



# My five cents...

A weekly column from Sen. Robert Nichols  
by Sen. Robert Nichols, Senate District 3

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Did you know you can buy tax free emergency preparedness supplies from April 27th - 29th, and ensure you are prepared for the next natural disaster? There is no limit on the number of qualifying items you can purchase, including: portable generators, batteries, ice chests, first aid kits, and more. To find out more information on items that qualify you can visit <https://comptroller.texas.gov/taxes/publications/98-1017.php>.

Here are five things happening at your Capitol this week:

## 1. Budget Conference Committee

I was recently appointed to the conference committee for the state budget. The conference committee consists of five members of the Senate appointed by the Lt. Governor and five members of the House appointed by the Speaker. We are tasked with working through the differences between the House and Senate versions of the state budget.

I will specifically be working on Articles 6, 7 and 8 of the budget which consists of Natural Resource agencies like the Department of Agriculture, Business and Economic Development agencies like Department of Motor Vehicles, and Regulatory agencies like the Texas Medical Board.

## 2. Referendum on Daylight Savings

The House has passed its first proposal of a two part plan to change daylight savings time in the state. The first part proposes an amendment to the Texas Constitution authorizing a referendum on daylight savings time. As changes to the Constitution must be approved by voters, the ballot language would first ask Texas voters whether a referendum may take place. The second part of the proposal, which is expected to pass out of the House this week, would add a second question to the ballot on whether Texas should use daylight savings time year-round, or standard time. If also passed by the Senate, these questions would be on the November 2019 ballot.

## 3. Electronic Voting Security

To ensure we are providing as much election security as we can, Senate Bill 9 was recently passed by the Texas Senate. This bill would require a paper trail to be created for each ballot cast, which could then be used to conduct random audits statewide to ensure electronic systems are recording the correct votes. It also requires that if a voter is assisted by someone else, they must provide their name and relationship to the voter to ensure the help is being offered for the right reasons. An automatic recount would be required if the total number of votes cast in a precinct exceeds the number of registered voters in that precinct.

In addition to those actions listed above and others, this bill increases the penalty for knowingly making a false statement, or for inducing someone else to make a false statement on a voter registration application, as well as for providing unlawful assistance to someone who is voting. A crime would also be committed if access from a polling place was impeded by any Texan.

#### **4. Texas Basket Company**

Nowadays we often see wooden baskets used for decorative purposes, but did you know that in the past they were used heavily in the agriculture industry for harvesting, and transporting or storing produce? At one time there were 57 basket factories in East Texas and Louisiana, with four of them being in Jacksonville, my hometown. Jacksonville is known as the 'Tomato Capitol of the World' and baskets were heavily used to ensure they made it to their destinations across the United States.

The only basket company left in our state, the Texas Basket Company, still resides in Jacksonville and is the largest and most well known in the nation. They produce approximately 15,000 items per day and provide several hundred different sizes, types and color baskets which are shipped all over the world. They have preserved and represented an important part of East Texas history and I am proud to congratulate them on their 100th anniversary this year.

#### **5. San Jacinto Day**

We recently celebrated the 183rd anniversary of the Battle of San Jacinto and honored the brave men and women we have to thank for our beautiful state. On April 21, 1836, Texans fought and won the Battle of San Jacinto to defend Texas independence, also capturing General Santa Anna. After this victory, Texas became fully independent from Mexico. While the battle only lasted 18 minutes, hundreds of Mexicans were killed, injured or captured while only nine Texan soldiers were killed and 26 were wounded.

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