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# NORTHEAST NEWS

Senfronia on Voter bill



State Representative Senfronia Thompson, one of the legislators who left Austin, speaks at a D.C. news conference.

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VOL. 45, NO. 28 TUESDAY, JULY 20, 2021 HOUSTON, TEXAS www.nenewsroom.com

## Local legislators leave Austin to stop Voter Restriction bill

Democrats Armando W., Senfronia T., and Carol A. among opponents in D.C.

### State Representative Walle Travels to D.C. to Stop Voter Suppression Efforts

HOUSTON – State Representative Armando Walle (D-Houston) released the following statement today regarding his joining over 57 Texas House Democratic Caucus members to break quorum to stop legislation restricting voting rights in Texas:

Unfortunately, we are here again in Washington D.C. today because of the choices of Texas Republican leaders to



State Representative Armando Walle, fourth from left, and other Texas legislators meet with U.S. Senator Alex Padilla in his office in D.C., to discuss federal Voter's Rights legislation, and the bills in the Texas Legislature that the Democrats say will restrict citizen's right to vote.

prioritize so-called "Election Integrity" legislation, or more accurately, voter suppression legislation, over the numerous issues that remain unfinished, like fixing and protecting our Texas grid or COVID relief for our constituents or our public health safety net that is a crisis away from collapse.

While I am here, we are visiting and pleading with Congressional leaders to pass voting rights legislation to protect our citizens' right to vote and participate in our democracy. I will never understand why we

are trying to make it more difficult to vote in Texas, a state already considered the hardest to vote in the country.[i]

I know some of you may have heard how the retired teachers' 13th check is on the line or how we need to reinstate the budget for the legislative branch. These are important priorities, but the House and Senate, including myself, already okayed the legislative budget multiple times in April and May. The Governor made a unilateral decision to veto the budget of the legislative branch and

Continued. See WALLE ON VOTER BILL, Page 4

Hundreds turned out last Saturday evening for the Inaugural Concert of the new Town Center Amphitheater and stage. Performing were the Diaz Music School Caliente Band, playing "LATIN JAZZ." Featured performers, as well as the students, were noted Jazz Trumpeter Ray Vega, and Trombonist Andre Hayward. Dance and Music students also performed.



ABOVE, Ray Vega and Andre Hayward perform Latin Jazz with the Caliente Band, which is also seen with conductor Jose Diaz in the photo at left. Far left, Ray Vega enters stage.

**QUOTE by Senfronia Thompson on resistance to Voter Suppression bill: 'If they want to arrest me, bring it on'**

## State GLO sends \$1.1b to Harris County

### Harris County receiving \$1.1 billion in infrastructure and mitigation projects

AUSTIN – Texas Land Commissioner George P. Bush has announced plans to sub-award \$750 million in light of a denial by U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) of a direct allocation of mitigation funding for Harris County. The General Land Office (GLO) will be drafting an action plan that will include a set aside of Community Development Block Grant Mitigation (CDBG-MIT) funding for \$750 million and direct at least \$500 million in additional funds to be distributed through the Regional Mitigation Program. Additional details will be released as the action plan amendment is finalized in accordance with HUD rules and federal requirements.

"Money from the federal government is, as always, tied up with endless mounds of red tape and bureaucracy," said Commissioner George P. Bush. "During Hurricane Harvey, Texans in Harris County undoubtedly suffered some of the costliest damage in the state. After considerable back and

forth with the Biden Administration's Department of Housing and Urban Development, the General Land Office will allocate \$750 million in funding for mitigation efforts in Harris County and continue to work around the federal government's ever-changing bureaucratic demands."

