

NORTH CHANNEL ★ STAR

Your News, Your Newspaper



'GALENA PARK LIBRARY'S NEW STAFF' L-R: Janell Constantino, Adult Program Specialist; Griselda Gallardo, Library Technician; Sarai Aguilar, Library Program Specialist; Dedra York, Youth Program Specialist; Magician Tommy Terrific. (Allan Jamail photo). See Story on page 6

Serving all of the North Shore -- Channelview, Cloverleaf, Sheldon, Galena Park, Jacinto City
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CHANNEL CURRENTS

Greater Houston Partnership: Economy Looks Bright After Covid Recovery

North Shore Rotary Fish Fry April 26

North Shore Rotary Club will hold its 50th Annual Catfish Fry/Crawfish Boil on Saturday, April 26, 2025.

The event will be held at the North Shore Rotary Pavilion, behind the Courthouse at 14350 Wallisville Road, Houston 77049.

There will be a Live and Silent Auction, and a Raffle Drawing to award a new vehicle, either a 2025 Toyota Tacoma Double Cab pickup truck, or a 2025 Toyota Rav4 XLE SUV.

Raffle Tickets are on sale from any Rotarian, and at many local businesses. Raffle tickets are \$100 donation to the NSRC Charitable Foundation, Inc. and Food Tickets are \$15. Raffle tickets include 2 meals. Meals are served from 11:00am to 3:00pm, or until food runs out.

Contact Rotary at 713-410-5352 or danna@phase3servicesllc.com for ticket information or sponsorship opportunities.

By David Taylor
Managing Editor

The Greater Houston Partnership (GHP) is a regional chamber of commerce covering 12 counties in the metro area with about 1,000 companies that are members. They focus on the key areas of economic development, public policy, advocacy, local, state and federal issues impacting business in Houston.

"We are currently involved in the Houston Energy Transition Initiative which is our focus on taking Houston from not just the oil and gas capital of the world moving forward with companies like Lyondell Bassell and others and then we're focused on upscale Houston, which is our workforce training program," said Craig Rhodes who leads the economic development team as senior vice president at the Greater Houston Partnership.

Rhodes explained when



Guest speaker Craig Rhodes, center, is joined by North Channel Area Chamber of Commerce CEO Ken Wimbley and Chamber president Margie Buentello. Rhodes is the senior vice president at the Greater Houston Partnership.

he talked about Houston per se, he was really talking about the 12-county metro area, not just the city of Houston or Harris County, but the full regional footprint.

"As you know, this area has about 7.5 million with 3.5 million jobs and ranks us as one of the largest economies in the world. If we were our own country,

we'd be ranked very highly like the state of Texas who is in the Top 10 in the world," he said. "Houston is a great economic powerhouse, not just for the country, but really the whole world," he said producing approximately \$697 billion in the economy last year.

Rhodes pointed to the Grand Parkway expansion

on the northeast leg and how connectivity has increased the mobility of the area and economy.

Last year, Houston ranked in the 10 largest growing metros in the United States with Houston leading the charge for Texas at No. 1 with a 9.8 percent increase, followed by Dallas/FortWorth and San Antonio/Austin areas, both with 8.9 percent increases. Around the country the other largest metros with increases were Phoenix who led the nation with an 11.2 percent increase. Others included San Jose with a 7.1 percent boost, Los Angeles with 2.8 percent, San Diego boasting a 6.1 percent, Chicago with a 1.9 percent climb, New York at 7.7 increase and Philadelphia with a modest 2.3 increase.

Since the 80s, during the oil and gas downturn, 60-70 percent of the entire economy was tied to energy and oil and gas.

"We've been on a massive upward growth trend in the Houston region that

continues today adding close to 2 million jobs since. We lost around 350,000 jobs almost overnight during the pandemic. Most of those jobs added are beyond just oil and gas sectors.

Healthcare, professional services, and retail have really grown to diversify the economy," he said

Overall, Rhodes said the economy was looking good.

"The partnership is not projecting any kind of recession anytime soon," he said. People ask what the price of oil needs to be for the companies to make money and be sort of in growth mode. Essentially around \$60 per barrel. If it stays above that, companies are in growth mode, expansion, they're in their production mode. If it drops below that, obviously things will draw back," he said.

Rhodes said they don't anticipate it dropping below that threshold for a while.

Continued. See HOUSTON'S ENERGY TRANSITION, Page 5

Rep. Sylvia Garcia's Second "Know Your Rights" Town Hall

2nd in a series
By Allan Jamail

Houston, Texas ~ On February 6, 2025 Congresswoman Sylvia Garcia held her second Know Your Rights event... it was done via a tele-town hall to help inform communities of their constitutional rights in light of President Trump's recent immigration executive orders and directives. More than 9,600 constituents joined the call.

Participants heard from a panel made up of Garcia, immigration attorney Silvia Mintz, FIEL Co-



Congresswoman Sylvia Garcia

Founder Cesar Espinosa, BakerRipley's Director of Citizenship and Immigration Program Josephine Sorgwe, and Secretary/

Treasurer of Texas AFT Wanda Longoria. The panelists gave opening remarks and fielded questions from participants, similar to the in-person Know Your Rights town hall on January 29th.

"For now, the best thing you can do is to know your rights, stay informed, and support one another. I want you to know that my democratic colleagues in Congress and I will not stop fighting to ensure that all of our constituents, regardless of their immigra

Continued. See 2ND KNOW YOUR RIGHTS TOWN HALL, Page 5

Jacinto City Library hosts Successful Blood Drive

By Allan Jamail

Jacinto City, TX. February 4, 2025 at the Jacinto City Library citizens were able to help save lives by donating blood. The successful event was hosted by the Gulf Coast Regional Blood Center. Librarian Nyla Vela planned the event and was the first to donate (see photo).



The Gulf Coast Regional Blood Center staff at Jacinto City's Library blood drive. Front row L - R: Laura Franco, JC Library staff, Christina Chavez, Blood Center staff & blood donor JC Librarian Nyla Vela (seated). Back row L - R: Blood Center staff, Blake Haynes, Lana Draughon, Kimberly Gonzalez & Bridget Donlin. (Photo by Allan Jamail)

STATE OF THE STATE: Abbott calls for Texas to be "Guardians of Freedom"

By David Taylor
Managing Editor

From the headquarters of the Arnold Oil Company in Austin, Texas governor Gregg Abbott issued his annual State of the State address looking back to accomplishments and successes in 2024 and outlining the plan for the future of the state.

The 85-year-old business supplies auto products, lubricants, power equipment, and much more.

"The Texas economy is thriving because of Arnold Oil and thousands of businesses like it," Abbott said.

