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Jacinto City & Galena Park Celebrate 4 of July & Nation's 250th Birthday

By Allan Jamail

Galena Park – Jacinto City, TX. - On the 4th of July, 2026 the two neighboring cities, Galena Park and Jacinto City joined together to provide their annual aerial fireworks show; thousands came out to watch.

This 4th of July marks the 250th anniversary (Semiquincentennial) of the United States. This monumental milestone commemorates the adoption of the Declaration of Independence on July 4, 1776.

According to Oscar Mireles Galena Park's newly elected mayor the two cities's split the cost of the fireworks.

Mayor Mirelis said, "Celebrating our first Fourth of July as a new administration, during our country's 250th anniversary, makes this year espe-



Aerial fireworks explodes high into the sky as thousands 4th of July celebrators gathered in Galena Park & Jacinto City to recognize the 2026 USA's 250th Birthday & Independence Day. (Photo by Allan Jamail)



Galena Park's Mayor Oscar Mireles at the city's main gathering point under the covered basketball court preparing to watch the fireworks display on the 4th of July, 2026. (Photo by Allan Jamail)

cially memorable for all of us. Our team is excited to see families, neighbors, and local small businesses all coming together in one place. That is what Galena Park is about, and I may be a little biased, but I think there is no better community to celebrate with."

Ana Diaz, Jacinto City's Mayor had said, "I'm glad our two communities can unite and show unity on such an important day as Independence Day to celebrate our Nation's birthday. Citizens of Galena Park and Jacinto City have family members and friends living in both cities. It's nice we were able to afford the fireworks."

North Channel Star photojournalist and former Mayor and Councilman of Jacinto City Allan Jamail said, "I can remember in the late 60's or early 70's these two cities funded their fireworks separately. Later we decided we could pool our funds together and get a much larger display at a lesser cost." "This makes my tenth consecutive year covering the event for the NC Star."

With the sweltering heat index soaring from 106 to 110 degrees Galena Park's administration was wise to use the covered basketball court as a central gathering place. Vendors and citizens were able to get out of

Continued. See GALENA PARK, JACINTO CITY, Page 3

CHANNEL CURRENTS

Precinct 2 to Host Back-to-School Bash

BAYTOWN — Harris County Precinct 2 Commissioner Adrian Garcia will host a Back-to-School Bash on Saturday, July 11, offering families an opportunity to prepare for the upcoming school year with free supplies, health services and family-friendly activities.

The community event will take place from **10 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the J.D. Walker Community Center, 7613 Wade Road in Baytown.**

The first **1,000 school-aged children** who attend will receive free backpacks and socks as part of the effort to help students begin the new school year ready for success. Vaccines will also be available during the event.

Families with children ranging from elementary school through high

Continued. See story on, Page 2

By Gerardo Hernandez
STAFF WRITER

JACINTO CITY — The Jacinto City Council has formally expressed its opposition to the development of data centers within the city's limits until additional studies can determine their potential impacts on local infrastructure, public services and the community.

Council members approved Resolution 2026-10R during their July 2 meeting, stating that more information is needed before the city considers allowing large-scale data center projects.

The resolution does not permanently ban data centers. Instead, it establishes the city's position that no construction, expansion or



The Manufacturing facility on Fidelity St. among the properties that have been the subject of unverified social media speculation about a possible future data center.

approval of such facilities should move forward until city officials complete further analysis and policy review.

According to the resolution, council members are concerned about the potential demands data centers could place on electrical service, water consumption, wastewater capacity, drainage

systems, transportation infrastructure and emergency services. The resolution also cites questions about land-use compatibility, environmental sustainability,

economic development and the long-term character of the community.

City officials noted that growing demand for artificial intelligence technologies and hyper-

scale computing facilities has led to increased interest in developing data centers throughout Texas and the Gulf Coast region.

The resolution states that the City Council wants any future consideration of data center development to be deliberate, transparent and based on data, while ensuring proposed projects align with Jacinto City's infrastructure capabilities and long-term planning goals.

The measure took effect immediately following its approval on July 2.

GP Mayor Says New Leadership Team Faces Water- Billing Crisis, Staffing Strains

By David Taylor
Managing Editor

GALENA PARK, Texas (AP) — Mayor Oscar Mireles says Galena Park's new leadership team is trying to stabilize city government as it confronts a water-billing shortfall, overdue financial obligations and staffing gaps across key departments.

In an interview, Mireles said he has tapped Jason Adams as interim police chief, brought back veteran attorney Jim L. DeFoyd and elevated finance director Britique Williams to serve as interim city secretary while the city searches for longer-term hires.

Mireles said he chose Adams, a Galena Park officer who lives in the city, because he wanted a younger leader with ties to the community.

"I wanted somebody that was younger because



I wanted to shake it up," Mireles said. "I want somebody that has some skin in the game of why they're here."

Adams is serving on an interim basis while the administration evaluates the department's direction.

"He's interim, yeah, at the moment," Mireles said. "I didn't want to commit to anything long term just yet because he's inexperienced, I'm inexperienced. And I wanted to see what ideas he had."

On the administrative

side, Mireles said Williams emerged as a natural choice for interim city secretary because employees were already relying on her for answers during the transition.

"She's been the one that's ran the city," he said. "Everybody, every employee goes to her for answers."

Mireles said DeFoyd, who previously worked with the city, has been

Continued. See GALENA PARK
NEW ADMINISTRATION, Page 5

Child Injured by Suspected Celebratory Gunfire in Channelview

By Gerardo Hernandez
STAFF WRITER

CHANNELVIEW — A 9-year-old child was injured Saturday night after being struck by a bullet while celebrating Independence Day with family in the backyard of a Channelview home, according to the Harris County Sheriff's Office.