This brings the total infrastructure and mitigation investments in Harris County to more than \$1.1 billion. HUD gave a direct allocation of \$61,884,000 to the City of Houston in the CDBG-MIT. If approved by HUD, the

Continued. See \$1.1b to Harris County, page 4

## Sheriff hosts public Bike Ride in park

HARRIS COUNTY – In honor of Park and Recreation Month, the Sheriff's office celebrates the beauty and value of our local parks and green spaces. They enhance our quality of life and contribute to the well-being of our communities. Our Parks Unit patrols nearly 100 parks across our county. These deputies ensure the parks are safe and welcoming for visitors.

For many, parks were essential mental and physical outlets throughout the pandemic. Our parks are



The public is invited to join with Sheriff's deputies on Saturday, July 24 starting at 7:30 am registration, 8:30 bike ride. The ride will take place in Deussen Park near Lake Houston.

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★ OPINION PAGE ★

**OPINION**  
By Grace Chimene, President  
League of Women Voters of Texas

*Statement on Failed Quorum in Special Session*

The League of Women Voters of Texas president, Grace Chimene, issued the following statement in response to the failed legislative process that drove some legislators to leave Texas today.

"As a non-partisan organization whose mission is empowering voters and defending democracy, the League is deeply disappointed that only extreme measures like the legislative exodus we saw today can prevent Texans from losing their voting rights.

"During the regular legislative session, the League of Women Voters of Texas (LWVTX) partnered with local, state, and national organizations to provide input to legislators who were considering various election bills. Yet, when SB 7 emerged as the final, comprehensive election bill, it was clear that voting rights were under attack. Under the guise of making elections more secure, SB 7 threatened the very core of our right to cast a ballot.

"When Governor Abbott called a special session to again consider elections, two comprehensive bills emerged: SB 1 in the Senate and HB 3 in the House. Yet again, these bills are intended to make voting more complicated and create more potential pitfalls that would deny the freedom to vote.

"Many legislators are not listening. Although over 400 individuals registered to testify on each of these bills, most were not called to testify until after midnight! Where is the meaningful public input? How can constituents trust that their rights are being protected when they are being shut out of the legislative process? If our representatives are truly to represent our interests, they need to listen to us and provide meaningful opportunities to hear us.

"SB 1 and HB 3 would prevent many of us from making our voices heard. Given the challenges to voting in several states including Texas, the League of Women Voters of Texas believes that the For the People Act and the John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act are necessary to preserve an election system that is free, fair, and accessible to all."

The League of Women Voters is one of America's oldest and most trusted civic nonprofit organizations. Formed in 1919, the Texas League represents more than 13,500 grassroots advocates and 34 local Leagues across the state. The League never supports or opposes candidates for office or political parties. The League encourages the informed and active participation of citizens in government. The League also seeks to influence public policy through education and advocacy. Membership is open to people 16 years and older.

League of Women Voters of Texas:  
lwwtexas.org

★  
**LETTERS To The Editor**

*Misplaced values in our columns, says reader*

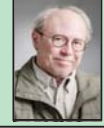
I could not believe reading the Star and not one word about the crisis at our border. What is wrong with you? Kamala takes time to discuss voting rights and refuses to go to the hot spots on our border? She is a disgrace and certainly not qualified to be president. I am livid.

— Pat Vice, Crosby



"BECAUSE WE HAVE TO PREVENT THE ELECTION FRAUD THAT DIDN'T HAPPEN IN 2020 FROM EVER HAPPENING AGAIN."

★  
**STATE CAPITAL HIGHLIGHTS**  
By Gary Borders



*Texas Legislature returns for a Special Session*

The Texas Legislature convened in special session last Thursday and GOP legislators introduced a fresh set of voting bills after Democrats blocked an earlier attempt during the regular session by walking out in May, preventing a quorum.

HB3 and SB 1 don't include some of the more controversial measures that were in the previous bill, such as restricting voting on Sundays. KUT.org reported the new bills include new ID requirements for people voting by mail and banning local election officials from sending vote-by-mail applications that have not been requested by the applicant.