"Texas is the most powerful economy in America. Ranked as the best state for doing business for 20



Texas Governor Greg Abbott

years, Texas is No. 1 for the most new jobs, No. 1 for economic development, and No. 1 as the best state to start a new business. We rank No. 1 for technology and innovation and No. 1 for semiconductors that power the things you use every day," he told the crowd assembled for the speech.

Last year, the governor created a Space Commission to boost space explo-

ration in Texas, from NASA, to SpaceX, to Blue Origin, and beyond. They also added new business courts to swiftly deal with complex business litigation.

"Business is booming so much that we now have our own stock exchange, the Texas Stock Exchange. It will make Texas the financial capital of America," he added.

To ensure prosperity reaches every Texas family and business, he created the Small Business Freedom Council to require all state agencies to slash rules, fees, and regulations to expedite business.

"We know that many Texans face an affordabil

Continued. See STATE OF THE STATE, Page 5

GP's Library Magic Show Teaches Black History



Magician Tommy Terrific entertains excited children at Galena Park's Library during the first week of Black History month. (Photo by Allan Jamail)

2nd of a series
By Allan Jamail

Galena Park, TX. ~ February 5, 2025 ~ Galena Park's Harris County Library Branch Manager Sisi Medina planned and hosted a Black Histo-

ry month event using a magic show to teach kids about important Black Cowboys.

Renowned Magician Tommy Terrific performed magic tricks which kept the excited kids jumping with joy and loud laughter.

During the magic show Tommy used an easel with stick on photos and a description of seven Hall of Fame Black Cowboys/Cowgirl. (*Read below of two)

Continued. See MAGIC MEETS HISTORY, Page 6

SCHOOL PAGE

NS Girls Basketball Lose Area Round Playoff

Lady Mustangs 45 – Dawson Eagles 46

By Allan Jamail

Pasadena, TX. ~ February 14, 2025 at the neutral site of Pasadena Sam Rayburn High School gymnasium the District 22 Region 3 – 6A D1 Bracket 22 Area Round playoff basketball game between the North Shore Lady Mustangs varsity team and the Dawson Eagles was a hotly contested to say the least. See **box score below**

Both teams were evenly matched and the score throughout the game indicated it. This game was so close either team could have easily won it at the free throw-line. Unfortunately for Coach Curtis Bason's Lady Mustangs the Eagles squeaked by victorious as fraction of a second clicked off the clock.

Both teams equally missed lots of free throw shot attempts... if either one of them had made more of their free throw

shots the game wouldn't have been so close. Pressure at the free throw-line is stressful for the best of shooters; no matter if it's college or pro-players you'll see shooters falter there. The closer the game the stress factor increases.

Coach Bason has a good crop of players returning for next year, according to his roster, he'll only lose 2 seniors out of the 14.

BOX SCORE BY PERIOD:	1	2	3	4	Final
North Shore -----	11	5	12	17	45
Dawson -----	8	8	15	15	46

SHELDON ISD NEWS

Sheldon Presents Outstanding HAABE Teachers



The Houston Area Association for Bilingual Education (HAABE) recognizes outstanding bilingual and ESL educators from Houston and its surrounding areas. The district surprised three individuals who were selected by the multilingual department and voted on by their peers. Congratulations to:

Hillary O'Grady, King High School - Secondary ELS Teacher of the Year
Daisha Kiser, Garrett Elementary - Elementary ESL Teacher of the Year
Claudia Ovalle, Royalwood Elementary - Elementary Bilingual Teacher of the Year

They will now advance to the Region 4 HAABE contest and will be recognized at a banquet in April.

In North Shore, nearly everyone reads the NORTH CHANNEL STAR.
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Sheldon ISD Receives State Recognition for Academic Achievements



The Texas Alliance of Black School Educators (TABSE) recognizes schools that have demonstrated best practices in education. At the state conference on February 14, Sheldon ISD was presented with the Dr. Thomas Randle Demonstration District Award. Additionally, Sheldon Elementary was recognized as a Demonstration School. Both the district, led by Dr. Demetrius McCall, and Mrs. Rolling were able to present during spotlight presentations over the weekend. The Sheldon Lake Elementary Honor Choir was showcased during the district presentation.

Seven Sheldon Art students snag Houston Rodeo Art Medals



Seven Sheldon ISD art students will have their art displayed in the Hayloft Gallery during the rodeo event this spring. Student artworks received either Best of Show or Gold Medalist and were grouped in categories of Elementary, Middle School and High School submissions. Congratulations to the following students and their teachers:

- 1)-Best of Show: Noah, 2nd Grade, Ms. Christopher
- 2)-Gold Medal: Nelson, 5th Grade, Ms. Christopher
- 3)-Best of Show: Camila, 6th Grade, Ms. Barr
- 4)-Gold Medal: Brianna, 6th Grade, Ms. Barr
- 5)-Best of Show: Axel, 10th Grade, Ms. Roades
- 6)-Gold Medal: Kaitlyn, 12th Grade, Mrs. Little
- 7)-Gold Medal: Bianca, 12th Grade, Ms. Roades

All District Finalists and Blue Ribbon Winners will be on display at the C.E. King High School Performing Arts Center on the evening of February 25 from 4:30 - 7:30 PM at the newly reinstated District Rodeo Art Show.

C.E. King art students win Harris County Scholastic Art & Writing Awards

Two C.E. King High School student artworks have earned Honorable Mention in the Harris County round of the Scholastic Art and Writing Awards, which is a national competition in the arts. This is only the second time that Sheldon ISD has earned this visual art distinction.

Congratulations to Andrea Villa and Danna Basilio of Ms. Roades art class.



OPINION PAGE

OPINION
By **BILL KING**



Birthright Citizenship

Since the adoption of the 14th Amendment in 1868, the United States has recognized birthright citizenship; that is, if a person is born on U.S. soil, that person is a U.S. citizen regardless of the citizenship of their parents. In one of his first official actions, President Trump issued an executive order that instructed U.S. officials to no longer recognize birthright citizenship. The essence of the order is that children of parents who are in the U.S. illegally will not be recognized as citizens. His order was met with immediate outcry from immigration advocates and was immediately challenged in numerous lawsuits, one of which has already resulted in a temporary stay of the order. A bill has also been introduced in Congress with similar effect.

While many have predicted the courts will summarily strike down the order, the issue is quite complicated and nuanced, and the outcome may not be as clear as many predict. It seems likely the issue will ultimately land in the Supreme Court, which was probably Trump's intention in issuing the order.

Soil or Blood

Countries throughout the world recognize two fundamental doctrines of citizenship: jus soli (Right of Soil) and jus sanguinis (Right of Blood). Right of Soil recognizes citizenship based solely on where the person was born. Its origins are the feudal concept that loyalty to the lord and, ultimately, the sovereign being bound up with the land. Right of Blood recognizes citizenship based on the nationality of the child's parents and traces its origins to Roman law. From my review, it does not appear that any country strictly uses jus soli or jus sanguinis. Rather, all countries incorporate some elements of each.