Sheriff Ed Gonzalez said the incident occurred at a residence in the 1500 block of Park Drive. Investigators believe the child was hit by a bullet fired during celebratory gunfire somewhere in the area.

The child suffered a gunshot wound to the arm and was transported to a local hospital. Authorities said the child was listed in fair condi-



tion.

The source of the gunfire has not been identified, and detectives continue to investigate the incident.

The Harris County Sheriff's Office is asking anyone with information about the shooting or those responsible for firing weapons into the air to contact investigators at **713-221-6000** or

Crime Stoppers of Houston at 713-222-TIPS (8477). Tips may be submitted anonymously.

Law enforcement officials routinely warn that celebratory gunfire can have deadly consequences because bullets fired into the air eventually return to the ground with enough force to seriously injure or kill innocent bystanders.

State Rep. Ana Hernandez Participates in Community Meetings

By Gerardo Hernandez
STAFF WRITER

EAST HARRIS - Staff with State Rep. Ana Hernandez spent the past week meeting with residents and participating in community events throughout East Harris County, focusing on neighborhood engagement and voter outreach. According to Hernandez's office, team members joined a Denver Harbor bus tour with residents to learn more about the neighborhood and receive updates on ongoing community improvement projects. The tour provided an opportunity to hear directly from residents about local concerns and future development efforts.

The team also attended a meeting of the Wood Shadows Civic Club, where they met with community members and discussed issues affecting the neighborhood. As part of the Independence Day holiday, Hernandez's office participated in the City of Galena Park's Fourth of July celebration. During the event, staff assisted eligible residents with voter registration and distributed information about voting resources



State Rep. Hernandez Team (Photo & information Source, State rep Ana Hdz Facebook page)



GP Mayor Mireles, and State Rep. Ana Hernandez (Photo & information Source, State rep Ana Hdz Facebook page)

and upcoming elections. Hernandez's office thanked the residents who attended the events and visited the outreach booth, saying community participation remains an important part of connecting constituents with state resources and civic engagement opportunities.

Sheldon ISD Celebrates Child Nutrition Department's Success at State Conference



Sheldon ISD is proud to announce that our Child Nutrition Department earned five prestigious accolades at this year's Texas Association for School Nutrition (TASN) Conference in Grapevine, Texas. We extend a special commendation to Director Barbara Vasser-Baldwin and Assistant Director

Jennie LaCour, who also served as conference presenters, sharing their leadership and industry expertise with child nutrition professionals from across the state. 2025-2026 TASN Awards Received: Certification Award, Membership Award, Continuing Education Award

Partnership in Child Nutrition Award, Nutrition Education Award. These distinctions reflect our team's steadfast commitment to operational excellence, professional development, and the health and well-being of the students of Sheldon ISD.

Rural Counties Face Hurdles in Regulating Data Centers

By Gary Border,

Rural counties trying to slow or even block data center construction are finding they have limited legal authority, the Texas Standard reported. Hill County, for example, rescinded a one-year moratorium on data center construction after being sued for \$100 million by a company planning a large-scale data center project near Hillsboro. RCM Hill argued that the county lacked the legal authority to impose the temporary ban, which came after the company had already secured contracts for more than 800 acres for more than \$80 million. "You're not going to see anybody else trying a moratorium at this point because they've seen what happens when you do it," said Robert Paterson, a professor at the University of Texas at Austin who specializes in land use law. "You basically just get clubbed with a ridiculous amount of money." In Hood and Somervell counties, both southwest of Fort Worth, at least nine proposed data center projects are under consideration. Concerned citizens are filling county commissioner meetings, saying the projects could raise electricity bills, strain water resources, and harm tourism. Earlier this month, Gov. Greg Abbott ordered the Public Utility Commission to ensure that new data centers actually reduce residential electric bills and proposed that new laws be passed during next year's legislative session to further regulate the data centers.

Back to School,

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

school are invited to attend and enjoy activities designed for all ages. The Back-to-School Bash is being organized through Harris County Precinct 2 Health Services, along with community partners, to provide resources and support for local families before students return to the classroom. No registration is required. Supplies and services will be provided on a first-come, first-served basis. For more information, call Precinct 2 Health Services at 713-274-2124.

East Harris County Small Business Conference: Empowering Local Entrepreneurs

East Harris County Small Business Conference Opens Doors for Local Entrepreneurs. Sponsored by Houston Methodist, the free Saturday, July 11 event will connect business owners with growth strategies, funding resources, expert guidance, and valuable regional connections. Time: 9:00 AM-12:00 PM Address: 11810 Lockwood Rd, Houston, TX 77044 Register: www.eastharriscounty.org/ehctxbusiness

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CHARLOTTE'S WEB

By Charlotte Jackson



Mental Illness is Real

Imagine being at work and you receive a text message “Send police. I am being held hostage.” Your heart would be racing, and you would be calling 911 instantly, right? Unless you are like me and rarely look at your personal cell phone while at work.

When I saw the message, I tried to call the person immediately but no answer, I reached out to the Constable’s Dispatch at 713-274-2500 and they immediately took as much information as I had and sent deputies to the address. In the meantime, I was still attempting to call the numbers I had for her family. I stopped and prayed and was just about to send a prayer request to some of our mutual friends. As I was looking up the numbers, the lady called me back. She was in tears and was a nervous wreck. I was so relieved to hear her voice that I was in tears.

When the Constable’s Deputies arrived at the scene, Houston Police Department had just arrested someone who had been threatening her live and had blocked the exit door so that she

had not been able to flee.