The measures, still largely opposed by Democrats and voting rights groups, also ban drive-through voting and extended hours during early voting. Those backing the new bills say those extended hours encourage voter fraud, though there is no evident of widespread fraud during the 2020 election. Republican lawmakers are pushing for a full House floor vote this week.

Gov. Greg Abbott announced the topics to be considered during the special session the day before it opened. Besides the voting bills, they include:

- Bail reform to "protect the public from accused criminals who may be released on bail."
- Border security with increased funding to support law-enforcement agencies and counties.
- Social media censorship legislation to protect social-media users from being silenced by social media companies based on their viewpoints.
- Restoring funding to the Legislature and legislative agencies that was vetoed by Abbott after the walkout.
- Family violence prevention legislation to provide funding for education to middle school and high school students about dat-



ing violence, domestic violence and child abuses. Parents would have the right to opt their children out of such programs.

- Youth sports measures to revive legislation passed by the Senate that bans transgender students from participating in UIL athletic competitions "designated for the sex opposite to the student's sex at birth."

- Abortion-inducing drugs legislation that would prohibit providing such drugs by mail or delivery service.

- Thirteenth Check legislation to allow a one-time supplemental payment of benefits under the Teacher Retirement System of Texas.

- Bills targeting "critical race theory" and restricting how current events and the country's history of racism is taught in Texas public schools.

- Appropriation bills targeting property-tax relief, protecting children in the state's foster-care system and safeguarding the state from potential cybersecurity threats.

**PUC ORDERED TO IMPROVE ELECTRIC RELIABILITY**

Abbott also last week directed the Public Utility Commission to make major changes "to ensure the reliability of the Texas power grid," the Houston Chronicle and other media outlets reported.

Abbott asked the PUC,

which oversees the Electric Reliability Council of Texas, to improve maintenance on power plants and speed development of some transmission projects.

"The objective of these directives is to ensure that all Texans have access to reliable, safe, and affordable power," Abbott wrote in a letter released last Tuesday.

In response, PUC chairman Peter Lake in a letter to Abbott expressed "wholehearted agreement with its contents." Besides the widespread blackout during the mid-February storm, a heat wave in June prompted ERCOT, which maintains the state's electric grid, to urge Texans to conserve electricity as usage approached peak capacity.

**\$4.1 BILLION MORE IN SCHOOL STIMULUS FUNDS**

Texas will receive another \$4.1 billion in federal stimulus funding for its public schools, the San Antonio Express-News reported.

The U.S. Department of Education announced last week that it had approved the state's plans for spending \$12.4 billion that was allocated to the state. According to the Express-News, the top priority for the Texas Education Agency is bolstering the mental and emotional health needs of Texas students by expanding tutoring and other methods.

TEA estimates Texas students lost 5.7 months of learning during the pandemic school year.

"The approval of these plans enables states to receive vital, additional American Rescue Plan funds to quickly and safely reopen schools for full-time, in-person learning; meet students' academic, social, emotional, and mental health needs; and address disparities in access to educational opportunity that were exacerbated by the coronavirus pandemic," Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona said in a news release.

**NUMBER OF COVID-19 CASES IN STATE RISES**

At 12,426, the number of new COVID-19 cases in Texas increased 18% in the past week when compared to the previous week, according to the Coronavirus Resource Center at Johns Hopkins University.

The number of new deaths in the past week dropped slightly to 151. Hospitalizations of lab-confirmed COVID-19 patients in the state were on the rise, with 1,927 currently in Texas hospitals as of Sunday, according to Texas Department of State Health Services.

The number of Texans fully vaccinated crossed the 12 million mark this week, DSHS reported. The rate of vaccinations in the state has slowed significantly in recent weeks, despite troubling reports of the spread of the delta variant of COVID-19.

★  
**THE POSTSCRIPT**  
By Carrie Classon

*Lost in the Move*

I'm not sure when a house becomes a home, but I don't think we're quite there yet.

My husband, Peter, and I have moved into the new place. All our stuff is here, but that doesn't mean we know where anything is.

