



My five cents...

A monthly column from Sen. Robert Nichols

by Sen. Robert Nichols, Senate District 3

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On October 25, 1886, the Texas State Fair opened in Dallas. For 137 years, the Fair has operated in Dallas. During the first State Fair, a rival organization opened the Dallas Exposition at the same time. Both fairs were successful and drew crowds of over 35,000 people a day at the time. Eventually the groups merged and became the State Fair of Texas. The current fair grounds in Fair Park were the original location of the Dallas Exposition. The grounds were expanded in 1936 when it became the site of the Texas Centennial Exposition.

Here are five things happening around your state:

1. Texas ranks as one of most talented states

According to a recent report, Texas is one of the most talented states in the nation. Texas ranked third in a list that evaluated how many film, music, sports, and comedy stars are from each state. Only New York and California exceed Texas' over 8,000 native-born stars. Those two states are boosted by actors and comedians, where Texas excels with the most professional athletes. There are more than 1,000 more notable athletes from Texas than the next highest ranking state, Illinois. Most star athletes from Texas play football or baseball, but there are still significant numbers of basketball and hockey players as well. Texas is followed by Pennsylvania, Illinois, Ohio, Florida, Michigan, New Hersey, and Massachusetts.

2. Third special session update

This month, the Governor called the Legislature back for the Third Called Special Session. Topics on the call include border security, public safety, ending COVID vaccine mandates, and education savings accounts. The Senate got started quickly, passing five Senate bills in our first week of special session. Senate Bill 1 establishes the education savings account program. While I did not vote for SB 1, it passed the Senate and is now in the House. Senate Bill 2 is a wide-ranging public school finance bill that includes teacher pay raises, an increase in the basic allotment, and an increase in school safety funding. Senate Bill 4 relates to border security especially penalties for smuggling or operating a stash house. Senate Bill 11 also relates to border security creating a criminal offense of improper entry from a foreign nation. Lastly, Senate Bill 7 prohibits private employers from adopting or enforcing a requirement for employees to have the COVID-19 vaccine. All of these bill passed the Senate and are now in the

House where they are being further refined and debated. This special session will last a maximum of 30 days, bringing it to a close around November 9.

3. Jacksonville-based business to be featured on Shark Tank

Shark Tank, a business reality television series, is set to feature local Jacksonville businessmen for their innovative new product. Called the “Krapp Strapp,” the product helps outdoorsmen when nature calls while they’re in the woods. The simple, but effective, invention was developed by Keith Lindsey and Bob Legg of Air Boss Outdoors. While their top selling products are waterfowl decoys, this new product is the one that opened the door for them to appear on the show. Be sure to tune into the episode which will air November 3.

4. Texas hits new record for job growth

Texas’ job count hit a historic milestone last month, surpassing 14 million jobs. Employment increased by over 61,000 positions over the month, marking 31 consecutive months of growth. Texas’ annual growth rate of 3.2 percent beat the national growth rate by 1.1 percentage points. Employment in nine of Texas’ eleven major industries expanded over the month. Those industries are trade, transportation, utilities, professional and business services, private education and health services, and manufacturing.

5. TWC awards training grant to Workforce Solutions Deep East Texas

The Texas Workforce Commission announced this month it awarded Workforce Solutions Deep East Texas a \$15,000 grant for High Demand Job Training to prepare workers in East Texas for long-term, high-demand careers. The High Demand Job Training program is part of a statewide effort to support collaboration between Workforce Development Boards and local economic development entities. The partnerships create job training programs for high-demand occupations. The grant will be used in conjunction with Crockett Economic and Industrial Development Corporation to help over 60 students from the local school district earn certifications in occupations such as healthcare, forklift operations, and risk management.

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