Unfortunately, this was a family member of hers. He had been diagnosed previously with a mental illness and as is too often the situation, he did not like the effects of the medication and would stop taking it at times. He would self-medicate with alcohol, marijuana and street drugs. This mother had traveled much of the journey with her son alone, except for his younger sister who succumbed to Type 1 Diabetes in 2025. Between having one child with mental illness and the other with Diabetes, their marriage ended. The mother struggled to keep a roof over their heads and worked when she could but as her daughter’s health deteriorated and the son became an adult, she was forced to put him out of the apartment. During the past few years, he had made many poor choices, including not staying on his medication. When his sister passed last year, the mother needed support and at a weak moment, allowed him back into her home.

Today was an example of something many families face much too often. Coworkers, friends, neighbors and often religious leaders

NAMI Greater Houston
National Alliance on Mental Illness

BAYTOWN AREA FAMILY & FRIENDS CLASS
8:30AM - 12:30PM
JULY 25TH

FACILITATOR

CHARLOTTE JACKSON
FACILITATOR

ANGELINA HUDSON
MPA

NAMI FAMILY & FRIENDS IS A FREE 4-HOUR SEMINAR FOR FAMILIES SUPPORTING A LOVED ONE WITH A MENTAL HEALTH CONDITION.

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East Harris County Empowerment Council

ADRIAN GARCIA
COUNSELLOR

hear stories of these nightmares. Many teachers and educational personnel have experienced events like this.

I know from personal experiences how scary it can be and how hopeless someone feels when they cannot find the resources they need. When my son was growing up, there would be something that would trigger his health and I thank God for those who did not just write him off as another child from a single parent home, or another spoiled kid not getting his way. I pushed and I prayed for answers. Amazing

school counselors such as Ms. Virginia Jackson and Mrs. Fran Urbanovsky, Brian Allen, Founder of the Gents of North Shore, as well as many supportive adults from Woodforest Baptist Church and Wallisville Road Athletic Club were there to help us.

Due to what I have experienced and what I see so many others facing now, NAMI Greater Houston will be hosting a four-hour Family and Friends Workshop on July 25. Please share with others and register today to attend.

ASK DIAMOND JIM



Diamond Jim: “What is an Amulet?”

Amulet

Originally a Latin word meaning a “thing worn as a charm against spells and disease,” it’s not seen in English until around the 17th century.

Some cultures believe certain jewelry possesses magical powers. Amulets are worn or kept close as protection from harm, whereas other types of charm<<https://gemkids.gia.edu/jewelry/amulets#charm>>s may be created to offer the wearer superhuman abilities or wisdom. Most are thought to bring good fortune.

A talisman, like an amulet, is a lucky charm. However, a talisman is created specifically to aid its wearer with special magical powers or protection.

Protective

An amulet is meant to protect its wearer from harm, illness, injury or death. Since the earliest of times, people all around the world have believed a special stone, figurine, or even inscribed enchanted word could invoke supernatural protective powers.

Religious

Amulets have their origin in ancient religions. Since the days of Old Babylonia, gods and demons have been formed into figurines that were believed to offer favors to their wearers: an ancient Hittite weather-god could have been worn to ensure good weather, and ugly demons were used as protectors to fight off other bad demons.

The ancient Egyptians wore the Eye of Horus, the symbolic eye of their sky god, and it was often worn for both protection and prosperity. The early Christians kept this tradition by shaping their sacred emblems into their treasures: carved crosses, crucifixes and holy images became jewelry. Figurines of Catholic saints, such as Saint Christopher, were also thought to bring good fortune.

Similarly, other religions such as Buddhism, Islam, and Hindu use a combination of ancient and current images for protection.

Still Today

Amulets have withstood the test of time, and they are still quite prevalent today. They can often be found on gold or silver charm bracelets or worn singly as a pendant on a chain. If you’re looking to have a little “Good Luck” to come your way, you might consider getting an amulet of your choice from Diamond Jim’s PINEFOREST JEWELRY Experience.

Credit to GIA for much of the content in this article

Ready to explore exquisite jewelry<<https://www.pineforestjewelry.com/>> that tells a story? From engagement rings to unique pieces, Pineforest Jewelry has something for everyone. And to our esteemed first responders and military personnel, we’re pleased to offer a 10% discount on purchases and repair work as a token of our gratitude.

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If you are looking to purchase that amazing gift for yourself or someone else, or you need to sell some old jewelry, coins, or diamonds to pay the bills, look no further than **Pineforest Jewelry**. **Contact us** or simply stop by our store if you would like assistance learning how we can be of service to you.

Thank you for reading the “Ask Diamond Jim” column and for supporting the North Channel Star Newspaper!
Diamond Jim is a master jeweler, diamond dealer and precious metals broker. Pineforest Jewelry has been a proud member of the Independent Jewelers Organization (IJO) and the Retail Jewelers Organization (RJO) for many years. See more at: www.pineforestjewelry.com.
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Galena Park, Jacinto City unite for Independence Day,

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1



Friends of the Galena Park Public Library were accepting donations for plants donated by friends of the library and Lowe’s Eastside off beltway. All proceeds went to the Galena Park Branch programs. L – R: Naomi Macias- Dolores Delano. (Photo by Allan Jamail)

the blazing sun, large fans kept the air moving which prevented anyone from overheating.

There were activities for all ages, a bounce house, games galore; gifts were raffled throughout the day. The city provided large fans, drinking water was available, vendor booths had games for prizes and food and refreshments was reasonably priced.

GP Fire Chief Tom Ehlers with some of his personnel were circulating in the crowd to insure participants stayed healthy. Others in his department were up on the levee where the fireworks were being prepared for the after dark display show. The fire trucks and ambulance were on site and manned in case an emergency call came in.

GP Police Chief Jason Adams and his officers were visible; they kept an eye out for anything which could cause a problem. The

chief and his officers had prepared for the crowd control for both prior to and after the fireworks. Public works had key intersections blocked off to keep vehicle traffic away from the basketball court to keep pedestrians safe.