"Have you seen the strainer?"

"Which strainer?"

"You know, the fine one."

"No."

We have about two dozen conversations like this every day. We got rid of a lot of stuff and now it's hard to remember what we kept. Then I unpacked by myself, so Peter had to go on a scavenger hunt when he got here. Finally, we had the "last-minute essentials" we brought with us, and we're still unpacking those. It's a jumble. Peter was convinced (unreasonably, I assured him) that every T-shirt he owned had mysteriously been lost in the move.

"I found them!" I heard him yell from the bedroom. "Mystery solved!"

I am realizing how much I do on autopilot. I reach for a soap dispenser that isn't there. "Do I even have a soap dispenser?" I wonder.

I look in a likely box and notice something I'd forgotten about and I put that away and, when I do, I notice something else in a drawer where it shouldn't be and I move it. Suddenly, I find I am standing in the middle of the kitchen with no idea what I'm doing there.

"The soap dispenser!" I remind myself. I end up using the bar of soap in the bathtub.

Then there are all the things we need contractors to do. Nobody is excited about renovating an old condominium when there is so much new construction going on, so my day is spent wheeling contractors to come over. We need electrical fixtures installed, we need the flooring repaired where a bump has developed, and we'd like to replace the old yellow bathtub. Since I am better at wheeling than Peter, I make these calls. I have particular success if the contractor is married and I can wheel his wife. I did that this morning and got the electrician, George, to come out in less than an hour.

It was a busy morning. In addition to George, a self-described "handyman" named Steve visited. Steve the handyman turned out to be quite handy and will be helping us out. George the electrician, however, turned out not to be an actual electrician, which was disappointing—especially after I had had such a friendly chat with his wife. Not to mention his card said "electrical contractor" across the top.

"Nope," George said. "I can't do that." Oh well.

Meanwhile our little balcony (which is the best part of the whole place) is closed off for painting and maintenance.

"How much maintenance can a balcony take?" I asked Peter. Apparently quite a lot, as they have scaffolding running up the building and yellow ribbon running across the balcony like the scene of a crime.

"Don't worry," Peter says. "It will all get done."

And, of course, he is right. We will get rid of the bump in the floor (which seems to be growing) and we will get to enjoy our balcony and we will have our electrical fixtures installed by someone who is actually an electrician. But for now, I am looking forlornly out at the forbidden balcony and wondering when this will feel like home.

We showed George the bathtub, and he said he could replace it. I think my next call will be to a plumber to see if he'd like to install some lighting fixtures.

Till next time,

Carrie  
Carrie Classon's memoir is called "Blue Yarn." Learn more at CarrieClasson.com

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COMMUNITY PAGE

# East Aldine librarian practices the art of paper folding

By Anne Marie Kilday  
Courtesy EAMD

This Aldine librarian does more than the usual with pages.

There are times when librarians do sit and watch television.

For Jane Holt, branch manager of the High Meadows Public Library in East Aldine, however, her hands are rarely empty. She is always busy folding pages – from books, maps, musical scores, or other papers – to create wall hangings, delicate flower arrangements and beautiful lamps.

“It’s a great thing to do while you watch TV. It keeps you from eating chips and other junk,” Holt said.

For more than 15 years, Holt has become a skilled practitioner of the art of origami, the Japanese paper folding technique. Her office at the library and her home are decorated with the bright, colorful creations, including illuminated designs crafted from old spools, tools, an antique microphone, even a firehose nozzle.

One of Holt’s special creations is a large origami wall-hanging featuring neatly folded, brightly colored pages from several Dr. Seuss books. The crumpled Cat in The Hat is being saved for a future grandchild.

Using light kits from hardware stores, and LED lights, Holt’s origami lamps are a blend of Western and Eastern art forms. Holt taught herself origami while working in her parents’ office and art supply store.



Jane Holt, branch manager of the High Meadows Public Library in East Aldine with one of her Origami creations.