However, on a continuum of the two doctrines, the U.S. would be far toward the jus soli end compared to most of the world. This is fairly typical of countries that outlawed slavery in the 19th century, especially those in the Western Hemisphere. At that time, those countries were faced with dealing with the citizenship status of a large number of former slaves. Many of those countries, like the U.S., adopted constitutional amendments that broadly gave citizenship to former slaves born in their countries. In the U.S., the 14th Amendment was enacted to overrule the U.S. Supreme Court case of Dred Scott v. Sanford (1857), which held that African Americans, free or enslaved, could not be U.S. citizens.

There are two questions we must face in addressing this issue. The first is a legal one. Can a President or Congress overturn a doctrine recognized in the U.S. for over a century by executive order or legislation? The second issue is whether an extreme reliance on the jus soli doctrine is the best policy for the country.

Legal Arguments on Birthright Citizenship

The legal question turns to the interpretation of Section 1 of the 14th Amendment. It provides:

"All persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and the State wherein they reside." (Emphasis added.)

The crux of this issue is the interpretation of the clause "subject to the jurisdiction thereof." Clearly, the phrase is intended to limit the grant of citizenship based on the birthplace in some way. However, the phrase "subject to the jurisdiction thereof" is hardly precise. During the debates surrounding the adoption of the 14th Amendment, the framers of the amendment appear to have been referring to Indian tribes because of their semi-autonomous status and children born to foreign diplomats or foreign military during their residency in the U.S.

I was unable to find any discussion at the time of the issue of children of parents in the U.S. without legal authority. However, the U.S. needed labor at that time for its rapidly expanding economy and frontier. It was relatively easy to come to the U.S. and apply for citizenship. In fact, legislation like the Homestead Act (1862) actively encouraged immigration. So, the issue of citizenship for emigrants who had come to the U.S. in violation of its laws was likely not on the minds of any of those drafting the amendment.

The issue of whether a child born in the U.S. of parents who were not U.S. citizens was first considered by the U.S. Supreme Court in United States v. Wong Kim Ark in 1898.1 Ark was the child of two Chinese immigrants who had settled in San Francisco but never became U.S. citizens. After residing in San Francisco for over twenty years, his parents returned to China in 1890. The parties stipulated that Ark's parents were Chinese citizens at all times.

In 1895, Ark traveled to China. When he returned, he was detained by customs officials seeking to enforce provisions of the Chinese Exclusion Act, passed in 1882. The Chinese Exclusion Act was passed during a period of rampant anti-Chinese sentiment in the U.S. and, particularly, in California. It expressly forbade any Chinese immigrant who left the country from returning. However, U.S. citizens were excluded. Therefore, whether the Act applied to Ark and whether he could return to the U.S. after he visited China turned on whether he was a U.S. citizen.

In a 6-2 decision, the Supreme Court ruled in Ark's favor, broadly declaring that the jus soli doctrine was required by the 14th Amendment and narrowly interpreting the "subject to the jurisdiction" qualifier. In reaching the decision, the majority relied heavily on English common law, which was rooted in the feudal system.

However, in a dissent, Justices Fuller and Harlan argued that the English common law did not bind the U.S. They contended that the standard was obsolete, especially in America, which was the antithesis of feudal society. According to Fuller and Harlan, "(n)ationality is essentially a political idea and belongs to the sphere of public law." Their dissent implies that Congress is Constitutionally allowed to define the limits of what it means to be subject to the jurisdiction of the United States.

Whether the Ark case can be read as an absolute prohibition on Congress more broadly defining what the "subject to the jurisdiction" phrase includes or, more narrowly, only holds that Congress went too far in the Chinese Exclusion Act seems to be an open question. This is an excellent discussion of the issue by two highly respected legal scholars.

It is somewhat ironic that today's progressives are flocking to the majority view in Ark. Justice Harlan is known as a liberal dissenter of the Supreme Court of that era when the Court primarily supported the status quo. When reading the two opinions, I thought the dissent reflected more contemporary views and values than the majority opinion.

I do think it is important to note that the Supreme Court would not have to overtly overrule Ark to uphold Congress' authority to redefine the limits of birthright citizenship. Ark is clearly distinguishable on numerous facts, most notably that Ark's parents were legally in the U.S. at the time of his birth.

But even if recognizing that Congress has the authority to define the "subject to the jurisdiction" clause required overruling Ark, the current Court has shown little reluctance to overturn long-standing precedents. The bottom line is I think the legal outcome of whether Congress could change the standard could go either way.

Of course, even if Congress has the right to limit birthright citizenship, there is still the question of whether a president can do so by executive order. In the case where Congress has failed to act, does the President have the right or authority to give direction to his administration in the absence of any direction from Congress? That seems to be much more of a stretch to me. Still, I have been amazed by the courts' deference to regulatory authority in the last few decades, so I would not rule out the possibility that the courts might ultimately uphold his order.

Policy Considerations

Setting aside the legal issue, is birthright citizenship a good policy for the U.S.? I think the proponents for it have a harder time here.

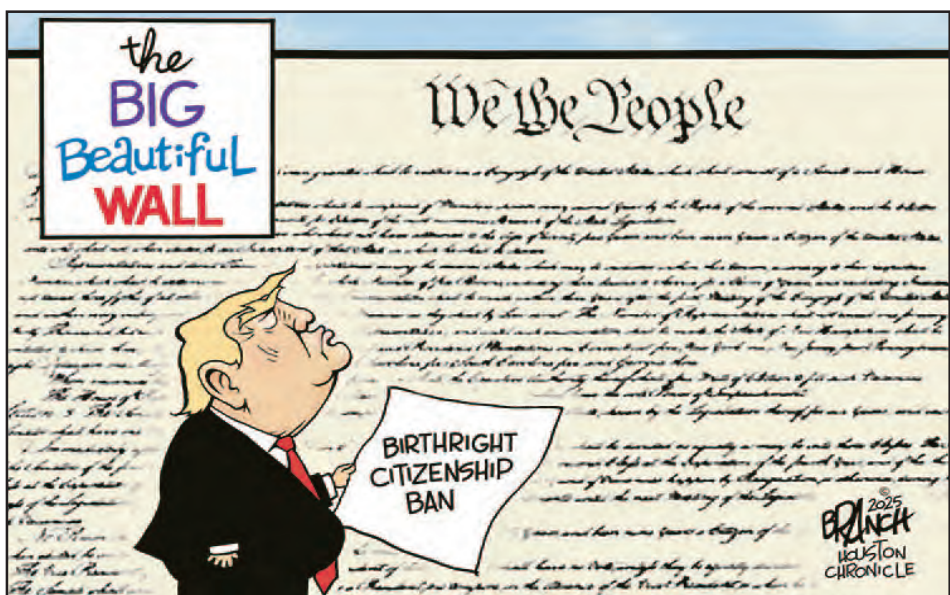
First, such a policy encourages prospective mothers to come to the U.S. illegally to obtain citizenship for their children. While most of us can sympathize with a mother aspiring to give the great gift of American citizenship to her child, nonetheless, that does not seem like a rational way to dole out citizenship. Certainly, it is easy to imagine a rational immigration legal structure that would encourage the type of immigration the U.S. needs while also screening those that would cause harm or become a burden to our country. It is easy to imagine such a functioning immigration system because such systems exist in much of the rest of the world.