As a former resident of Galena Park I knew lots of citizens who had came to the event. It seems the community is coming together after the recent city election that ushered in a new mayor and city commission. Citizens who were on opposite sides in the election seemed to put the politics aside and join together to make the city’s welfare their main concern.



Galena Park First Responders at the citizens & vendors central gathering point to watch the fireworks show in celebration of the 4th of July, 2026. L – R: Galena Park Fire Chief Tom Ehlers, Susan Davis, Jordan Slevin, Cody Sawyer & Ricardo Rangel. (Photo by Allan Jamail)

A Tribute to America's 250th Anniversary

As our community reflects on the celebration of Independence Day and the nation's 250th anniversary, we pause to honor the courage, vision and sacrifice of those who dared to imagine a free nation.

On July 4, 1776, the founders adopted words that have inspired generations of Americans:

"We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness."

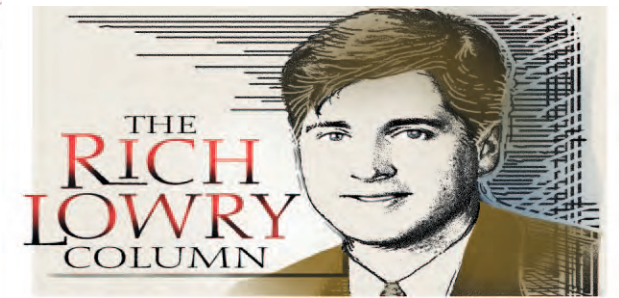
For two and a half centuries, those enduring principles have challenged each generation to preserve liberty, strengthen democracy and build a more perfect union. Freedom carries both privilege and responsibility.

As the fireworks fade and the celebrations conclude, the ideals expressed in the Declaration of Independence remain as meaningful today as they were in 1776. May we continue to honor those who have defended our liberties, strengthen our communities, and inspire future generations to uphold the values that unite us.

The celebration may have passed, but the promise of America—and the enduring pursuit of liberty, equality and opportunity—continues every day.

Happy 250th Anniversary, America.

-The North Channel Star Editorial Staff



Trump's Three Retreats

President Trump has been musing about whether he's the most powerful man in world history, and judging by the results lately, the answer is definitely "no."

It's certainly true that Trump has technical tools at his disposal that would have astounded famous pre-20th-century contenders for the title of most powerful man, whether Caesar, Alexander the Great, Charlemagne or Napoleon.

Trump's power, though, isn't defined by, say, the precision and explosive punch of the Tomahawk missile. As the leader of a constitutional republic that disperses power and depends ultimately on democratic consent, Trump is operating under constraints that routinely blunt his ambitions.

If the theme of the first year of his second term was aggression on all fronts, his second year has so far been defined by significant retreats.

Late last year, Trump surged DHS forces into Minneapolis, seeking to make an example of the Twin Cities after Somali immigrants were implicated in welfare fraud schemes. When the operation was met by fierce opposition from city and state leaders and resistance in the streets, the Trump administration steeled itself for a gargantuan test of wills — before Trump, realizing he was losing the battle of political optics, sent Tom Homan to Minneapolis to unwind the operation.

Last month, the Department of Justice settled Donald Trump's \$10 billion suit against the IRS over the leak of his tax returns. The department agreed to create a \$1.8 billion fund for the compensation of victims of Democratic lawfare, a slush fund for his allies, presumably including Jan. 6 rioters. Faced with adverse legal rulings and opposition in the Senate, the administration abandoned the scheme that it had initially touted as a means to "right the wrongs that were previously done while ensuring this never happens again."

Then, of course, Trump signed a ceasefire with Iran that wasn't close to the "unconditional surrender" that he had once demanded. The 14-point agreement included more U.S. than Iranian concessions, and Trump admitted that the Iranian closure of the Strait of Hormuz had forced his hand.

TITLE: None of these were incidental initiatives. They all involved core commitments of this president — to mass deportation, to turning on its head the lawfare campaign against him and to denying the Iranian regime a nuclear weapon.

They were also overreaches that displayed a heedlessness born of hubris. Trump had already driven down overall migration when he surged into Minneapolis; already pardoned the Jan. 6 rioters when his DOJ created the weaponization fund; and already struck a punishing blow against the Iranian nuclear program via Midnight Hammer when he launched Operation Epic Fury.

Trump isn't one for incremental progress toward an objective. He prefers the grand gesture and big gamble. He's drawn to the bridge too far when a drive a couple of blocks down the street would do just fine.

The worry about Trump was that he'd be unconstrained in his second term, and indeed, he's fashioned a team that is loath to tell him "no." But he's subject to checks from the other branches of government and, even more, from routine political pressures.

There was nothing that formally compelled him to remove DHS forces from Minneapolis or to relieve the military pressure on Iran, both of which were within his legitimate powers. It was the poor polling and the potential damage to Republican prospects in the midterms that obliged Trump to declare victory and go home.

