, scholarship granting organizations say that the state needs to opt in to the federal program to meet the growing demand. Democratic Gov. Josh Shapiro has been a supporter of vouchers generally, but he has not said whether Pennsylvania will opt into the program.

Keisha Jordan, president and CEO of the Children’s Scholarship Fund Philadelphia, said that more than 200,000 Pennsylvania children live in neighborhoods where the local public schools are low performing.

Despite serving thousands of students, she said, “every year scholarship organizations like Children’s Scholarship Fund Philadelphia still have to turn students down because we don’t have enough funding to meet the demand.”

Jordan argues the new federal tax credit could help close that gap. “The demand is here,” she said. “Pennsylvania taxpayers will participate, but their money could go to another state. Why not keep it here?”

OPTIMISM

from page A3

show “the unique challenges and strengths” faced by Texas owners.

NFIB said Texas respondents reported stronger sales expectations and more positive earnings and employment trends than the organization’s overall U.S. data across the 10 components that make up the index.

“Texas remains one of the best places to own, operate, and grow a small business,” Jeff Burdett, NFIB’s state director for Texas, said in a statement. Burdett also pointed to ongoing hiring challenges, saying NFIB plans to work with lawmakers on policies aimed at strengthening the workforce.

In the report, Texas owners rated their business health slightly better than owners nationwide. Seventeen percent of Texas respondents described their business health as excellent, compared with 11% nationally, NFIB said. Another 48% in Texas rated their business health as good, compared with 54% nationally.

Texas business owners matched the national average on “fair,” with 29% choosing that rating, NFIB said. Six percent in Texas rated their business health as poor, compared with 5% nationally.

Labor quality stood out as a leading concern in Texas, according to the report. Twenty-eight percent of owners in Texas cited labor quality as their single most important problem for summer 2025, compared with 19% nationally, NFIB said. The organization said labor quality was the only issue that was meaningfully worse in Texas than in the rest of the country combined.

At the same time, fewer Texas owners pointed to government regulation as their top problem. NFIB said 3% of Texas respondents selected regulation as their single most important problem, compared with 8% nationwide.

The report also found elevated uncertainty in 2025 for both Texas and the nation, with many owners responding “don’t know” or “uncertain” to questions about future business plans, NFIB said. NFIB said 2025 was the highest year on record for its Small Business Uncertainty Index, with little difference between Texas and U.S. readings. NFIB said that uncertainty can make it harder for small businesses to plan, including decisions tied to capital investment.

NFIB said the Texas report draws from its Small Business Economic Trends survey, based on responses from a random sample of NFIB members. The organization said it compiled a weighted average across multiple surveys to produce state-level seasonal results, and that this report analyzes responses from Texas participants from summer 2025.

SENTENCE

from page A1

May 2014 and May 2018, six wafers were shipped as part of the scheme for about \$497,000. When diced, authorities said, one wafer can yield roughly 180 individual chips.

Dimitrov was indicted in July 2020. He was arrested in 2022 and extradited from Greece to the United States in August 2024, according to the Justice Department. Two other defendants named in U.S. filings — Russian national Ilias Sabirov and Dimitrov’s father, Dimitar Dimitrov — remain fugitives, U.S. officials said.

In Bulgaria, politicians from the nationalist party Vazrazhdane portrayed Dimitrov as a victim and criticized Sofia for not funding his legal defense. Kostadin Kostadinov, the party’s leader, argued the case was “absurd” and claimed the goods cited by U.S. prosecutors never left Dimitrov’s office in Sofia — a claim that conflicts with U.S. court filings describing shipments to Russia.

HILL COUNTRY NEWS™
SCOTT COLEMAN, PUBLISHER
publisher@hillcountrynews.com

GINNY BROCK, OFFICE MANAGER
Bookkeeping/Ad Sales/Circulation/Obituaries
bookkeeper@hillcountrynews.com

MARISSA FERREIRA, PAGE DESIGNER

OFFICE HOURS:
9 a.m. - 5 p.m., Monday - Friday, Call for Appointment
910 Quest Pkwy, Suite 4, Cedar Park, TX 78613 (512) 259-4449

TO REPORT NEWS:
Call (512) 259-4449 or email: news@hillcountrynews.com

CORRECTIONS:
We strive for accuracy and transparency in our reporting. If you believe that we have made a factual error in reporting, please call (512) 259-4449 or email editor@hillcountrynews.com with a link to the story in question, along with information on what you believe is factually incorrect in the reporting. Individual columns in the Hill Country News do not necessarily reflect the newspaper’s editorial opinion.

SUBSCRIPTION RATES:
Digital Subscription (eEdition): \$38 annually
Print & Digital (USPS mail delivery): \$58 annually in Texas, \$80 outside Texas
*Mail subscriptions not available outside the US

All subscriptions must be prepaid. Delivery inside Cedar Park and Leander may be made by carrier or mail. Full access subscriptions include access to hillcountrynews.com as well as full digital replica (e-edition) which may include updated content and advertising.

POSTMASTER:
Periodicals postage paid at: Cedar Park, TX (USPS 019423)
Send address changes to: P.O. Box 1777, Cedar Park, TX 78630

PUBLISHED BY:
Katy Newsmedia LLC
P.O. Box 1777
Cedar Park, TX 78630-1777
© 2025 Hill Country News™. All rights reserved.