Holt’s illuminated designs crafted from old spools, tools, an antique microphone, even a firehose nozzle.

“I don’t paint, but it was something I could do artistically,” she said.

She has even presented origami demonstrations at meetings of the Texas Library Association.

She found the art of paper folding was a popular activity for all ages at a previous job at an Amarillo library.

“It seems to be really popular with teenagers,” she said. “I know they really like to come to the library to use the computers, but I think they like the creativity,” she said.

Senior citizens also enjoy learning the craft. Although it seems complicated at first, “paper has memory, so you can always go back to the fold,” and start a project again.

“It’s something you can come to the library and be a part of, and then leave with something that you are really proud of,” Holt said.

Holt hasn’t been able to teach her art at the High Meadows Library due to the pandemic. The library is operating at 75 percent of capacity for the same reason.

But she will resume teaching once the library is fully open, when the staff will also offer many activities and classes every afternoon, from Monday through Thursday.

The library, at 4500 Aldine Mail Route Rd., is open from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday through Thursday, from 1 p.m. to 6 p.m. Friday, and from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Saturday.

— by Anne Marie Kilday

**OPINION**

By U.S. Representative  
**SHEILA JACKSON LEE**

## Congress must support fight against voter suppression

Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee Statement on Need for Congress to Support Fight Against Voter Suppression of House Democrats of Texas General Assembly By Eliminating the Senate Filibuster and Passing H.R. 1 and H.R. 4, the John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act

Washington, DC – Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee, a senior member of the House Committee on the Judiciary, Homeland Security, and the Budget, and Chair of the House Judiciary Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism, and Homeland Security, released the following statement today regarding and in support of the House Democrats of the Texas General Assembly who are fighting the insidious voter suppression bill, and have now arrived in Washington, DC to press their case for immediate federal action to protect the right to vote, including eliminating the filibuster to block consideration of remedial legislation:

“Voter suppression is at a crisis level in America. Laws suppressing the right to vote are being passed in Red States and others across the nation.

“I applaud the House Democrats of the Texas General Assembly for being on the front lines, fighting in opposition to Texas SB7 on the House floor. They have arrived in Washington, DC and I join with them in calling upon the U.S. Senate to eliminate the filibuster and to bring to the floor for debate and vote — so Congress can pass — H.R. 1 and H.R. 4, the John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act.

“Voting is our most precious right, guaranteed by the 15th Amendment to the Constitution. We must all do our part to preserve this most important heritage because it was earned with the sacrifices and the lives of our ancestors.”

###

Congresswoman Jackson Lee is a Democrat from Texas’s 18th Congressional District. She is a senior member of the House Committees on Judiciary and Homeland Security and a member of the Budget Committee.

## HIGH MEADOWS LIBRARY NEWS

By Jennifer N. Nandlal

### SHARK WEEK

Celebrate Shark Week with High Meadows Library. We will be sharing a variety of online activities including story-times and crafts for all ages.

### ART CAMP KITS

We have partnered with the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston to provide summer art kits for kids ages 6-12. The kits include projects that can be completed at home. Registration is required to receive a kit. Contact the library today to request your kit while supplies last.

### SUMMER READING

The Summer Reading Program is underway, and there’s still time to register! We have free books, craft kits, and giveaways for those that reach various levels of reading during the summer. Summer Reading is open to everyone and is FREE. For more information on registration or reading incentives, contact us and we are happy to assist.

### HOUSTON FOOD BANK MEAL BOXES

We are proud to announce that we are partnering with the Houston Food Bank to provide food boxes for children. Distribution is on Mondays from 11am-2pm on a first come

first served basis while supplies last.

### VIRTUAL CITIZENSHIP CLASSES

Beginning July 13, we will host virtual Citizenship Classes every Tuesday and Thursday at 5pm. Classes are an hour long and space is limited. To register for the class, please contact us.