One of the serious difficulties in changing our policy would be the transition and the administrative and litigation nightmare that would ensue. For example, there are literally millions of people in the U.S. who believe they are citizens by virtue of being born here, and the government has treated them as such for decades in many cases. Suddenly, stripping those individuals of their citizenship would likely run afoul of the Constitution's prohibition of ex post facto laws, in addition to being profoundly unfair. Trump's executive order avoids this problem by restricting it only to children born 30 days after its issuance.

Both Trump's executive order and the pending legislation provide that if one of the parents is a citizen, the child will be as well. How exactly would it be determined if the father was a U.S. citizen? Who would have the burden of proof? Will we run DNA tests on every child born to determine their heritage? Can you imagine the number of lawsuits that would be filed over that? At a minimum, a massive new federal bureaucracy would be required to determine citizenship claims.

Adopting a rational immigration system that included better criteria for granting citizenship would greatly benefit our country. Many of the issues surrounding birthright citizenship are the legacy of the inability of Congress to enact such a system. I wish I believed Trump's executive order might spur a thoughtful debate and legislative action in that direction. But sadly, our representatives from both sides of the aisle seem more interested in demagoguing immigration than working together to enact a rational system.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Opinions expressed here are not necessarily that of this newspaper or its staff. YOUR OPINION is welcome. Send a letter for possible publication to Grafikpress Newspapers, 5906 Star Lane, Houston TX 77057 or an email to GRAFIKSTAR@aol.com. Please limit your words to about 200. Letters will be subject to editing. Thank you.



STATE CAPITAL HIGHLIGHTS
By **Gary Borders**



Voucher Bill Passes Senate, Arrives in House

A bill to implement school vouchers in Texas sailed through the Senate largely on party lines last week and now awaits consideration in the House, the Austin American-Statesman reported. House Speaker Dustin Burrows, R-Lubbock, said he believes there are enough votes in that chamber to pass the legislation, which was defeated a half-dozen times in 2023 by a coalition of Democratic and rural Republican members. "As Speaker, I'm committed to ensuring the agenda of the Texas House remains truly member-driven this session," Burrows said in a statement. "I support empowering parents to decide the best educational option for their children." The bill's supporters, which include Gov. Greg Abbott, Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick and other top elected officials, say it would give students access to more school choices. Opponents fear the \$1 billion program will siphon funding and students away from public schools already facing budget deficits. The political director of the Texas Freedom Network said legislators should focus on funding public schools instead. "Voucher schemes steal vital funds from kids in our neighborhood schools, all so megadonors and the politicians in their pockets can subsidize private and religious schools for the wealthy at our expense," Rocio Fierro-Pérez said.

ABBOTT OUTLINES HIS LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

Abbott outlined his legislative priorities in a speech last Sunday. Besides school vouchers, he wants state lawmakers to cut property taxes by \$10 billion, launch a massive water project to ensure adequate supplies, and restrict bail for a number of crimes, the Houston Chronicle reported. Other priorities include pay raises for teachers and investment in nuclear energy as a way to "fortify" the state's electric grid. Abbott is backing a plan by state Sen. Charles Perry, R-Amarillo, which would invest in several large projects to increase the state's water supply. Among the projects are desalination plants and a network of pipelines to



distribute water. "We will make the largest investment in water in the history of Texas," Abbott said. "We will tap into new water supplies and repair pipes to save billions of gallons of water each year." The Democratic response to Abbott's State of the State address blasted the governor for being too friendly with President Trump and billionaire Elon Musk, who is leading an effort to eliminate federal government waste and inefficiency. "The fact is people are struggling after 30 years of Republican rule," Gilberto Hinojosa, the former Democratic Party chair, said in the response.

DAIRY, POULTRY PRODUCERS GRAPPLE WITH BIRD FLU

By now, most everyone has noticed the steep rise in the price of eggs, which is being blamed on the spread of avian flu, first detected in a flock of pheasants in Erath County nearly three years ago. The Texas Standard Reported. "It's a supply-and-demand issue," said J.C. Essler, executive vice president of the Texas Poultry Federation. "When we're putting multiple flocks down, and our layer operations can be up to a million birds, you're taking a substantial supply out of the market." Thus far in Texas, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have confirmed 14 cases of bird flu at poultry farms, only one of which was at a large-scale farm with 2 million chickens. There have been 27 confirmed cases at Texas dairy farms. The potential economic impact could be huge if bird flu continues to spread in the state. The poultry industry contributes more than \$5 bil-

lion to the state economy annually, while dairy operations add \$53.8 billion. One longtime researcher of bird flu at Texas A&M University said he didn't expect the virus to spread from human to human; 67 cases of it being transmitted to humans from poultry or cattle have been recorded, including one in Texas. One death has been reported. "If we ever start seeing human-to-human transmission, that tells us the virus is adapting to humans," said Gerald Parker, associate dean for Global One Health at A&M. "That would not be a good sign."

STATE STRUGGLING TO FIX LEAKY ABANDONED OIL WELLS

Abandoned oil wells turned into water sources are threatening aquifers that supply water to cities, farms and ranches, the Statesman reported, particularly in rural West Texas where oil exploration began nearly a century ago. The leaky wells are called P-13 wells after a Texas Railroad Commission form that allowed them to be repurposed to provide water. The state has recorded 1,915 P-13 wells, though many more likely exist undetected and undocumented. They have the potential to become environmental disasters. One example is the 60-acre Lake Boehmer in Pecos County, formed by a leaky well. It emits high concentrations of hydrogen sulfide, a potentially fatal gas. The state committed \$10 million to plugging the leaky wells in 2023, but two years later none of that money has been distributed. Even that amount, whenever it is actually spent, is likely inadequate to solve the problem, since plugging a single well can cost hundreds of thousands of dollars. "We do not know how much it will cost to plug each well, so we cannot determine how many wells could be plugged under this program," said Ricky Richter, a spokesperson for TCEQ. Federal funds that are being used to plug orphan gas and oil wells can't be used for P-13 wells, since they are no longer considered oil wells.