CALL, EMAIL OR VISIT:

(512) 259-4449

bookkeeper@HillCountryNews.com
HillCountryNews.com

CLASSIFIEDS

**PLACE
YOUR AD
TODAY!**

**040
AUCTIONS**

**PUBLIC ONLINE
AUCTION
LEANDER ISD
1900 Cougar
Country Dr.
Preview:
Tues., 3/3/26,
7am-2pm
Auction Ends:
Thurs., 3/5/26
FEATURED
ITEMS
Exercise Equip.,
Smart TV's,
Cosmetology
Chairs, Sound &
Lighting Equip.,
Appliances,
Shop Heaters,
Grow Light
Racks, Spin
Bikes, Exercise
Equip., Balance
Beam, & More
14% B.P.
www.onlinepros.com
#7341
(800)243-1113 OR
(281)357-4977**

**190
LAWN, GARDEN**

**TREE
SOLDIER
LAWN &
LANDSCAPE**
Let our family
take care of
your family.
For all of
your tree &
landscape
needs, call
Stacy @
512-629-0329
**FREE
ESTIMATES
& GREAT
REFERENCES!
VETERAN
OWNED &
OPERATED**

**The Classifieds
RIGHT
ON THE
MONEY!**
Trade your unwanted
items for fast cash with
the Classifieds.
PLACE YOUR
AD TODAY
512-259-4449
HILL COUNTRY
NEWS
CLASSIFIEDS
hillcountrynews.com
P.O. Box 1777
Cedar Park, TX 78630

**210
MISC. SERVICES**

THE FIX IT MAN REPAIRS
We're Here To Help!
737-888-1551 • thefixitmanrepairs.com



FREE ESTIMATES
Experience & Integrity
Decks & Patio Covers • Fence Installation & Repair
Drywall Repairs • Door Installation & Repair
Carpentry & Woodworking • Handyman Jobs & Much More

February 19 Puzzle Answers

2	9	4	6	3	7	5	1	8
3	8	7	1	5	2	6	4	9
1	5	6	9	4	8	7	2	3
4	3	1	8	6	5	9	7	2
5	6	2	7	1	9	8	3	4
9	7	8	3	2	4	1	6	5
6	2	3	5	8	1	4	9	7
8	4	9	2	7	6	3	5	1
7	1	5	4	9	3	2	8	6

**950
PUBLIC NOTICES**

Application has been made with the Texas Alcoholic Beverage Commission for MIXED BEVERAGE PERMIT and MIXED BEVERAGE LATE HOURS PERMIT by AUSTIN VAMPIRES LLC, to be located at 710A West 6th Street, Austin, Travis County, TX 78701. Officer of limited liability company is RODRIGO JARDON AYALA [manager]

Application has been made with the Texas Alcoholic Beverage Commission for a Mixed Beverage License by FW Leander LLC dba First Watch Leander to be located at 19397 Ronald W Reagan Blvd., #100, Leander, Williamson County, Texas. Manager and officers of said LLC are Joseph M. Haik-President/Secretary, Brandon Poynter-EVP, Blaine Poynter-VP, Alec Poynter-VP. Member is MH FW Restaurants LLC.

**210
MISC. SERVICES**

**950
PUBLIC NOTICES**

**CITY OF LEANDER, TEXAS
INVITATION FOR BID
TRAFFIC SIGNAL PROJECT:
RONALD REAGAN BLVD.
AND PALMERA RIDGE BLVD.
CIPS26-001**

The City of Leander is soliciting an Invitation For Bid (IFB) from qualified firms to provide construction services for the delivery of the Traffic Signals at the Intersection of Ronald W Reagan Blvd and Palmira Ridge Blvd/Vista Heights Dr. Applications will be accepted prior to 2:00 P.M. on Thursday, March 26, 2026, submitted to the City of Leander via electronic file uploaded to the Bonfire Purchasing Platform at <https://leandertx.bonfirehub.com/>.

Notice Public Hearing

The City of Lago Vista City Council will hold a Public Hearing on March 19, 2026 at 4:00 PM in the Council Chambers at City Hall, located at 5803 Thunderbird, Lago Vista, Texas to receive citizen input in consideration of the following:

Consideration and recommendation on an amendment to Chapter 14 of the Code of Ordinances of the City of Lago Vista, TX, also known as the "Zoning Ordinance" specifically Exhibit A, Part IV, Table B (Use Table), to add a new use category for indoor inventory storage and to allow such use in all commercial zoning districts.

Copies of the proposed amendment are available for public review at City Hall.

All interested persons are invited to attend.

CITY OF JONESTOWN

Ordinance No. 2026-O-662

An Ordinance of the City of Jonestown, Texas, amending Section A13.002, entitled "Fee Schedule for Wastewater Services" of the Appendix A "Fee Schedule" of The Code of Ordinances of the City of Jonestown, Texas, to provide for an increase in the amount of the wastewater rates applicable to property served by the Lago Vista wastewater system to correspond with increases in rates adopted by the updated wastewater rates and fee based on a Comprehensive Wastewater Rate Study; providing for implementation; provisions; severability; effective date; and providing for proper notice and meeting.

This ordinance was duly passed and approved on February 12, 2026, by the City Council of the City of Jonestown, Texas. Copies are available at the City of Jonestown, 18649 FM 1431, Suite 4-A, Jonestown, Texas, or by email request to sbarton@jonestowntx.gov

NEED TO PLACE A LEGAL NOTICE?
Visit HillCountryNews.com, email bookkeeper@hillcountrynews.com or call 512-259-4449.

**950
PUBLIC NOTICES**

Notice Public Hearing

The City of Lago Vista Planning and Zoning Commission will hold a Public Hearing on March 12, 2026 at 4:00 PM in the Council Chambers at City Hall, located at 5803 Thunderbird, Lago Vista, Texas to receive citizen input in consideration of the following:

Consideration and recommendation on an amendment to Chapter 14 of the Code of Ordinances of the City of Lago Vista, TX, also known as the "Zoning Ordinance" specifically Exhibit A, Part IV, Table B (Use Table), to add a new use category for indoor inventory storage and to allow such use in all commercial zoning districts.

Copies of the proposed amendment are available for public review at City Hall.

All interested persons are invited to attend.

