



My five cents...

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

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On August 17, 1786 frontier icon and brave defender of the Alamo, Davy Crockett was born in Tennessee. Throughout his life, he acquired a reputation as a sharpshooter, hunter, and outdoorsman. He left his home state of Tennessee when he was 49 and set out for Texas. He arrived here in February 1836 and joined the Texas Revolutionaries at the Alamo. On March 6, 1836, he died during the Battle of the Alamo.

Here are five things happening around your state:

1. Proposed amendments to Texas Constitution

This week, Governor Abbott announced a special election date for the eight proposed amendments to the Texas Constitution. That election will be held on November 2, 2021. To be put on the ballot, a joint resolution has to be passed by at least two-thirds of the members in both the Texas House and Texas Senate. The proposed amendments are:

PROPOSITION 1: The constitutional amendment authorizing the professional sports team charitable foundations of organizations sanctioned by the Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association or the Women's Professional Rodeo Association to conduct charitable raffles at rodeo venues.

PROPOSITION 2: The constitutional amendment authorizing a county to finance the development or redevelopment of transportation or infrastructure in unproductive, underdeveloped, or blighted areas in the county.

PROPOSITION 3: The constitutional amendment to prohibit this state or a political subdivision of this state from prohibiting or limiting religious services of religious organizations.

PROPOSITION 4: The constitutional amendment changing the eligibility requirements for a justice of the supreme court, a judge of the court of criminal appeals, a justice of a court of appeals, and a district judge.

PROPOSITION 5: The constitutional amendment providing additional powers to the State Commission on Judicial Conduct with respect to candidates for judicial office.

PROPOSITION 6: The constitutional amendment establishing a right for residents of certain facilities to designate an essential caregiver for in-person visitation.

PROPOSITION 7: The constitutional amendment to allow the surviving spouse of a person who is disabled to receive a limitation on the school district ad valorem taxes on the spouse's residence homestead if the spouse is 55 years of age or older at the time of the person's death.

PROPOSITION 8: The constitutional amendment authorizing the legislature to provide for an exemption from ad valorem taxation of all or part of the market value of the residence homestead of the surviving spouse of a member of the armed services of the United States who is killed or fatally injured in the line of duty.

2. Hunting and fishing licenses now available

Hunting season is right around the corner and licenses are now available from Texas Parks and Wildlife. Annually, Texans buy over 2.7 million licenses. Those purchases fund a variety of conservation efforts at TPWD. You can purchase your 2021-2022 license online at <https://tpwd.texas.gov>.

3. COVID-19 vaccine information

This month, the CDC released data about how effective the COVID-19 vaccines are at preventing severe cases of COVID-19 that could lead to hospitalization or death. Currently the "breakthrough" cases are still rare and a small percentage of fully vaccinated Texans are getting sick. The Moderna and Pfizer vaccines are very effective at preventing hospitalization. The current increase in hospitalizations is driven primarily by unvaccinated Texans. In one survey of hospitals, 95 percent of people in the intensive care unit beds who are sick with COVID-19 were unvaccinated. Over 13 million Texans are fully vaccinated and I'm one of them. I received both doses of the Pfizer vaccine earlier this year and have had no complications at all.

4. Census data released

This week, the US Census Bureau released raw population data for the entire country. These data will be used later this fall when the Legislature begins the process of redistricting. Texas added 4 million people the last decade and will add two new US congressional seats because of it. The detailed information that will help the redistricting committee redraw the boundaries will be available next month and we will start that process then.

5. Special session continues

We are still in the second called special session of the 87th Legislature. On the days I do not have to be at the Capitol, I have made it a priority to travel to the district to visit with constituents. This week I was in Houston County, Trinity County, and Polk County. In the past three weeks, I will have visited 18 counties. It's been great to travel around East Texas and visit with all of you about what you think we need to be working on.

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