ABBOTT BACKS LEGALIZING SPORTS GAMBLING IN TEXAS

Abbott recently said on the Texas Take Podcast that he has no objection to Texas joining 39 other states that have legalized sports betting, the San Antonio Express News reported. "I don't have a problem with online sports betting," Abbott said in the interview. "The reality is that I'd be shocked if there were not some Texans that do it already." A coalition of major sports franchises including the Dallas Cowboys, San Antonio Spurs and Houston Astros have teamed up with several sports gaming companies to push for legalized sports gambling. They have hired more than a dozen lobbyists and have tapped former Gov. Rick Perry and Houston Rockets owner Tilman Fertitta to help make their pitch to legislators to pass such a measure. The issue ultimately would require voters to approve a constitutional amendment.

HIGHLANDS CROSBY

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GHP projects continued expansion amid workforce and industry shifts,

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Oil and gas and traditional energy will be very much a part of the long-term transition for the Houston economy which hopes to add more wind, solar, and battery storage and carbon capture and hydrogen and waste to fuel circular economy.

Rhodes said while there is a good bit of discussion around tariffs, he said the US is in a strong position.

"We're by and far the largest economy in the world which gives us leverage in many of these discussions. We think of the impact to Houston that makes Texas the largest exporting state. We're not so much interested in the politics of it all as much as the potential trade impact and effect on our economy," he told chamber members.

The number of new jobs added for December 2023 to December 2024 was 57,800.

"I think this was within a couple of hundred jobs of what our forecast was for 2024," Rhodes said.

Immigration is another hot topic at the GHP and Rhodes said they estimated one in 10 people working in Houston right now are undocumented.



Craig Rhodes, who leads the economic development team as senior vice president at the Greater Houston Partnership, told chamber members that the Houston area economy is looking good.

"Houston overall definitely had a big uptick here in the last few years in terms of just total overall growth and new business announcements. We see continued growth in construction, healthcare, in our schools, and the industrial sector side," he said.

He said an annual survey by the Kinder Foundation looks at the attitude of residents toward the future and it continues to be positive and exciting about being here. Some of the reasons are quality of life, lower cost of living here,

more job opportunities, and people have a chance at all income levels.

There are 90,000 babies born every year in Houston and 30,000 deaths with a net population growth of 60,000 every year.

What's to come? Rhodes said a normal year would produce 65,000 new jobs. With a burgeoning economy, he said they believe they will see about 71,200 jobs created this year.

"We're in a really great, strong position across a lot of industry sectors," he said in closing.

Sylvia Garcia's Tele-Town Hall,

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1



tion status, are protected. No matter what Trump says or does. We stand with you. Always," Garcia told constituents.

Since my first article for the North Channel Star published February 6th President Donald Trump has issued a flurry of new immigration policy changes to the past policies of former President Joe Biden's term of 2021-2025 and to his own policies during his first term of 2017-2021.

One of them being very troublesome reverses a longstanding guideline that prohibited immigration raids in areas deemed "sensitive", such as schools, hospitals and churches. Trump expanded Immigration and Customs Enforcement's (ICE) ability to arrest and detain unlawful migrants anywhere on US soil.

A cornerstone of Trump's immigration policy is removing unlawful migrants out of the US and the promise of "mass deportations". To that effect, the defense department has said that it will provide military aircraft to deport people that have been detained by Border Patrol and or ICE. The White House Press Secretary shared images of deportation flights being carried out by military cargo planes.

The Pentagon announced the deployment of 1,500 active duty troops to the southern US border to assist with expedited deportations. This is in addition to 2,500 active-duty personnel already there, officials said - marking a 60% increase in Army troops in the area. The troops will fly helicopters to help Border Patrol ICE agents said acting Defense Secretary Robert Salesses. He said that "this is just the beginning" and more troops may be sent soon.

Expedited removals were previously limited to areas within 100 miles (160km) of US international borders, and applied to those who did not request asylum or failed to show a legitimate case for asylum. With Trump's changes, these removals can now occur anywhere in the US, and will apply to undocumented migrants who can't prove that they have been in the country for more than two years.

Trump has ordered the construction of a migrant

detention facility in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba which he said would hold as many as 30,000 people. The facility had always been used to incarcerate war prisoners linked to terrorism. It is unclear how much the facility will cost or when it would be completed. Cuba's government swiftly condemned the plan, accusing the US of torture and illegal detention on "occupied" land.

Another significant policy change that was felt almost immediately was Trump's canceling existing immigrant appointments to be heard by the immigration courts. After he took office he scrapped the Customs Border Protection (CBP) One Smartphone app, which migrants were able to use to schedule appointments with US border patrol agents. The CBP One app was launched by the Biden administration as a way to organize and streamline the entry of migrants who are fleeing prosecution.

Some 30,000 people were said to be stranded inside Mexico since the app was taken down - all of them with scheduled appointments that are now cancelled. The move was met with anguish by migrants who had travelled long journeys to the border, and who had waited months to secure those appointments. The American Civil Liberties Union has since filed a legal challenge against the app's closure.

There is an estimated backlog of 3.6m cases in US immigration courts, and migrants often have to wait years. Many have been left wondering whether those cases will still be heard. Trump has fired immigration judges and court officials since taking office which may impact the processing of those cases.

Trump has also vowed to end birthright citizenship. Citizenship in the United States is a matter of federal law, governed by the United States Constitution. Since the adoption of the Fourteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution on July 9, 1868, the citizenship of persons born in the United States has been controlled by its Citizenship Clause, which states: All persons born or naturalized in the United States are citizens of the United States.

Catholic's Pope Francis issued a major rebuke against the Trump administration's aggressive migrant deportation policies. He warned that forcibly expelling individuals solely based on their illegal status strips them of their inherent dignity and will ultimately lead to negative consequences.

Twenty-seven more churches and religious organizations filed suit to stop ICE stakeouts and raids in religious places. The Pope criticizes Trump's deportation of migrants as a violation of human dignity.

In a rare move, Francis addressed the issue in a letter to the U.S. bishops, who have been vocal critics of the mass deportations. The Catholic Church leaders have repeatedly condemned the policy, highlighting its impact on the most vulnerable communities.

As the first Latin American pope in history, Francis has consistently prioritized the protection of migrants. His teachings emphasize the moral duty of nations to welcome, protect, promote, and integrate those fleeing war, poverty, and climate crises. While advocating for migrants, Pope Francis has acknowledged that governments have the right to manage migration within their means. However, he urges them to approach the issue with compassion and fairness, rather than through mass expulsions that disregard human rights.