**Request for Proposals
Leander High School Utility Bid**

American Constructors requests proposals for Select Utility Relocation for the Leander HS Master Plan Additions and Renovations Project.

Proposals are due Wednesday, March 11th at 2:00 pm. Proposals may be emailed to estimating@americanconstructors.com or mailed/delivered to American Constructors at 11900 West Parmer Lane, Suite 200, Cedar Park, TX 78613, or submitted via fax to (512) 328-2520.

Documents are also available for downloading from American Constructors' ftp site. Please visit www.americanconstructors.com for details. Please contact American Constructors at (512) 328-2026 for additional information on this project.

**CITY OF LAGO VISTA, TEXAS
NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING
REGARDING THE ISSUANCE OF
GENERAL OBLIGATION
REFUNDING BONDS**

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the City Council of the City of Lago Vista, Texas ("the City"), intends to issue general obligation refunding bonds (the "Refunding Bonds") for the purpose of reducing debt service payments of the City on ad valorem supported tax debt. The City will conduct a public hearing at its meeting to commence at 6:30 p.m. on March 5, 2026, expected to be held at the Lago Vista City Hall, 5803 Thunderbird, Lago Vista, Texas, on the issuance by the City of the Refunding Bonds. There are no statutory provisions providing for a petition and election on Refunding Bonds since they are being issued to save taxes for the City's taxpayers, however the City Charter provides that if before March 5, 2026, the City Secretary receives a petition, signed by qualified voters equal in number to at least five (5) percent of the number of registered voters in the City at the time of the last general city election, protesting the issuance of the Refunding Bonds, the City may not authorize the issuance of the Refunding Bonds unless the issuance is approved at an election. The City Council will consider ratifying the ordinance authorizing the issuance of the Refunding Bonds and the pricing information related to the Refunding Bonds at the meeting of the City Council to commence at 6:30 P.M. on March 5, 2026, at the Lago Vista City Hall, 5803 Thunderbird, Lago Vista, Texas. The Refunding Bonds will be secured by a continuing pledge of ad valorem taxes to be levied, assessed and collected annually against all taxable property in the City. The maximum principal amount of the Refunding Bonds to be issued is \$14,080,000 and the purpose for which the Refunding Bonds will be issued is to generate debt service savings of at least 3.00% for the City's taxpayers.

**ADVERTISEMENT FOR
SEALED PROPOSALS
RFP No. 26-03 Irrigation System
Repairs, Cedar Breaks Effluent
Disposal Area**

The City of Lago Vista is requesting sealed proposals from qualified irrigation contractors for the repair, rehabilitation, and testing of the existing effluent irrigation system at the Cedar Breaks Effluent Disposal Area. Work under this contract will include, but is not limited to, inspection, troubleshooting, repair or replacement of damaged components, electrical diagnostics, valve and lateral line repairs, controller programming, and operational testing. The intent of this project is to restore full operational functionality of the irrigation system, ensuring proper water flow, valve performance, wiring integrity, communication between controllers and field components, and full operation of all irrigation heads on each line. Contractors shall ensure the system is fully tested and functioning as designed upon completion. Submittal packages will be available on the City's website at www.lagovistatexas.gov/Bids.aspx.

Submittals shall be submitted in sealed envelopes marked "RFP No. 26-03 Irrigation System Repairs, Cedar Breaks Effluent Disposal Area" and may be hand delivered or mailed to the City of Lago Vista, 5803 Thunderbird Street, Lago Vista, Texas 78645. Submittals must be received by 1:00 p.m. CST on Thursday, March 12, 2026. The name of the submitting Company of all proposals will be read aloud on Thursday, March 12, 2026, at 1:00 p.m. CST in the Council Chambers at Lago Vista City Hall, 5803 Thunderbird, Lago Vista, TX 78645.

A more detailed description of this RFP and a description of the desired scope of services and requirements related to the anticipated form of agreement for this project are available in the link above and from Eric De La Cruz (Eric.DeLaCruz@lagovistatexas.gov).

All questions and requests for explanations, clarifications, or interpretations must be received by email to Eric.DeLaCruz@lagovistatexas.gov prior to March 4, 2026, at 5 p.m. CST.

The City of Lago Vista reserves the right to waive any informality that is not detrimental to any other proposal or potential proposer or to reject all proposals or to accept the lowest responsible proposal that in the judgment of the City Council will be in the best interest of the City of Lago Vista. No proposer may withdraw his proposal within sixty (60) days after the actual date of opening thereof.

**NOTICE OF AMENDED RULES AND REGULATIONS
ADOPTED BY TRAVIS COUNTY WATER CONTROL AND
IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT – POINT VENTURE**

Travis County Water Control and Improvement District – Point Venture, a political subdivision of the State of Texas (the "District"), has adopted an amended Order Establishing Water and Wastewater Service Rates, Charges and Tap Fees, and Adopting General Policies and Rules with Respect to the District's Water, Wastewater and Drainage Systems (the "Rules") governing applications for connection to the District's system, payment of fees, security deposits, customer's responsibility, applications for water and wastewater services, impact and tap fees, security deposits, water and wastewater rates, billings, grease traps, inspection fees, grinder pumps, access to customer's premises, bulk water sales, surplus water sales, fire hydrant meters fees, TCEQ regulatory assessment fees, fire flow protection and test fees, meter calibrations, pulling/resetting meters, returned check fees, collection of delinquent accounts, late charges, discontinuation of service, charges for reconnection, cross connections, equipment damage, illegal water and wastewater connections, water restriction violations, wastewater quality limits, sewer cleanouts, leak billing adjustments, and enforcement of the Rules.

