



# My five cents...

A monthly column from Sen. Robert Nichols  
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One hundred and thirty-six years ago this month, the Texas State Fair opened in Dallas. The iconic predecessor to our present-day State Fair of Texas drew crowds from across the state. A rival fair, the Dallas exposition, opened around the same time and together they welcomed over 35,000 people. Both fairs were successful and, ultimately, decided to combine efforts in 1887 to establish the State Fair of Texas as we know it today.

Here are five things happening around your state:

## **1. Senate Redistricting Committee Launches Public Comment Portal**

This month, the Senate Select Committee on Redistricting announced the launch of a public comment portal on their website. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the committee had to curtail their original plans for receiving public comment at in-person hearings around the state. Therefore, the portal was created to allow all Texans equal opportunity to participate in the important redistricting process. The portal is designed to be an accessible, productive, reliable, and secure method to receive testimony. Those who would like to submit comments or maps to the committee can comment on maps for the Texas House, Senate, US Congress, State Board of Education, or all of the above. Legislators will use this information as they work through the Redistricting and map drawing process. To access the portal, interested parties should visit <https://senate.texas.gov/redistrictingcomment/>.

## **2. NASA Aerospace Scholar Opens for Applications**

This month the NASA High School Aerospace Scholars program opened for applications. High Schools juniors with an interest in STEM are encouraged to apply for the one-of-a-kind program. The program starts as a five-day online course. The highest achieving students will earn the opportunity to attend an onsite summer experience at NASA's Johnson Space Center in Houston. The online program focuses on space exploration, earth science, technology, and aeronautics. Students will also explore design challenges such as 3D drawing, video creation, and interactive poster design. Throughout the program students will have the opportunity to interact with NASA engineers and scientist virtually. Interested students should visit <https://nasa.gov/has> to apply.

### **3. Texas Named #1 State for Business**

For the eighth consecutive time, Texas has been named the number one state for business by corporate executives. In the 2020 survey released at the International Economic Development Council Annual Convention, corporate executives again ranked Texas the state with the best business climate by a wide margin with 48 percent of those surveyed favoring it. The second-place state was Georgia with twenty-five percent favorability. Rounding out the top five in order are North Carolina, Florida, and Tennessee. The survey is conducted every three years, and Texas has been named number one every time since its inception in 1996. Major contributors to this designation include Texas' pro-business climate, low tax rates, and access to talent.

### **4. Jacksonville's Tomato Bowl Stadium recognized in School Architecture Exhibit**

Jacksonville's historic Tomato Bowl Stadium was recognized with the "Star of Distinction" in the Texas Association of School Boards and Texas Association of School Administrator's 2020-2021 Exhibit of School Architecture. The Tomato Bowl is one of the last downtown stadiums in the state and has held continuous district play since 1940. Originally constructed by the WPA using red iron ore from local farms, the renovation of the stadium allows Jacksonville to continue bringing the community together in a place that has been a source of tradition and pride for 80 years. The Star of Distinction is given to architecturally significant structures that are rated in five categories: design, value, sustainability, community, planning, and school transformation.

### **5. Census Bureau concludes 2020 operations**

On October 15, the Census Bureau finished collecting responses from the 2020 Census. The Bureau reported that 99.9 percent of households in the US were accounted for, with 67 percent self-responding. Roughly 33 percent of households were accounted for through non-response follow up. Though their usual operations were hindered by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Bureau is confident that their data accurately reflects the current population of the United States. The Census, which only takes place once every decade, is important because it can shape the future of communities as federal funds are allocated based on population size and characteristics. It also determines the number of congressional representatives each state gets. This was the first year that respondents could use the internet to fill out and return their census form. Though their operations were delayed, the Census Bureau has assured legislators that they will be doing their best to get all the information to states as close to their initial timeline as possible.