"Christians know very well that it is only by affirming the infinite dignity of all that our own identity as persons and as communities reaches its maturity. Christian love is not a concentric expansion of interests that little by little extend to other persons and groups. In other words: the human person is not a mere individual, relatively expansive, with some philanthropic feelings! The human person is a subject with dignity who, through the constitutive relationship with all, especially with the poorest, can gradually mature in his identity and vocation," the Pope said.

Trump officials say that a number of additional "border enforcement missions" are in development, without providing specifics.

Abbott: State of the State,

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

ity crisis. Last session, we slashed your property taxes. But for many Texans, those cuts were wiped out by local taxing authorities that hiked your property taxes even more. That must end this session," he said, pledging \$10 billion in new property tax relief.

"That will only work if local authorities cannot use loopholes to jack up your property taxes like Harris County did. They increased property taxes more than 10 percent last year," he said.

Abbott promised to make property tax relief an emergency item and water.

"We will also make the largest investment in water in the history of Texas. We will tap into new water supplies and repair pipes to save billions of gallons of water each year," he promised.

He also plans to add more power to the electric power grid adding at least 10,000 megawatts of power, enough to power an additional two million homes. Texas currently ranks No. 1 for electric power generation, more than California and New York combined.

"Texas is No. 1 in so many ways, like jobs, Tier One research universities, cattle and cotton, oil and gas, and we're home to the largest medical center in

the world. The list goes on. It is now time that we set our sights on another No. 1. Texas should be No. 1 in educating our children," he said.

Abbott listed three pillars to that success: empowered parents, exemplary teachers (with a pay raise), and exceptional academics.

In other related targets for education, he promised to ban DEI in grades K-12, no boys in girls' sports, and expand career education.

He promised to fully fund public schools and raise teacher pay, while also giving parents choice with vouchers.

He pledged to rid state agencies of DEI and make communities safer by eliminating parole for criminals convicted of child trafficking, capital murder, and other heinous violent crimes.

"Illegal immigrants who are arrested should be considered a flight risk, denied bil, and turned over to ICE," he said.

With that, he pledged bail reform, property rights to remove and prosecute squatters, and more funding firefighters to protect homes.

"As the world becomes more complicated and dangerous, we must protect our state from hackers and

hostile foreign actors. Just in the last two weeks, we have seen one of our cities, a hospital, and a major business all hit by serious cyberattacks," he said. He announced a partnership with UT at San Antonio in the creation of the Texas Cyber Command.

"We also must protect Texas from infiltration by foreign adversaries... prohibiting non-citizens from serving in state and local government and prohibiting hostile foreign nations and their agents from buying Texas land," he pledged.

He also promised to protect election integrity and empower the Attorney General to prosecute election violations.

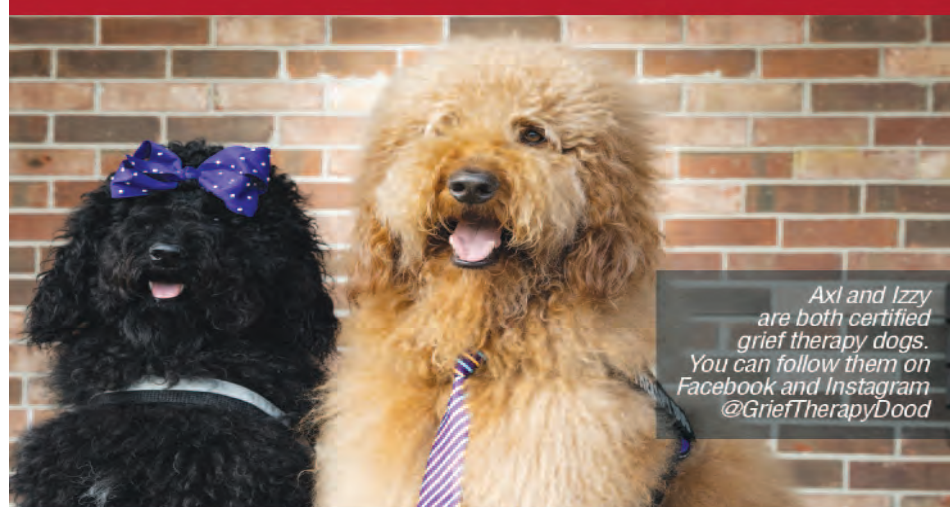
Operation Lone Star at the border will continue as well as the border wall, buoys in the Rio Grand River, and the deployment of the Texas National Guard and DPS in the ground, water, and air.

Last year, Abbott declared an invasion at the border and designated the Mexican drug cartels foreign terrorist organizations along with the Venezuelan gang Tren de Aragua.

"Ultimately, our task this session is to be guardians of freedom. Freedom will persist for as long as we protect it," he said.

Dealing with the loss of a loved one is never easy, but maybe these guys can help!

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Crowded Houston Area Market Receives New Area Code

By David Taylor
Managing Editor

The influx of new residents into the Houston metro area and the demand for more and more phones has resulted in the Public Utility Commission of Texas (PUCT) to approve an additional area code for the region. The new 621 area code will encompass the greater Houston metropolitan area and surrounding communities such as Baytown, League City, Missouri City, Pasadena, Pearland, Sugar Land, and The Woodlands and will encompass Harris, Austin, Brazoria, Chambers, Fort Bend, Galveston, Liberty, Montgomery, San Jacinto, and Waller Counties.

According to the PUCT, the new area code began on Jan. 23, 2025, while existing area codes, 281, 346, 713, and 832 will remain in use.

With the advent of the burner phone, the use of multiple phones now by individuals more and more, the increase for phone numbers has increased.

Telephone customers requesting a new phone number in the 281/346/713/832 area code overlay region may be assigned a number beginning with 621. Whether they're requesting new service, adding a line, or in some cases, moving their service, customers could be assigned one with the new 621 code.

The PUCT wanted the public to know some important facts about



the new area code:

- Existing telephone numbers will not change.
- The price of a call, coverage area, or other rates and services will not change due to the new area code.
- What qualifies as a local call now will remain a local call.
- Customers in the new area code region will continue to dial 10 digits for local calls within and between the Houston-area overlay area codes, and 1+10 digits for long distance calls.
- Customers can still dial just three digits to reach 911 and 988, as well as 211, 311, 411, 511, 611, 711, or 811 if those services are currently available in their community.

Telephone customers should continue to identify their telephone number as a 10-digit number (3-digit area code + 7-digit telephone number) and include the area code when sharing the number.

Customers should ensure the accurate area code is reflected across

their devices and personal

identification. This includes any equipment that uses their phone number (i.e. automatic dialing

equipment, wireless phones, PBXs, fax machines, internet dial-up numbers, speed dialers, call forwarding settings, voicemail services, medical alert devices, safety alarm security systems and gates, ankle monitors). It also includes printed communications including websites, personal and business stationary and printed checks, advertising materials, contact information, and personal or pet ID tags.