The foregoing Rules of the District provide for penalties for violations. Any grease trap the District's Representative finds is not being properly cleaned, maintained, or monitored will result in a fine of \$250.00 plus the actual cost incurred by the District to cure the violation if it fails inspection after the time period to cure provided in the Rules. There is a \$500.00 charge for the second failed inspection, \$750.00 charge for the third failed inspection, \$1,000.00 charge for the fourth failed inspection, and \$2,500.00 charge for five or more failed inspections. Failure to provide the grease trap maintenance log within five business days of written demand for such log shall constitute a first failed inspection under the schedule above.

A \$1,000.00 fine will be assessed for direct cross connections and repeat offenses will be charged a \$2,000.00 fine.

A fee shall be charged equal to actual costs of corrective actions by the District if the District's facilities or equipment have been damaged by tampering, bypassing, installing unauthorized taps, damage caused by equipment or by hand without calling for locates, reconnecting service without authority, or other service diversion. If the District's equipment has not been damaged, a fee equal to the actual costs to correct service diversion, unauthorized taps or reconnection of service without authority shall be charged. If the District's facilities or equipment have been damaged due to negligence or unauthorized use of the District's equipment, right-of-way or meter shut-off valve, or due to other acts for which the District incurs losses or damages, the customer shall be liable for all labor and material charges incurred as a result of said acts or negligence. A \$4,000.00 fee will be assessed for tampering with a fire hydrant, and a \$10,000.00 fee will be charged for tampering with tank sites.

The following penalties will be assessed for an unauthorized connection to the water system that bypasses a meter: by builders/contractors, \$2,000.00 for the first offense, \$3,000.00 for the second offense, and \$4,000.00 per offense for the third offense and beyond plus meter connect fee and costs to clean or replace meter; or by residential customers, \$2,000.00 for the first offense and \$500.00 for each repeated offense.

A \$500.00 fine will be assessed for any unauthorized connection to the District's wastewater system.

When the District has issued mandatory outdoor water restrictions, the following fines are imposed: \$200.00 for the second offense, \$500.00 for the third offense, \$1,000.00 for the fourth offense, and \$2,000.00 for the fifth offense and beyond.

A \$250.00 fine will be assessed plus actual fees as charged by the District and any of its wholesale service providers for exceedance of wastewater quality limits.

A fine of up to \$100.00, plus actual costs for repairs and services to clear the line, will be assessed for broken cleanouts or impaired sewer plant function due to illegal introduction of foreign substances into the sewer collection system or failure to cap cleanouts where water or debris enter the wastewater system. Customers will be charged \$500.00 plus actual costs of repairs performed by a District's Representative to broken cleanouts with no other damage.

A fine of \$5,000.00 maximum per occurrence may be assessed for other violations of the District's Rules.

All charges and fines assessed under the Rules shall be added to the utility bill to such customer and shall be due and payable at the same time as the utility bill and shall be processed as a delinquent account in accordance with the Rules if not timely paid. Other violations of the Rules may result in termination of services.

The full text of the foregoing Order Establishing Water and Wastewater Service Rates, Charges and Tap Fees, and Adopting General Policies and Rules with Respect to the District's Water, Wastewater and Drainage Systems is on file at the District Office, 18606 Venture Drive, Point Venture, Texas 78645, phone: (512) 267-1641, where it may be read by any interested person. Persons may also request a copy by calling the foregoing number.

CURRICULUM

from page A1

publishers do, he said.

"I think there's going to be corrections," Dempsey said. "That's why we have this process."

Little, the vice chair, agreed on the minor nature of some edits but said she still considers them "pretty sloppy publishing." The need to replace images concerns her most, she said.

"The fact that they have requested licensing changes and the fact that they have these items in here leaves us open to lawsuits for a violation of copyright laws," said Little, who formerly served as regional vice president for Houghton Mifflin Publishers.

Historically in Texas, learning materials rife with errors have drawn scrutiny across the political spectrum. Two Democratic members, Gustavo Reveles and Marisa B. Pérez-Díaz, noted that Texas publishers sign affidavits prior to submitting their materials for approval. Those affidavits indicate that the authors checked for errors.

"What I want to ensure is that all publishers are being held to the same standard," Pérez-Díaz said. "It's quite alarming to hear and to learn of all of these errors, especially licensure errors, at this late an hour."

Bluebonnet's reading portion attracted national attention in 2024 for its references to the Bible and Christianity. Roughly a third of Texans follow other faiths or no faith at all.

The education agency has said the religious

references make up only a fraction of the overall product. Multiple analyses have found that the curriculum skews heavily in favor of Christianity compared to other religions. Parents and historians have also expressed concerns about the materials downplaying America's history of racism and slavery.

The State Board of Education narrowly approved Bluebonnet, often touted by state leaders as high-quality instructional material, in November 2024. Roughly 1 in 4 school districts have indicated that they're using at least some portions of the reading curriculum, covering about 400,000 students. The materials come with a \$60 per-student incentive for school districts.

The board voted Friday to postpone its decision on the education agency's correction request until its next meeting.

The board's next official meeting is scheduled for April. However, Chair Aaron Kinsey, a Republican, said Friday he plans to call a special meeting at an undisclosed date to address some of the board's unfinished business from the week.

Until the board approves the request, the current materials will remain in place.

"The 4,200-plus changes, for me, is unprecedented," said Republican board member Will Hickman. "I just saw the list yesterday, and I just need more time for myself to consider those before I'm able to approve these changes."

STANDOFF

from page A1

was trying to steal her vehicle. In later calls, she said he had broken into the home and that she and her two other children were hiding in a bedroom.

Officers who arrived at the residence found the front door barricaded and forced entry, the release said. As three officers moved toward upstairs bedrooms, they heard screaming. When they attempted to breach a bedroom door, Taylor fired through the closed door, the release said.

