



My five cents...

A weekly column from Sen. Robert Nichols

by Sen. Robert Nichols, Senate District 3

For immediate release
May 4, 2023
word count: 757

Contact: Shelby Conine Vestal
Tel: 512-463-0103

This week we celebrate Cinco de Mayo! On May 5, 1862, Mexican general Ignacio Zaragoza defeated French expeditionary forces at Puebla, Mexico.

Here are five things happening around your state:

1. Ankle monitor bill heads to the governor

This week, a bill that would increase penalties for tampering with, disabling, or removing an ankle monitor overwhelmingly passed the House. The Senate passed the measure unanimously in late March. Senate Bill 1004, authored by Senator Joan Huffman and sponsored by Representative Abel Herrero, would enhance the penalty for knowingly removing or disabling an ankle monitor to a felony. Currently, the penalty is an administrative violation, not a criminal offense. The bill was prompted by the October 2022 shooting at a hospital in the Dallas area which killed a nurse and a social worker. The alleged perpetrator was a parolee with an ankle monitor who had permission to be at the hospital for the birth of his child. He had cut off his monitor previously. Now the bill heads to Governor Abbott's desk for final approval before it becomes law.

2. Right to Farm passes the Senate

This week, the Senate passed House Joint Resolution 126, a constitutional amendment that would protect the right to engage in farming, ranching, timber production, horticulture, and wildlife management. HJR 126 was authored by Representative DeWayne Burns and sponsored by Senator Charles Perry. As the state grows increasingly more urban, farmers and ranchers within municipal boundaries are subjected to municipal ordinances that can inhibit their operations and production. Cities sometimes use public nuisance ordinances to prohibit agricultural activities. It is important that our state enshrine the right to farm in our state constitution.

3. Bill allowing flexibility for transfer students passes Senate

The Senate passed Senate Bill 418 by Senator Angela Paxton this week. The bill updates statutes governing students who want to transfer from one district or campus to another. The legislation permits students to transfer to any public school that has capacity available and prohibits public

school districts from charging these students tuition. The bill sets out parameters for a school district that receives more applications than seats available and requires districts to publicly post the number of available seats they have. The bill also provides protections for school districts for students who violate code of conduct rules, are placed in disciplinary alternative education programs, or are required or permitted to be expelled. Allowing for flexibility in the public school system for students to attend the campus or district of their choice helps ensure we are meeting the needs of our Texas public school students.

4. Texas Parks and Wildlife celebrates centennial

Texas Parks and Wildlife Department is celebrating its centennial anniversary this year and the *Texas Parks & Wildlife* magazine staff devoted an entire issue to the occasion. The special edition magazine has 100 pages honoring 100 years of parks. There are recommendations for the best parks for fishing, hiking, kayaking, or seeing wildlife. It also highlights the six new parks that will open over the next 12 to 15 years. New parks include Palo Pinto Mountains State Park, Dan A Hughes Unit of the Devils River State Natural Area, Albert and Bessie Kronkosky State Natural Area, Powderhorn State Park, Chinati Mountains State Natural Area, and Davis Hill State Natural Area.

5. End of session deadlines, calendar

Now that we are in May, there are some end of session deadlines that are quickly approaching. These deadlines mark the final day that certain bills can be considered by either chamber to realistically have time to pass. They are as follows:

- **Monday, May 8** – Last day for House committee to report House bills and House joint resolutions;
- **Tuesday, May 9** (by 10 p.m.) – Deadline for the House to distribute its last House daily calendar with House bills and House joint resolutions;
- **Wednesday, May 10** (by 9 a.m.) – Deadline for the House to distribute its last House local and consent calendar with consent House bills;
- **Friday, May 12** – Last day for the House to consider consent House bills on the local and consent calendar on 2nd and 3rd reading and all 3rd reading House bills and House joint resolutions;
- **Saturday, May 20** – Last day for House committee to report Senate bills and joint resolutions;
- **Wednesday, May 24** – Last day for House to consider local and consent Senate bills and all 3rd reading Senate bills AND last day for Senate to consider all bills and joint resolutions on 2nd and 3rd reading;
- **Monday, May 29** – Legislature adjourns sine die.

###