For more information, please contact your local telephone provider.

Texas consumers with questions or concerns about their telecommunications service should contact their provider first. If they do not feel the provider's response adequately addressed their needs, they should contact the PUCT's Consumer Protection Division.

Magic meets history: GP library honors black cowboys,

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

*Nat Love is one of the most famous Black Cowboys of all time. He was born a slave in Tennessee, but in 1876, he became a legend by winning a roping and shooting event in Deadwood City in the Dakota Territory. His skill and strength inspired the crowd, and they nicknamed him, "Deadwood Dick". Other famous Black cowboys they learned about were Bill Pickett, John Ware, Ned Huddleston, Bass Reeves and Bose Ikard.

*Mary Fields a famous Black Cowgirl was six feet tall; heavy; tough; short-tempered; two-fisted; and packed a pair of six-shooters and an eight or ten-gauge shotgun. In 1895, she became the second woman and first African-American woman to work for the U.S. Postal Service. She developed a reputation for always delivering her letters and parcels no matter what the weather or



Nat Love - Black Cowboy
June 14, 1854 - February 11, 1921

how rugged the terrain, and was nicknamed Stagecoach Mary.

Not only was his show entertaining but educational as well. The show was made possible by funds from the Harris County Library.

Tommy Terrific's Wacky Magic Show is a unique blend of laugh-out-loud comedy coupled with sensational magic, all combined with an educational

approach that is all about having fun with books.

The show features Tommy as a big kid who shows up at your event to watch his Uncle Fumpnutter perform a magic show. When no one can find Uncle Fumpnutter, Tommy takes over!

Unfortunately, Tommy has never done magic before, so he enlists the kids' help following the instructions in the huge Magician's Handbook. The magic works in wacky and unexpected ways, making Tommy Terrific's Wacky Magic Show educational fun for the whole family.

The show is aimed particularly at schools, libraries, churches, fairs and festivals. He travels all over the nation entertaining and educating children, mostly for ages 3-12 years old.

To reach Tommy Terrific phone: 501-786-2442 / www.tommyterrific.com

Galena Park Library Introduces New Staff

By Allan Jamail

Galena Park, TX. February 18, 2025 ~ The Galena Park library is heavily used by the community and it's truly an asset to all ages. Anytime I visit there the computers are filled with users and people are always checking out books and videos etc.

Librarian Sisi Medina has a new staff. (See photo)

Sisi Medina has been a librarian for 9 years, and been the Manager of the Harris County Public Library - Galena

Park Branch for 7 years.

She said she feels much fulfilled by her library work. She said, "I love being a part of this community and helping people get the information and resources they need. I was an educator in my previous career, and that has influenced my work with this library because of the high volume of children we work with every day. I get to do a variety of things daily. I enjoy that each day is different."

"My primary goal at Galena Park Branch Library is to provide excel-

lent customer service by meeting the needs of our visitors and maintaining a clean, vibrant space. I am continually looking for ways to improve our programs and services. Our next project will focus on outdoor beautification, and I am excited to see what we will create," she said.

The Galena Park Branch Library is located at 1500 Keene Street, Galena Park, TX 77547. Phone: 832-927-5470 Email sisi.medina@hcpl.net

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Robert De Niro, left, and Angela Bassett star in "Zero Day."

"Zero Day"

"Mufasa: The Lion King" (PG) — This musical drama tells the story of an orphaned lion who would later become a king through the eyes of Academy-Award-winning director Barry Jenkins ("Moonlight"). Taking place after the events of "The Lion King" (2019), the film picks up after Simba, Mufasa's son, becomes King of the Pride Lands and now has a young daughter, Kiara, with his wife, Nala. While Simba's trusted friends Timon and Pumbaa watch over Kiara, the shaman Rafiki pays them a visit and decides to tell Kiara the story of her grandfather, letting viewers get whisked away to the time when Mufasa first stepped foot onto the Pride Lands. New additions to the cast include Blue Ivy Carter in her feature film debut, Mads Mikkelsen, and Thandiwe Newton.

Available to rent on Feb. 18. (Amazon Prime Video)

"One of Them Days" (R) — This comedy led by Keke Palmer and SZA can be compared to the 1995 film "Friday," starring Ice Cube and Chris Tucker. The two female leads respectively play waitress Dreux (Palmer) and aspiring artist Alyssa (SZA), who face eviction after their rent fails to get paid on time. Dreux and Alyssa deduce that Alyssa's boyfriend, Keshawn, took the rent money for his own gain, so the two women are forced into a series of shenanigans to obtain \$1,500 before the day is over. Lil Rel Howery, Katt Williams, and Maude Apatow co-star in this ridiculously entertaining film that is out now to rent. (Apple TV+)

"The White Lotus: Season 3" (TV-MA) — Mike White's smash-hit series "The White Lotus" recently premiered its third season, with the first episode out now to stream! This season is in Thailand and follows a new set of self-absorbed characters who are doomed to experience some kind of ego death while they're on vacation. Jason Isaacs (of "Harry Potter" fame), Leslie Bibb ("Palm Royale"), and Walton Goggins ("Fallout") are some of the new additions to the cast, while Natasha Rothwell reprises her role as Belinda, a spa manager from the first season that took place in Hawaii. Viewers will be glued to their screens for this show until the season's finale on April 6, and a fourth season has already been greenlit by HBO. (Max)

"Zero Day" (TV-MA) — It is hard to believe that the prolific Robert De Niro hadn't yet taken on a main role in a television series, but this role as ex-president George Mullen in Netflix's new-political-thriller miniseries is his first! In a reality that looks scarily akin to ours, George is tasked by President Evelyn Mitchell (Angela Bassett) with heading a commission for cybercriminals after a global cyberattack leaves the world in devastation. But as George begins his investigation, he's thrust into a deeply hidden conspiracy that will test his patriotic morals. Lizzy Caplan ("Fatal Attraction"), Jesse Plemons ("Civil War") and Connie Britton ("Winner") were perfectly picked to co-star and dial in the drama. All six episodes are out now for your viewing pleasure! (Netflix) (c) 2025 King Features Synd., Inc.



Q: Is it true that "Buffy the Vampire Slayer" is coming back?

Will it be a TV series or a movie? — G.A. A: Sarah Michelle Gellar, who rose to stardom after playing the titular role in the WB series "Buffy the Vampire Slayer" from 1997-2003, has confirmed that a reboot series is in its early stages of development. The actress shunned the idea of such a project for years, especially after the show's creator Joss Whedon was canceled by Hollywood for numerous allegations of misconduct. However, Gellar changed her mind recently when one of the original show's executive producers, Gail Berman, introduced her to Oscar-winning director Chloe Zhao ("Nomadland"). Both women convinced Gellar that their vision was one that would honor Buffy and her legacy.