Bullets struck Officer Jackie Quiles on the edge of her vest and grazed the head of Officer Cris Hester, according to the release. Officer Nik Anderson was shot in the arm, shattering his humerus bone, the release said.

Hester and Quiles retreated from the house. Anderson waited for an opportunity to escape and returned fire as Taylor continued shooting from a second-story window at patrol cars and other vehicles, the release said.

Law enforcement from across the county and the Central Texas Regional SWAT team responded. Negotiators worked through the night as Taylor

held family members in the bedroom for about 16 hours, the release said. Authorities said he released his siblings before surrendering with his mother about 7:30 a.m.

Investigators recovered a Glock 9mm handgun with several extended magazines and about 96 spent shell casings from the bedroom, the release said.

At trial, Taylor raised an insanity defense, arguing he could not understand the nature of his actions or distinguish right from wrong, the release said. Kennon rejected the defense after testimony and body camera footage, according to the release.

Prosecutors also presented evidence of a prior arrest for family violence against a sibling and a shooting at a Houston apartment complex, where the release said Taylor fired at his father and forced residents to seek cover.


"This case serves as a reminder of the inherent dangers our law enforcement officers face every single day to keep our community safe," Williamson County District Attorney Shawn Dick said in a statement.

CALL, EMAIL OR VISIT:
(512) 259-4449
bookkeeper@HillCountryNews.com
HillCountryNews.com

CLASSIFIEDS

PLACE
YOUR AD
TODAY!

900 BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES	900 BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES	900 BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES	950 PUBLIC NOTICES	950 PUBLIC NOTICES	950 PUBLIC NOTICES	950 PUBLIC NOTICES	950 PUBLIC NOTICES	950 PUBLIC NOTICES
----------------------------------	----------------------------------	----------------------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------



Grand Alaskan Cruise & Tour
12 DAYS INSIDE CABIN
STARTING AT \$3,549 \$3,299*
BASED ON JUL 8, 2026 DEPARTURE

CALL US: 1-877-741-0071

*Per person based on double occupancy & includes tax service/gov't fees. Ask your Travel Consultant for terms & conditions. Add-on airfare with transfers available for most major gateways.



WE BUY
Oil, Gas, & Mineral Rights
Both non-producing and producing
including Non-Participating Royalty Interest (NPRI)
Provide us your desired price for an offer evaluation.

806.620.1422
LOBO MINERALS, LLC
PO Box 1800 • Lubbock, TX 79408 • LoboMineralsLLC@gmail.com

Jim's Metal Roof Coatings
Licensed and Insured Statewide Service
All of our coatings protect and make your building look beautiful.

ASPHALT SHINGLE ROOF COATINGS
FLAT DECK ROOF COATINGS
LEAK REPAIR • BIN TOPS • ROOFING (METAL/GALVANIZED)

PAINTING
METAL BUILDING (STEEL OR ALUMINUM) • HOUSE (EXTERIOR)

Call your local contractor, Jim's Metal Farm Coatings at
(325) 436-4039 (469) 315-0002

TEXAS STATEWIDE CLASSIFIED ADVERTISING NETWORK

TexSCAN

HOME IMPROVEMENT

TexSCAN Week of Feb. 15-21, 2026

CELLULAR PHONE SERVICE

Consumer Cellular - the same reliable, nationwide coverage as the largest carriers. No long-term contract, no hidden fees and activation is free. All plans feature unlimited talk and text, starting at just \$20/month. For more information, call 1-855-493-3803.

CHARITY

Donate your car, truck, boat, RV and more to support our veterans! Schedule a FAST, FREE vehicle pickup and receive a top tax deduction! Call Veteran Car Donations at 1-855-808-4152 today!

ENERGY

Prepare for power outages today with a Generac Home Standby Generator. Act now to receive a FREE 5-Year warranty with qualifying purchase. Call 1-855-704-8579 today to schedule a free quote. It's not just a generator. It's a power move.

OIL & GAS

We buy oil, gas & mineral rights. Both non-producing and producing including Non-Participating Royalty Interest (NPRI). Provide us your desired price for an offer evaluation. Call today: 806-620-1422. Lobo Minerals, LLC, PO Box 1800, Lubbock, TX 79408-1800, LoboMineralsLLC@gmail.com.

WANTED

Need Extra Cash — I Buy RVs & Mobile Homes — Travel Trailers, 5th Wheels, Goosenecks, Bumper Pulls. In Any Area, Any Condition — Old/New, Dirty or Clean! I PAY CASH. No Title — No Problem, we can apply for one. We go anywhere in Texas. ANR Enterprises, 956-466-7001!

Texas Press Statewide Classified Network
184 Participating Texas Newspapers • Regional Ads
Start At \$250 • Email ads@texaspress.com

NOTICE: While most advertisers are reputable, we cannot guarantee products or services advertised. We urge readers to use caution and when in doubt, contact the Texas Attorney General at 800-621-0508 or the Federal Trade Commission at 877-FTC-HELP. The FTC web site is www.ftc.gov/bizop.


ARE YOU ADVERTISING?

Your customers want to know you'll be there
FOR THE LONG TERM.

To advertise, call us at
512-259-4449

HILL COUNTRY NEWS

Texas Commission on Environmental Quality



NOTICE OF APPLICATION AND PRELIMINARY DECISION FOR TPDES PERMIT FOR MUNICIPAL WASTEWATER RENEWAL

PERMIT NO. WQ0012644001

APPLICATION AND PRELIMINARY DECISION. City of Leander, P.O. Box 319, Leander, Texas 78646, has applied to the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) for a renewal of Texas Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (TPDES) Permit No. WQ0012644001, which authorizes the discharge of treated domestic wastewater at an annual average flow not to exceed 5,250,000 gallons per day. TCEQ received this application on August 1, 2024.