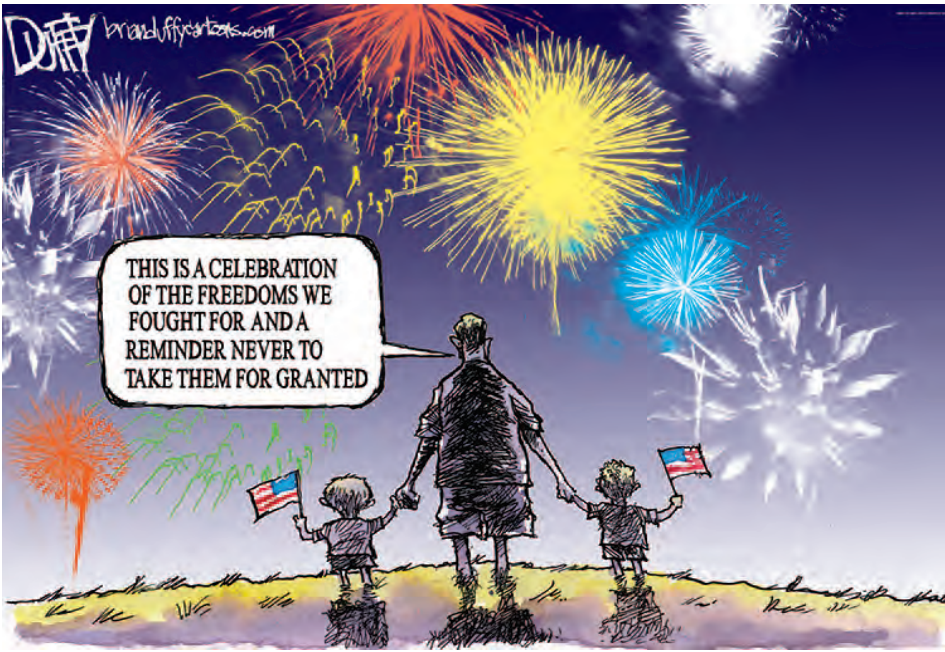
The president may enjoy thinking of how he can do things that a Roman emperor or never would have imagined, yet Marcus Aurelius wasn't hypersensitive to how stories were playing in the mass media, or to the latest public-opinion surveys.

As the creature of a democratic republic, Trump inherently is mindful of those considerations, which is one reason that it's been a year of retreats. Trump, surely, doesn't think of it that way. As Gen. Oliver Smith put it during the Korean War, he's merely attacking in a different direction — although not the one he'd intended.

Rich Lowry is editor of the National Review.

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STATE CAPITAL HIGHLIGHTS

By Gary Borders



Cornyn: Closed Primaries Could Backfire on Texas GOP

Sen. John Cornyn is warning Texas GOP leaders that closing party primaries would be “paving the way to minority party status,” The Texas Tribune reported.

The Texas Republican Party and its top elected leaders are pushing to require voters to register with a party, thereby prohibiting them from crossing over in party primaries. Texas is one of 17 states with open primaries.

Cornyn, who was defeated for reelection in a runoff by Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton, commented on an op-ed published in The Dallas Morning News, sharing its title — “Closed primaries are a threat to Texas voters.” He added, “Exactly,” and “Democrats haven’t turned Texas blue; Republican’s [sic] might.”

Paxton has joined the GOP’s pending lawsuit to strike down open primaries in court.

SUPREME COURT RULING COULD AFFECT 147K TPS RECIPIENTS IN TEXAS

The U.S. Supreme Court’s ruling that the Trump administration can revoke Temporary Protected Status for immigrants from Haiti and Syria means more than 147,000 migrants in Texas under the program face imminent risk of arrest and deportation, the Texas Standard reported.

Texas hosts one of the largest concentrations of TPS holders in the nation, and University of Houston constitutional law professor Seth Chandler said the ruling has dramatic consequences for them.

“It basically streamlines the ability of the Trump administration to revoke TPS status, not just for the Haitians and Syrians who were litigating in the case the Supreme Court decided today, but with respect to Hondurans, Nepalis, Afghans, and perhaps criti-



cally for Venezuelans as well,” Chandler said.

The decision could have economic consequences, since many immigrants in the country under TPS work in sectors already experiencing labor shortages.

“If you look at our plights in the Syria case, for example, we have a highly sought-after pediatrician,” said Hussein Elbakri, attorney at the International Refugee Assistance Project.

“We have somebody who is a special needs teacher by day and is training to be a nurse at night. We have construction workers. We have people in the food services industry, and we have many, many people, especially in the Haitian community, who are home health care workers, Elbakri said.

TESLA ACCUSED OF ALLOWING TOXIN RELEASE FROM REFINERY

Two Texas property owners have filed a class action suit against Tesla, accusing the company of dumping toxins from its lithium refinery near Corpus Christi onto their property, according to the Houston Chronicle. They claim that Tesla has violated its state-issued wastewater discharge permit by allowing contaminated water to flow onto their property.

The company’s permit allows it to discharge up to 231,000 gallons a day of

treated industrial water into Baffin Bay, according to state records. A review of the water leaking into a drainage ditch by lab hired by the Nueces County Drainage District revealed two toxic metals — arsenic and the carcinogen hexavalent chromium, as well as elevated levels of other chemicals.

Tesla did not respond to a request for comment.

MAJORITY OF TEXANS OPPOSE DATA CENTERS IN THEIR COMMUNITY

A new poll from the University of Texas’ Texas Politics Project indicates that a majority of Texans oppose having data centers in their community, according to the Texas Standard. The state has become the nation’s top destination for data centers, which provide the infrastructure for artificial intelligence and cryptocurrency mining.

The poll found 43% of Republicans oppose data centers, while 42% support their construction. More than 60% of people who identify as Democrats oppose new data centers.

“I think people are objecting for different reasons,” said James Henson, director of the polling center. “On one hand, lots of environmental concerns about water and resource use. But if you’re living next to these data centers or in the region... they have a big impact on people’s lives.”

Both Gov. Greg Abbott and Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick have made regulation of data centers a legislative priority in next year’s session.

TEXAS GOP ELEPHANT LACKED MANDATORY PERMIT

When Paige the elephant made an appearance at the recent GOP state convention in Houston, its owner did not acquire the required city permit to bring wild animals into the city, The Dallas Morning News reported.