Sarah Michelle Gellar as Buffy in "Buffy the Vampire Slayer."

According to the Los Angeles Times, the new series, which is being developed for Hulu, will center on a new, younger slayer, much like Buffy was as a teen. Gellar will also star, but it's not known yet which beloved characters from fictional Sunnydale, California, will also return. ***

Q: Why is there not going to be a new season of "The Bachelorette" this year? Has it been canceled?

— M.E. A: No, "The Bachelorette" hasn't been canceled, but it has been put on hiatus. It normally airs a new installment in the summer following "The Bachelor," which recently premiered on ABC for its 29th season. However, no reason has been given for why its female counterpart is being put on the shelf indefinitely. The ratings for Jenn Tran's season last year were no worse than Charity Lawson's the year before, but Tran did have a heartbreaking ending. She proposed to her chosen suitor Devin Strader, only to have him break up with her (via phone no less) before the "After the Final Rose" live reunion. Fortunately, Tran ended up meeting her current beau, Sasha Farber, when she was paired up with him on "Dancing with the Stars." According to Entertainment Weekly, this isn't the first time the show has taken a long break. The magazine stated: "After

three consecutive January premieres, 'The Bachelorette' took two years off in 2006 and 2007 before returning with season four in 2008, which, in turn, resulted in the show moving to a summer launch date." As for who will eventually follow in Tran's footsteps, we'll just have to wait and see! ***

Q: Who is the new female judge on "The Voice"?

I know she's a singer, but I've never heard of her before. — S.K. A: While she looks much younger, 31-year-old Kelsea Ballerini is a new coach on the latest season of the singing competitive reality show "The Voice." Growing up in Knoxville, Tennessee, Ballerini became the first solo female country music artist to earn a No. 1 hit with her debut single ("Love Me Like You Mean It") since Carrie Underwood accomplished the same. In the next decade, Ballerini would go on to be nominated for five Grammy Awards. Underwood, who is now 41 years old, has taken home eight Grammys since winning "American Idol" in 2005. Send me your questions at NewCelebrityExtra@gmail.com, or write me at KFWS, 628 Virginia Drive, Orlando, FL 32803. (c) 2025 King Features Synd., Inc.

ENTERTAINMENT

Amber Waves

by Dave T. Phipps



TIGER

by Bud Blake



The Spats

by Jeff Pickering



Weekly SUDOKU grid and instructions. Difficulty: Moderate. HOO BOY!

HOCUS-FOCUS by Henry Boltinoff. Find at least six differences in details between panels.

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Trivia Test by Fifi Rodriguez. 10 trivia questions with answers.

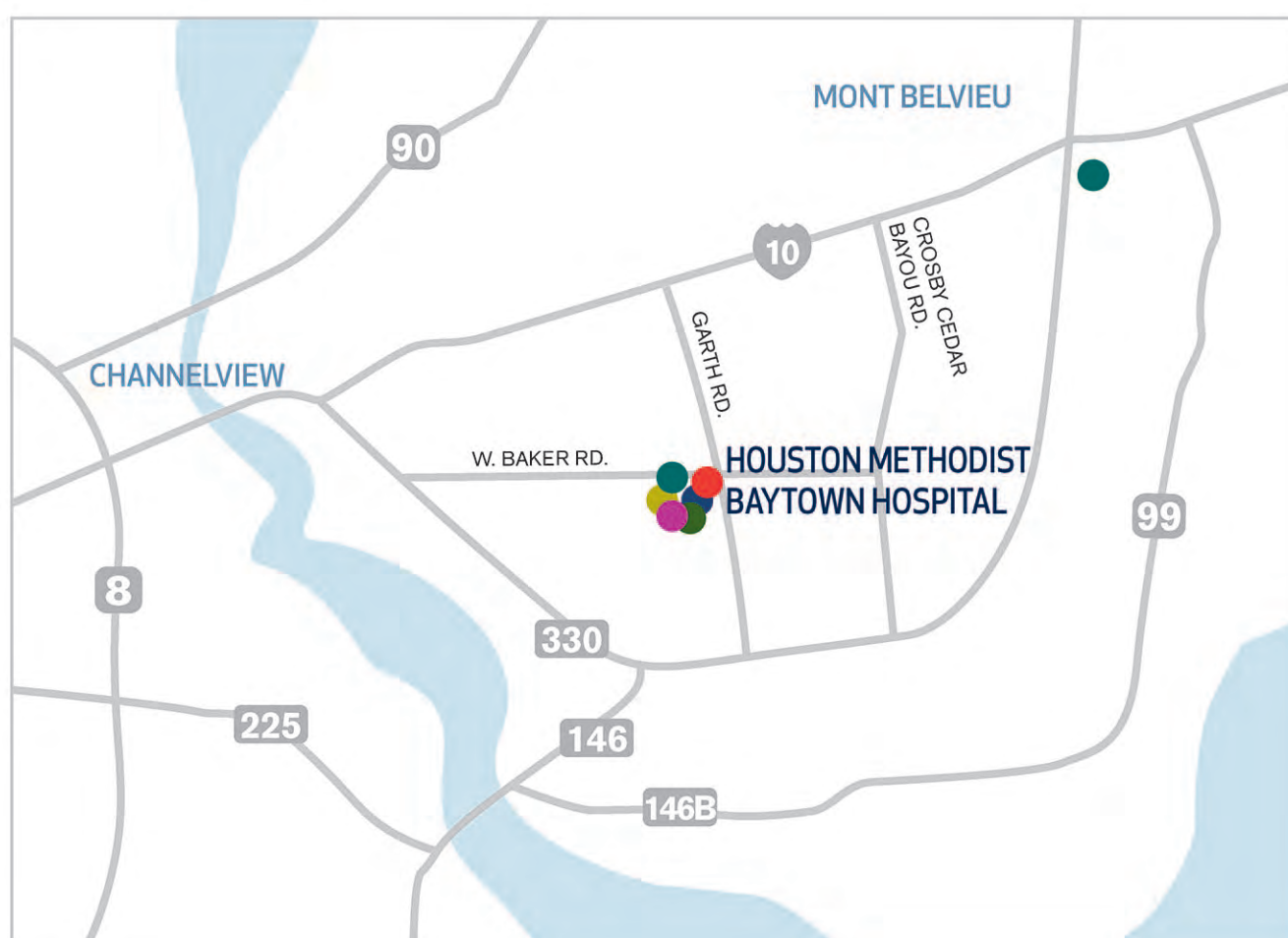


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