The facility is located at 10201 Ranch-to-Market Road 2243, in the City of Leander, Williamson County, Texas 78641. The treated effluent is discharged to Brushy Creek (unclassified), thence to Brushy Creek in Segment No. 1244 of the Brazos River Basin. The unclassified receiving water use is high aquatic life use for Brushy Creek (unclassified). The designated uses for Segment No. 1244 are primary contact recreation, public water supply, aquifer protection, and high aquatic life use. This link to an electronic map of the site or facility's general location is provided as a public courtesy and is not part of the application or notice. For the exact location, refer to the application.
<https://gisweb.tceq.texas.gov/LocationMapper/?marker=-97.84027,30.581388&level=18>

The TCEQ Executive Director has completed the technical review of the application and prepared a draft permit. The draft permit, if approved, would establish the conditions under which the facility must operate. The Executive Director has made a preliminary decision that this permit, if issued, meets all statutory and regulatory requirements. The permit application, Executive Director's preliminary decision, and draft permit are available for viewing and copying at City of Leander City Hall, 105 North Brushy Street, Leander, in Williamson County, Texas. The application and associated notices are available electronically at the following webpage: <https://www.tceq.texas.gov/permitting/wastewater/pending-permits/tpdes-applications>.

ALTERNATIVE LANGUAGE NOTICE. Alternative language notice in Spanish is available at <https://www.tceq.texas.gov/permitting/wastewater/plain-language-summaries-and-public-notice>. El aviso de idioma alternativo en español está disponible en <https://www.tceq.texas.gov/permitting/wastewater/plain-language-summaries-and-public-notice>.

PUBLIC COMMENT / PUBLIC MEETING. You may submit public comments or request a public meeting about this application. The purpose of a public meeting is to provide the opportunity to submit comments or to ask questions about the application. TCEQ holds a public meeting if the Executive Director determines that there is a significant degree of public interest in the application or if requested by a local legislator. A public meeting is not a contested case hearing.

OPPORTUNITY FOR A CONTESTED CASE HEARING. After the deadline for submitting public comments, the Executive Director will consider all timely comments and prepare a response to all relevant and material, or significant public comments. **Unless the application is directly referred for a contested case hearing, the response to comments will be mailed to everyone who submitted public comments and to those persons who are on the mailing list for this application.** If comments are received, the mailing will also provide instructions for requesting a contested case hearing or reconsideration of the Executive Director's decision. A contested case hearing is a legal proceeding similar to a civil trial in a state district court.

TO REQUEST A CONTESTED CASE HEARING, YOU MUST INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING ITEMS IN YOUR REQUEST: your name, address, phone number; applicant's name and proposed permit number; the location and distance of your property/activities relative to the proposed facility; a specific description of how you would be adversely affected by the facility in a way not common to the general public; a list of all disputed issues of fact that you submit during the comment period; and the statement "[I/we] request a contested case hearing." If the request for contested case hearing is filed on behalf of a group or association, the request must designate the group's representative for receiving future correspondence; identify by name and physical address an individual member of the group who would be adversely affected by the proposed facility or activity; provide the information discussed above regarding the affected member's location and distance from the facility or activity; explain how and why the member would be affected; and explain how the interests the group seeks to protect are relevant to the group's purpose.

Following the close of all applicable comment and request periods, the Executive Director will forward the application and any requests for reconsideration or for a contested case hearing to the TCEQ Commissioners for their consideration at a scheduled Commission meeting.

The Commission may only grant a request for a contested case hearing on issues the requestor submitted in their timely comments that were not subsequently withdrawn. **If a hearing is granted, the subject of a hearing will be limited to disputed issues of fact or mixed questions of fact and law relating to relevant and material water quality concerns submitted during the comment period. TCEQ may act on an application to renew a permit for discharge of wastewater without providing an opportunity for a contested case hearing if certain criteria are met.**

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR ACTION. The Executive Director may issue final approval of the application unless a timely contested case hearing request or request for reconsideration is filed. If a timely hearing request or request for reconsideration is filed, the Executive Director will not issue final approval of the permit and will forward the application and request to the TCEQ Commissioners for their consideration at a scheduled Commission meeting.

MAILING LIST. If you submit public comments, a request for a contested case hearing or a reconsideration of the Executive Director's decision, you will be added to the mailing list for this specific application to receive future public notices mailed by the Office of the Chief Clerk. In addition, you may request to be placed on: (1) the permanent mailing list for a specific applicant name and permit number; and/or (2) the mailing list for a specific county. If you wish to be placed on the permanent and/or the county mailing list, clearly specify which list(s) and send your request to TCEQ Office of the Chief Clerk at the address below.

All written public comments and public meeting requests must be submitted to the Office of the Chief Clerk, MC 105, Texas Commission on Environmental Quality, P.O. Box 13087, Austin, TX 78711-3087 or electronically at www.tceq.texas.gov/goto/comment within 30 days from the date of newspaper publication of this notice.

INFORMATION AVAILABLE ONLINE. For details about the status of the application, visit the Commissioners' Integrated Database at www.tceq.texas.gov/goto/cid. Search the database using the permit number for this application, which is provided at the top of this notice.

AGENCY CONTACTS AND INFORMATION. Public comments and requests must be submitted either electronically at www.tceq.texas.gov/goto/comment, or in writing to the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality, Office of the Chief Clerk, MC 105, P.O. Box 13087, Austin, Texas 78711-3087. Any personal information you submit to the TCEQ will become part of the agency's record; this includes email addresses. For more information about this permit application or the permitting process, please call the TCEQ Public Education Program, Toll Free, at 1-800-687-4040 or visit their website at www.tceq.texas.gov/goto/pep. Si desea información en Español, puede llamar al 1-800-687-4040.

Further information may also be obtained from City of Leander at the address stated above or by calling Ms. Dara Crabtree, City Secretary, at 512-528-2743.