Public records acquired by the paper indicate Trunks and Humps, the elephant’s owner, has been cited repeatedly for federal animal welfare violations and failed to apply for a permit before bringing Paige to the June 12 convention.

The elephant arrived as the finale to Abbot’s speech. A video of the event went viral after the elephant urinated on the convention floor.

Gary Borders is a veteran award-winning Texas journalist. He published a number of community newspapers in Texas during a 30-year span, including in Longview, Fort Stockton, Nacogdoches, Lufkin and Cedar Park.

Email: gborders@texaspress.com.

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THE POSTSCRIPT

By Carrie Classon

Beautiful Houses



Every day, I walk by dozens of beautiful houses.

I am an admirer of grand old houses. I live downtown, just blocks away from some of the oldest neighborhoods in the city, where lumber barons and early merchants built their houses when the city was young. I admire the tall and pointed windows, the large trees in front, the ornate brickwork, the pointy roofs and occasional turrets (I admire the turrets so much that I wrote a book called “The Turnip House” about a house with a turret that looks like an upside-down turnip.)

I walk down the sidewalks, admiring these lovely houses, often at night, and sometimes I even peep through the windows. It’s hard not to when the windows are large and the lights are on. (My friend Verne calls me a Peeping Tom, and he may be just a little bit right.)

But I love the woodwork and the 8-foot Christmas trees put up for the holidays. I admire the antique furniture and the lights shining through the stained glass. Some of the houses still have slate roofs. Some have wooden shingles. All of them have a character and charm and lasting beauty that makes me enormously grateful their owners have preserved them and that they are standing so proudly on the street for everyone to enjoy.

And right after I have enjoyed looking at a particularly beautiful house, I’m glad I don’t own it.

I’ve never owned a large house, but I once owned a rather small old farmhouse. I sanded every floor in that house and covered the floors with polyurethane. I sanded the cedar siding down to bare wood and painted it twice. I tiled the backsplash and replaced the furnace and insulated every wall inside. I no longer remember what all I did to that old farmhouse, and I honestly don’t remember hating the work at the time.

But because the house was nearly 100 years old, something would go wrong. The front porch foundation disintegrated. The septic tank was prone to clogging, and when it was dug out, I discovered I had not one septic tank but three — one after the other — heading off into the thick woods that were part of the property.

And yes, there are parts of it I miss. The quiet of that wooded spot. The creak of the old boards beneath my feet. The endless collection of wildlife parading past my windows. The brilliant maple leaves I looked into as I took a bath. I have many wonderful memories of living in that farmhouse. But when I am honest, I am glad they are a memory.

Because owning an old house is constant and unending work.

This is why I am so glad there are people (people other than me) who are happy to do it. There was a time when many of the grand old houses I walk by every day were in ruins. It took a tremendous amount of work and money — far, far more than my little farmhouse — to get those houses to look the way they do today, and I hope their owners get many years of enjoyment and pass them on to their families to do the same.

But I know what an old house needs. And right now, it feels good to know that this condo is enough. Our little apartment in Mexico is enough. I am happy with a life that is comfortable and easy, even if it is not grand. I can visit beautiful houses every day just by walking down the sidewalk — or by writing a story.

Till next time,
Carrie

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Governor Abbott Launches Texas Classroom Commission

AUSTIN — Governor Greg Abbott today launched the Texas Classroom Commission, a new teacher-led initiative that will put Texas educators at the center of shaping the future of public education, strengthening student achievement, and ensuring Texas becomes the No. 1 state for educating kids.

Building on the historic investments in public education and teacher compensation secured by Governor Abbott, Lieutenant Governor Dan Patrick, Speaker Dustin Burrows, and the Texas Legislature in recent sessions, the Commission will bring together exemplary public school educators from across Texas to develop practical, classroom-informed recommendations.

“Texas teachers know what their students need to succeed,” said Governor Abbott. “The Texas Classroom Commission will bring together exemplary public school educators to identify innovative solutions that help students succeed, improve the learning environment in classrooms, and strengthen our schools. By empowering those on the front lines of education, we will build on Texas’ success and ensure our state becomes the national leader in the education of our kids.”

The Commission will develop recommendations to the Governor, the Texas Education Agency, and the Texas Legislature ahead of the 90th Legislative Session. Its work will focus on bolstering classroom instruction, supporting teachers, improving the learning environment, and ensuring Texas students are prepared to succeed.

“Texas remains committed to delivering for our public school students and teachers,” said Lieutenant Governor Patrick. “Other than a parent, no person is more influential in a child’s development than a teacher. Under my leadership, we have raised teacher salaries, provided additional resources in the classroom, and supported teachers in maintaining discipline in the classroom. That is why we must empower teachers to make recommendations to improve public education through the Texas Classroom Commission, so our students can achieve even better educational outcomes.”

“Texas teachers play a foundational role in shaping the next generation, making their work essential to our state’s future,” said Speaker Burrows. “Last session, the Texas Legislature made an unprecedented investment in public education, providing permanent teacher pay raises, increasing funding for the Teacher Incentive Allotment, and giving educators more authority in their classrooms. I look forward to Governor Abbott’s Texas Classroom Commission building on that progress with recommendations that help Texas students receive the best education in the nation.”

The Commission will be led by Courtney Boswell MacDonald of Kerrville. MacDonald is a former classroom teacher and the current chair of the State Board for Educator Certification. She previously worked on the Senate Education Committee and served as executive director for Texans for Education Reform, Texas Institute for Education Reform, and Texas Aspires. She is a former math teacher at Richardson ISD and Dallas ISD. MacDonald received a Bachelor of Science in fashion and communications and a secondary education certification from Texas Christian University and a Master of Public Policy in education policy from Vanderbilt University.

