

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

- SB2 Vouchers 4, 5
- Library News 2
- Fire Museum 2
- AISD School News 3
- AISD Superintendent 3
- Postscript 4
- Jacuzzi Shower 5
- Church Page 6
- Entertainment 7
- LSC Register for Summer 8
- Cinco de Mayo 8

NORTHEAST NEWS



Serving the Neighborhoods of Aldine, Greenspoint, US59 Eastex, Beltway 8 and North Forest for over 49 Years
 VOL. 49, NO. 16 TUESDAY, APRIL 29, 2025 HOUSTON, TEXAS www.nenewsroom.com

NEWS NOTES

Voucher Bill Passed, sent to Governor

Program will officially start in the 2026-2027 School Year

Celebrate Cinco de Mayo at East Aldine on May 2

East Aldine District will hold a Cinco de Mayo Fiesta on Friday, May 2 from 5pm to 11pm at the Amphitheatre in Town Center, 2909 East Aldine Amphitheatre Drive, off Aldine Mail Route.

Live Music, featuring Juan Acuña and Y El Terror Del Norte, Compo Latino, Idoio, and Crupo Crystal.

Also Food Trucks, Bounce House, Moonwalk, Games, Prizes and More. Free, everyone welcome. Plenty of Parking, Come and Go.

AUSTIN – The Texas Senate voted to send legislation creating a state-wide private school voucher program to Gov. Greg Abbott's desk to be signed into law, all but concluding an ugly intra-party battle that has dominated state politics for much of the last two years.

Abbott has already said that he plans to sign Senate Bill 2, a \$1 billion proposal allowing families to use taxpayer dollars to fund their children's private school education. Similar legislation has historically run into opposition from



State Rep. Dustin Burrows, Gov. Greg Abbott and Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick at the Capitol in Austin. Photo by The Texas Tribune

Democrats and rural Republicans. But that changed last week, when the Texas House gave its stamp of approval to SB

2, a vote that included support from Republicans who opposed similar legislation in 2023. Upon Abbott's signa-

ture, the program will officially launch at the start of the 2026-27 school year.

SB 2 would initially put \$1 billion over a two-year period in taxpayer dollars toward education savings accounts that families could use for private school tuition and other school-related expenses, like textbooks, transportation and therapy. Notably, up to 20% of the program could go to wealthier families who earn 500% or more of the poverty rate, which would be about \$160,000 or more for a family of four.

"Passing this bill sends a message to all of Texas; it tells the next generation of Texas leaders: Your path should fit your purpose, your path should fit what's best for you and your family, and your ambition will always be greater than any system or any institution," Sen. Brandon Creighton, the Conroe Republican education committee chair who sponsored the legislation, said during closing remarks Thursday.

Senate Democrats Continued. See VOUCHER BILL PASSED, Page 5

State releases School Ratings; Aldine ISD ranks bottom in area

By Jacob Carpenter
Houston Landing

The 2023 report cards are finally out for Texas public schools, and as expected, grades took a tumble virtually across the board.

Texas public districts and schools saw a sharp drop in their academic accountability ratings under a revamped rubric that made it harder for them to score top ratings in 2023, according to results released Thursday by the Texas Education Agency.

Nearly two-thirds of the A-through-F district ratings fell by at least one letter grade, while one-third of district ratings didn't change. Those trends played out in the Greater Houston area, where 14 of the largest 20 districts dropped at least one letter grade and the remaining six held on to their rating.

To see results for each school and district, click txschools.gov for the TEA's ratings website.

The TEA planned to publish the scores in the fall of 2023, but the release was delayed due to a lawsuit filed by school districts that argued state officials violated the law in crafting the tougher standards. Scores from 2024 haven't been released, either, due to a separate lawsuit filed by districts.

Accountability ratings are largely based on various measures tied to standardized test scores, including overall performance, rates of growth and comparisons to other districts and schools. Graduation rates and measures of readiness for life after high school also factor into ratings for districts and high schools.

Here are some of the biggest takeaways from

the 2023 scores for Houston-area districts, including Houston, Katy, Aldine and Pasadena ISDs.