For information on any of the above events or more, please call us at 832-927-5540 or stop by the library.

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## COMMUNITY WATCH

### Fatal Wrong-Way Crash on 4400 Eastex Freeway

Houston police are investigating a fatal crash at 4400 Eastex Freeway (North U.S. Highway 59) about 3 a.m. Sunday (July 18).

The identities of the male victim, 2, and the female suspect, 31, are pending verification by the Harris County Institute of Forensic Sciences.

HPD Vehicular Crimes Division Sergeant P. Pham and Officer J. Rangel reported:

The suspect was driving a white Kia Optima southbound in the northbound lanes of the above address when she struck a gray Hyundai G80 head-on. The Kia’s driver was pronounced deceased at the scene.

The five occupants of the Hyundai were transported to an area hospital. A male passenger, 2, was pronounced deceased. One of the victim’s two brothers, 9, was in critical condition. The other brother, 4, was in stable condition. All three brothers were passengers in the backseat. The victim’s father, 35, a front seat passenger, was in stable condition. The victim’s mother, 30, the driver, was hospitalized in unknown condition.

The investigation is continuing.

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 For additional information, call 281-799-9076 or text 832-906-4214

In view of the U.S. Government regulations due to the Covid19, the space is limited. These classes will consist of a weekly class for a period of 15 weeks. Each weekly class will be given at the same time and it will consist of a session of 90 minutes of instruction by a BAA trained volunteer teacher.

## PICK-UP BREAKFAST & LUNCH AT THE LIBRARY

Each week this Summer, families can pick up 7 boxed breakfast & lunch meals for each child under the age of 18 at their local library branch.

VISIT [WWW.HCPL.NET/KIDSCAFE](http://WWW.HCPL.NET/KIDSCAFE) FOR MORE INFORMATION











# Sheriff hosts Youth Citizens' Police Academy in East Aldine

EAST ALDINE – The Harris County Sheriff's Office is hosting a Youth Citizens' Police Academy at BakerRipley East Aldine Campus for area students to learn about the inner workings of our agency. The academy is free and open to students in sixth through twelfth grade.

Participants will


learn about our programs and services, various units, crime prevention, and road safety.

Our deputies will cover a range of other valuable topics, including goal setting and police interactions. Students will have the opportunity to be paired with a deputy over lunch. They can ask questions and

share feedback with the very leaders entrusted with protecting them.

Apply Today, because the application deadline is July 23. Space is limited to 30 participants.


If you have any questions, you may contact our Community Engagement Division at 713-759-9454.



**HARRIS COUNTY  
HCSO  
SHERIFFS' OFFICE**  
SHERIFF ED GONZALEZ



The Harris County Sheriff's Office will host a Youth Citizens' Police Academy for Grades 6<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup>  
*DAILY ATTENDANCE IS REQUIRED | LUNCH AND SNACKS PROVIDED*

**HCSO Youth Citizens' Police Academy**  
**August 2-6, 2021 | 9:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m.**  
Held at: BakerRipley East Aldine Campus,  
3000 Aldine Mail Rte Rd, Houston, Texas 77039



REGISTRATION IS FREE  
(OPEN JULY 1-23, 2021)

APPLICATIONS MUST BE TURNED IN BY THE DEADLINE (JULY 23<sup>RD</sup>) TO:  
Mail: 9111 Eastex Fwy, Suite 300 Houston, TX 77093  
Email: [CommunityEngagementDiv@sheriff.hctx.net](mailto:CommunityEngagementDiv@sheriff.hctx.net)


**We're Back**  
*and waiting for you!*

**Registration Fair**  
**Thursday | August 18**  
1-3 p.m.  
Northline Campus | 8001 Fulton St., 77022

**REGISTER NOW**  
FALL CLASSES BEGIN  
**AUGUST 23**

Online | On Campus | Or Both

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**Automotive Tech. Training Center** | 4638 Airline Drive | Houston, TX 77022

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