The Commission will consist of current and retired public school classroom teachers. The Commission will begin its work in the coming weeks and deliver recommendations before the start of the 90th Legislative Session.

GP new administration faces challenges,

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

helping the new administration sort through legal and procedural issues, including water billing and meeting logistics. But the mayor said the city is still looking for someone who can serve as a long-term legal partner.

“I need somebody that’s gonna help us grow and stick with us for a good while,” he said.

The biggest immediate challenge, Mireles said, is a utility system that he says has been losing money for years. He said Galena Park pays more for water from Houston than it charges many residents, and that the gap has forced the city to pull money from other parts of the budget to keep current on its wholesale bill.

“We’re losing like \$100,000 a month because our water bill had never gone up,” Mireles said. He said the city charges about \$14.40 for a level of usage that costs roughly \$20 from Houston, and that some senior-discount accounts pay even less.

“We just cannot keep doing that,” he said. “Losing \$100,000 a month just to stay in power, it doesn’t work for me.”

He said the city is reviewing roughly 600 senior-discount accounts and believes some records may be outdated. At a recent public meeting, Mireles said, residents appeared more receptive than he expected to the prospect of higher rates.

“If that’s what we have to do, that’s what we have to do,” he said some attendees told him.

Other problems, he said, include a water department that is short-staffed, the recent departure of its superintendent, broken or tampered water meters and no city penalty currently on the books for meter tampering. Mireles said the council is expected to consider an ordinance to address that issue.

Mireles also described wider financial and operational strains, saying the city has enough cash to cover payroll but little room for unexpected equipment failures. He said some vendors are owed money, some checks had been written but not mailed, and an audit remains a priority as the city works to protect grants in the pipeline.

“There’s enough to cover payroll, but there’s not enough for the equipment and the things that break unexpectedly,” Mireles said. “It’s tight, it’s really tight.” He added that the administration is trying to rebalance staffing after finding what he described as lopsided personnel levels, with more workers in parks and recreation than in the water department.

The transition comes after a turbulent change in power in Galena Park. Mireles defeated longtime Mayor Esmeralda Moya in May, and local news reports documented confusion during the handover, including questions over records, staffing and city operations. Recent reporting has also highlighted past criticism of the city’s financial transparency and public access to budget information.

Mireles said he is trying to be more open with residents even when the news is unwelcome.

“Transparency means you’re going to see it all,” he said. “We have to make changes.”

For now, he said, the goal is to stop the financial bleeding and restore basic city functions.

“We just need forward motion,” Mireles said. “As long as you’re moving, that’s what we need.”

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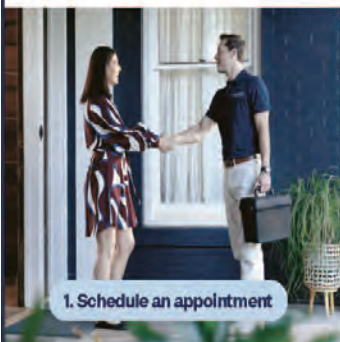
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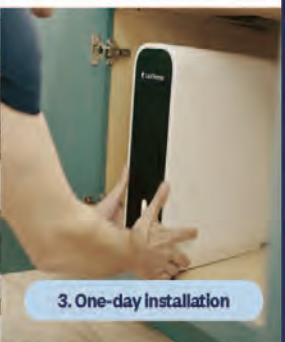
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Chiwetel Ejiofor stars in "Backrooms."

“Backrooms.”

“Obsession” (R) — No doubt you’ve heard the buzz all over the internet about this supernatural horror film! Shot with a budget of \$750,000, this film became Focus Features’ highest-grossing film of all time with grosses of \$371 million. “Obsession” follows music store employee Bear (Michael Johnston), who has a crush on one of his co-workers, Nikki (Inde Navarrette). (Sounds normal enough so far.) Before hanging out with Nikki and a few other co-workers, Bear decides to buy her a novelty toy that grants one wish per person when broken. Later that evening, Bear breaks the toy himself in frustration and wishes that Nikki would “love him more than anyone in the

world.” Shortly after, their relationship finally turns romantic, but what follows isn’t for the faint of heart. Out now to rent. (Apple TV)

“Backrooms” (R) — Eating at the heels of the previous entry is this psychological sci-fi film starring Chiwetel Ejiofor (“The Old Guard 2”) and Renate Reinsve (“Sentimental Value”). This film was produced with a budget of \$10 million and has grossed \$330 million, making it A24’s highest-grossing film to date. Add on top of it that it was directed by 21-year-old Kane Parsons in his feature-length directorial debut, and it’s nothing short of a filmmaking phenomenon. (Parsons also co-scored the film alongside Edo Van Breenmen.) Taking place in

June 1990, the film follows Clark (Ejiofor), the owner of a furniture store, who struggles with alcohol and marriage issues. While in his store, he encounters a glowing slit in one of the walls, where he’s able to enter a chilling reality called “The Backrooms.” Eventually, Clark fully disappears into The Backrooms, leaving none other than his therapist, Mary (Reinsve), to attempt to get him out. Available to rent on July 7. (Amazon Prime Video)

“The Five-Star Weekend” (TV-MA) — Jennifer Garner (“The Last Thing He Told Me”) leads this heartwarming drama miniseries that drops on July 9, and it’s based on the 2023 novel from Elin Hilderbrand. Garner portrays food influencer Hollis Shaw, whose world gets unexpectedly turned upside down when she receives news that her husband died in an accident. Ever productive and stuck in her domestic ways, Hollis decides to host a girls’ weekend at her house with four friends from different chapters throughout her life. As Hollis tries to process her grief, each of her friends grapples with obstacles of their own. Regina Hall (“One Battle After Another”), Chloe Sevigny (“After the Hunt”), D’Arcy Carden (“Sunny Nights”), and Gemma Chan (“Josephine”) co-star. (Peacock)

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Q: Is it true that Zendaya and Tom Holland are married? There have been rumors about it, but was it ever confirmed? — A.O.