Issuance Date: January 26, 2026

No. 4 Texas closes in on regular-season finish with NCAA seeding in focus

STAFF REPORTS

AUSTIN — No. 4 Texas routed Mississippi State 92-42 on Sunday at Moody Center, using pressure defense and a season-high 11 3-pointers to set the stage for a regular-season closing stretch that could shape its NCAA Tournament path.

The Longhorns (26-3, 11-3 SEC) led 24-8 after one quarter and took a 50-18 advantage into halftime. Madison Booker scored 23 points on 8-of-12 shooting, including 3-for-3 from beyond the arc, while Jordan Lee added 17 points and hit 5 of 8 from 3-point range. Rori Harmon had 11 assists, and Brea Cunningham grabbed 12 rebounds as Texas forced 28 turnovers and turned them into a 39-11 edge in points off turnovers.



MADISON BOOKER

Texas finished at 52.2% from the field (35 of 67), outrebounded Mississippi State 42-21 and got 40 points from its reserves.

Sunday's win was Texas' next-to-last home game of the regular season, and the Longhorns now return to Moody Center one more time.

Texas will host No. 23 Georgia on Thursday, Feb. 26, in its regular-season home finale before traveling to face No. 24 Alabama on Sunday to close the regular season. Both games carry significant NCAA Tournament seeding implications for a Texas team aiming to strengthen its resume in the final week.

Texas enters the week third in the SEC standings after losses earlier this month to Vanderbilt and South Carolina. With Vanderbilt later falling to Georgia, the race behind the league's top tier has tightened, and projections have Texas in position to contend for a No. 1 seed and the right to host — but the Longhorns will likely need to win out to stay on that track.

The matchup with Georgia offers a direct measuring stick against a ranked opponent that has already shown it can disrupt the SEC picture. The Longhorns will look to carry over the formula they used against Mississippi State: aggressive ball pressure, quick conversion offense and balanced scoring behind Booker and Lee's perimeter shooting and Harmon's playmaking.

Alabama presents a final road test and a potential résumé boost heading into the SEC Tournament. For Texas, the margin for error is slim in a crowded top of the bracket. Two wins would not only extend momentum into postseason play but could also lock in a more favorable seed line and home-court advantage in the NCAA Tournament's opening rounds.



Austin FC defender Jon Gallagher celebrates after recording an assist on a second-half goal against Minnesota United on Saturday.

SCOTT W. COLEMAN

Late Minnesota goal denies three points to Austin FC in season opener

STAFF REPORTS

AUSTIN — Austin FC twice built a lead but could not close out its 2026 Major League Soccer home opener, settling for a 2-2 draw against Minnesota United FC on Saturday night at Q2 Stadium after Kelvin Yeboah scored for the Loons in the 90th minute.

Playing in front of 20,738 fans — the club's 89th consecutive MLS home sell-out — Austin showed attacking sharpness but was undone by defensive lapses on two set pieces.

Austin struck first in the seventh minute. Facundo Torres, making his MLS debut for the Verde after an offseason transfer, delivered a corner kick that center back Brendan Hines-Ike headed home from close range for a 1-0 lead.

Minnesota equalized in the 40th min-

ute when Morris Duggan capitalized on a corner from Joaquin Pereyra, heading past goalkeeper Brad Stuver.

The Loons' equalizer came moments after Stuver made two saves to preserve the advantage, including a stop on a bending effort from Tomas Chancalay.

Austin regained control for much of the second half, leaning on its left-sided attack. Jon Gallagher helped restore the lead in the 76th minute, heading a Robert Taylor cross across the goalmouth where Myrto Uzuni bundled the ball in from close range for a 2-1 edge.

But Minnesota found a late response. After Taylor went down injured in the final minutes, the Loons capitalized during a transition sequence. Devin Padelford sent a cross into the box, and Yeboah rose unmarked to power a header past Stuver to split the points.

"I think that confused a little bit everyone on the field and they took advantage," Austin coach Nico Estevez said of the late sequence following Taylor's injury.

Despite the result, Estevez praised winger Jayden Nelson's debut performance, highlighting his aggressiveness and ability in one-on-one situations.

"I think he had a really good debut," Estevez said. "I think he was brave. He was aggressive in the 1-v-1 situations, created a lot of good crosses and dangerous plays."

Austin finished with 56% possession and put six of its 10 shots on target. Stuver made two saves, while Minnesota goalkeeper Drake Callender recorded four stops.

Austin (0-0-1) returns to Q2 Stadium on Sunday at 1:30 p.m. to host D.C. United in its second match of the regular season.



Austin FC goalkeeper Brad Stuver watches the ball after recording one of his two saves against Minnesota United.

BOX SCORE

Minnesota United FC 1 1 - 2
Austin FC 1 1 - 2

SCORING PLAYS

1 — ATX: Brendan Hines-Ike (Facundo Torres), 7'
1 — MIN: Morris Duggan (Joaquin Pereyra), 40'
2 — ATX: Myrto Uzuni (Jon Gallagher, Robert Taylor), 76'
2 — MIN: Kelvin Yeboah (Devin Padelford), 90'

KEY PLAYER STATS

Austin — Myrto Uzuni: 1 goal
Austin — Brendan Hines-Ike: 1 goal
Austin — Facundo Torres: 1 assist
Austin — Jon Gallagher: 1 assist
Austin — Brad Stuver: 2 saves
Minnesota — Kelvin Yeboah: 1 goal
Minnesota — Morris Duggan: 1 goal
Minnesota — Drake Callender: 4 saves

BOX SCORE

Mississippi State 8 10 13 11 - 42
Texas 24 26 25 17 - 92

TEAM RECORDS

Mississippi State (18-10, 5-9 SEC)
Texas (26-3, 11-3 SEC)

LOCATION ATTENDANCE

Moody Center, Austin, Texas 10,705

FOLLOW THE NEWS EVERY DAY Any Way

There is no where else to find fast, accurate access to information about Cedar Park, Leander and Northwest Suburban Austin, along with curated news from around the region, state and nation.