A: Fashion stylist and TV personality Law Roach let it slip back in March that engaged A-listers Zendaya and Tom Holland (both of the most recent “Spider-Man” franchise) secretly wed. Neither of the stars confirmed the nuptials until June, when the very private Holland pretty much admitted to a reporter that it was true. But he stayed mum on the details, simply stating that his relationship with Zendaya is “the happiest [he’s] ever been.”

The newlyweds are starring in the upcoming Christopher-Nolan-directed epic film “The Odyssey,” which will be released in theaters on July 17. They’ll also return in “Spider-Man: Brand New Day,” which releases in theaters on July 31.

Q: What ever happened to the show “S.W.A.T.” with one of my favorite actors, Shemar Moore? I think I’ve seen all the episodes, but I’m not certain. — S.A.

A: “S.W.A.T.” was canceled for the third and final time after eight seasons on CBS. I say the third time because it was given its first pink slip after season six but returned after viewers demanded it. Unfortunately, no amount of rallying by fans or by star Shemar Moore on social media could save it after season eight in 2025, when the series ceased production.

Now “S.W.A.T.” is returning yet again but in the form of a spin-off. “S.W.A.T. Exiles” will air exclusively on the Starz pay cable channel beginning on Sept. 25 — at least at first. According to People magazine, there have been discussions about a “second window under Netflix,” but these details haven’t been solidified yet.

You’ll be pleased to know that Moore will be reprising his role of Daniel “Hondo” Harrelson Jr. in “an experimental S.W.A.T. unit made up of untested, unpredictable young recruits,” according to an article in TVLine. Ronen Rubinstein (“9-1-1: Lone Star”), Freddy Miyares (“When They See Us”), Lucy Barrett



Zendaya and Tom Holland in “Spider-Man: Far from Home”

(“Charmed”), Zyra Gorecki (“La Brea”), and Adain Bradley (“All American”) will round out the cast.

Q: I was surprised to see Lauren Koslow playing Jill Abbott on “The Young and the Restless.” Is she leaving “Days of Our Lives”? — V.V.

A: When Jess Walton, longtime portrayal of Jill Abbott on “Y&R,” couldn’t travel from Oregon to film scenes as Jill on the set in Los Angeles, “Y&R’s” head writer Josh Griffith (who used to write for “Days”) called on Lauren Koslow. The two soaps coordinated her schedule, allowing Koslow to film her short arc of just five episodes as Jill with short notice.

If you’re a longtime “Y&R” fan, you’ll remember that Koslow played Lindsey from 1984-1986 when she blackmailed Jill! Jill was played by Brenda Dickson in those days, but it was also during that time that Koslow met the man who’d become her future husband, “Y&R” make-up artist Nicky Schillace.

Send me your questions at NewCelebrityExtra@gmail.com.
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ENTERTAINMENT

Amber Waves



Weekly SUDOKU

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Place a number in the empty boxes in such a way that each row across, each column down and each small 9-box square contains all of the numbers from one to nine.

DIFFICULTY THIS WEEK: ♦

♦ Moderate ♦♦ Challenging ♦♦♦ HOO BOY!

HOCUS-FOCUS BY HENRY BOLTINOFF

July 6, 2026 Posting Date

King Crossword

ACROSS

- Gas station fixture
- Doo follower
- Rabbit's tail
- Pantene's business
- Peddled item
- Figure out
- "Das Lied von der —"
- Indian lentil stew
- iPod accessory
- Cool veggies
- 1504, in old Rome
- Fr. holy women
- Evening affairs
- Bit of ink
- "SNL" segments
- Wager
- Stockings
- Ham's dad
- Resort near Snowbird
- Tubular pasta
- As a whole
- Duo's pronoun
- Hoopster Malone
- Strongman of myth
- Needle case
- Implanted
- Lavish affection (on)
- ACLU issues
- Shakespeare title starter
- Language of Pakistan
- Ticked (off)
- Tax prep pros
- Broadcasts
- Chicago winter hrs.
- Beehive State
- High-fat diet
- Kelly of "One Tree Hill"
- Courtroom artist
- Black, in verse
- Penn or Astin
- Missile shelter
- Chance — Rapper
- Mae (loan offerer)
- Poet Pablo
- Brownish purple
- Scratched (out)
- Post-WWII alliance
- Very dry
- Spheres
- 911 responder
- "Bad" cholesterol
- Sushi fish
- Radical '60s gp.

DOWN

- Third degree?
- Dubai's country, for short
- Amp plug-in
- Lion packs
- Wonka's creator
- "— you awake?"
- Geneticist's study
- Veer
- Sugar or starch, for short
- 31 Chance — Rapper

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Trivia test by Fifi Rodriguez

- TELEVISION: What is Walter White's code-name in the drama "Breaking Bad"?
- GENERAL KNOWLEDGE: Which month of the year has the fewest letters in its name?
- U.S. STATES: Which state is known as the Prairie State?
- LANGUAGE: What is the British term for a bike's training wheels?
- ASTRONOMY: What is the Earth's only natural satellite?
- FOOD & DRINK: What is a more common name for the fruit sometimes called "alligator pear"?
- MOVIES: What kind of creature is Thumper in the animated movie "Bambi"?
- LITERATURE: What is the name of the python in "The Jungle Book"?
- GEOGRAPHY: Which countries and islands make up the geographic area known as Oceania?
- ANATOMY: What is a more common name for cerumen?

Solution time: 22 mins.

King Crossword — Answers



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