Become a member today and make a difference.

Support community journalism here in your community for just \$38* for the year!

HILL COUNTRY NEWS

Subscribe • Support • Advertise | In Print & Online
512-259-4449 | www.hillcountrynews.com

* Digital only subscription.

Print & Digital (USPS mail delivery): \$58 annually in Texas, \$80 outside Texas

Vokietaitis scores 22, but Texas falls 91-80 at Georgia

STAFF REPORTS

Matas Vokietaitis recorded a game-high 22 points, but Texas saw its five-game winning streak end with a 91-80 loss to Georgia on Saturday afternoon at Stegeman Coliseum.

The Longhorns (17-10, 8-6 SEC) trailed for most of the contest and were unable to sustain momentum after rallying from a 10-point second-half deficit to briefly tie the game.

Vokietaitis converted 8 of 10 field goals and added five rebounds in 26 minutes. Dailyn Swain finished with 21 points, hitting 6 of 11 from the floor and 8 of 8 from the free throw line, while grabbing a team-high six rebounds. Jordan Pope added 17 points and three assists without committing a turnover.

Georgia (19-8, 7-7 SEC) built early separation with a 19-3 run midway through the first half, stretching a one-point edge into a 26-9 lead. Texas cut the deficit to eight late in the half before entering the break trailing 45-35.

The Bulldogs pushed the margin back to 14 early in the second half, but Texas responded. Trailing 67-57 with 10:18 remaining, the Longhorns used a 10-0 run capped by a Pope three-pointer to even the score at 67-67 with 7:37 left.

Georgia answered with a 10-2 spurt over the next two-plus minutes to regain control and lead 77-69. Texas drew within six on a Vokietaitis dunk with 4:51 remaining but could not get closer the rest of the way.

The Longhorns shot 57.1 percent (28 of 49) from the field and 50 percent (6 of 12) from three-point range while hitting 18 of 24 free throws. Texas was outrebounded 24-22 and allowed Georgia to shoot 59.6 percent overall, including 11 of 20 from beyond the arc.

Texas returns home to host No. 12/11 Florida before traveling to Texas A&M on Saturday for a 3 p.m. CT game televised by ESPN2. The Longhorns close the regular season March 4 at Arkansas and March 7 at home against Oklahoma.

BOX SCORE | Feb. 21, 2026

Texas 35 45 - 80
Georgia 45 46 - 91

TEAM RECORDS

Texas (17-10, 8-6 SEC)
Georgia (19-8, 7-7 SEC)



For Print Home Delivery and Unlimited eEdition Access — and to Support Independent Local News — Subscribe by Phone or Online Today!

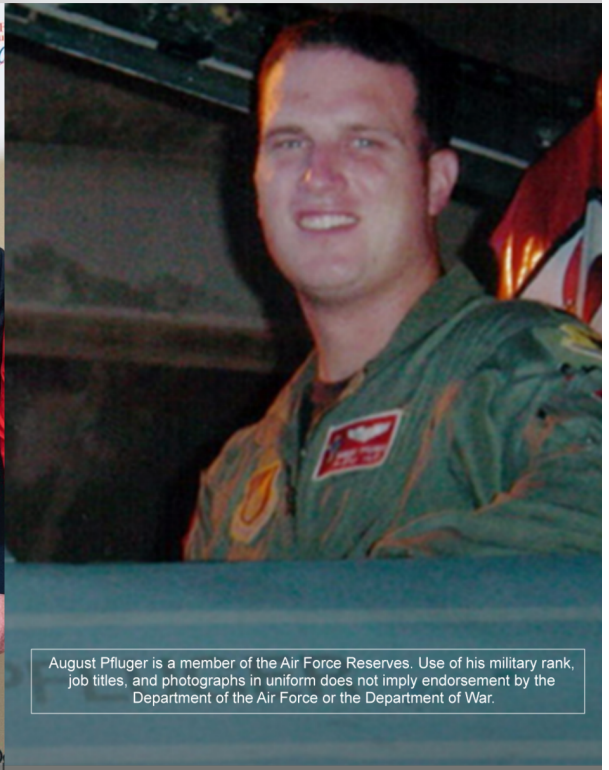
AUGUST

PFLUGER

REPUBLICAN FOR CONGRESS ★ DISTRICT 11

- 7TH GENERATION TEXAN
- AIR FORCE VETERAN
- TRUMP-ENDORSED
- FIGHTER FOR TEXAS
- PROLIFIC LAWMAKER

Paid for by August Pfluger for Congress



August Pfluger is a member of the Air Force Reserves. Use of his military rank, job titles, and photographs in uniform does not imply endorsement by the Department of the Air Force or the Department of War.

AUGUST PFLUGER DELIVERS FOR TEXAS

- ✓ CUT TAXES AND SLASHED GOVERNMENT SPENDING.
- ✓ SECURED THE BORDER AND DEPORTED ILLEGAL CRIMINALS.
- ✓ ENDED WOKENESS IN THE MILITARY AND TOOK MEN OUT OF WOMEN'S SPORTS.
- ✓ WROTE THE LAW THAT STOPPED ILLEGALS FROM VOTING.
- ✓ SECURED BILLIONS FOR THE STATE OF TEXAS.
- ✓ UNLEASHED AMERICAN ENERGY AND BOLSTERED NATIONAL SECURITY.

VOTE TO RE-ELECT
AUGUST PFLUGER!

EARLY VOTING FROM
FEBRUARY 17TH-27TH

ELECTION DAY ON
MARCH 3RD