HISD trended down before takeover

Under Texas' accountability system, each district and school grades a 0-to-100 rating, which is then converted into a letter grade that follows the traditional A-through-F scale. All of the Houston region's 20 largest districts saw their numerical rating fall in 2023 compared to 2022.

But HISD carded the sharpest decline of the group, falling from 88 to 72. The fall largely resulted from a large drop in reading and math growth relative to the rest of the region.

The 2023 scores, which are primarily based on spring test results, marked the last accountability rating before Texas Education

Commissioner Mike Morath replaced HISD's school board and appointed Superintendent Mike Miles to run the district. HISD's accountability rating from 2023 did not contribute to the ouster of district leaders.

HISD posted significant gains in test scores and accountability ratings in Miles' first year, district administrators said, though official ratings for 2024 haven't been released.

Higher-income districts held steadiest

Critics of Texas' accountability system often point to the fact that districts in wealthier neighborhoods rarely get low ratings, while it's difficult for districts in lower-income parts of Texas to excel.

The updated grading Continued. See SCHOOL RATINGS, Page 5

Superintendent Goffney responds to Ratings Report:

Dear Aldine ISD Families,

As the end of the 2024-2025 school year quickly approaches, we would like to share an important update regarding the 2023 school ratings from the Texas Education Agency (TEA). On April 3, 2025, the State of Texas 15th Court of Appeals ruled that the 2023 A-F Academic Accountability Ratings can now be released. They had previously been held back by lower courts due to concerns from districts that TEA did not provide enough advance notice about changes to the calculations prior to their release.

As a result of this ruling, the TEA will release school and district ratings for the 2022-2023 school year on Thursday, April 24, 2025. You will be able to view these ratings at TXSchools.gov.

It's important to understand that these ratings



DR. LATONYA GOFFNEY
ALDINE ISD SUPERINTENDENT

are based on student data and STAAR scores from the 2022-2023 school year and earlier. They do not reflect the important work happening right now in our classrooms or the current performance of our students and staff.

Due to the pending lawsuit related to accountability ratings for the 2023-2024 school year,

Continued. See GOFFNEY RESPONSE, Page 5

Sam Houston HS Art Car Parade Entry wins top prize



Ann Harithas Legacy Award
GRAND TROPHY & \$2,000



Something To Dream About by Sam Houston Math, Science, and Technology Center High School Visual Arts led by Kerriane Clabaugh & Wendy Bejarano - Photos by Charlie Ewing



Orange Show Center for Visionary Art (left to right): Kerriane Clabaugh & Wendy Bejarano (co-teachers at Sam Houston HS), winner grand prize - Ann Harithas Legacy award - with their children) and their trophy made by Sharon Kopriva (the big bird in the background).

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COMMUNITY WATCH

Two teenagers injured in hit-and-run incident on Airline Drive

Two teenagers were injured after being struck by a driver who fled the scene. The incident occurred at the corner of Airline and West Mount Houston at around 1:45 a.m. Sunday morning.

Investigators say the victims, who were both 15-year-old girls, were riding bicycles when they were struck by a vehicle. The driver did not stop and fled the scene, leaving both teenagers critically injured.

Surveillance video from a nearby business showed the vehicle after impact, appearing to carry the teenagers several feet before they are thrown onto the roadway. Other images revealed multiple cars driving around the teens, but no one immediately stopped to help.

At this time, it is unclear if anyone called 911 right after the crash.

A local business owner noted that this street brings a lot of different problems, particularly, accidents like these.

"It's a very conflicting area. There are a lot of accidents. Way too many accidents," he said.

He also expressed that people should have stopped to help the injured teens. He emphasized that if it were a family member, no one would want others to drive off and leave the scene.

"The person who ran them over didn't stop to help those kids," the business owner said. "A truck and another car stopped and didn't render aid."

Police are asking anyone with information about the incident to call the police or Crime Stoppers at 713-222-TIPS.

--KPRC

Pct. 2 Seniors Visit the Houston Fire Museum



Commentary by Marina Flores Sugg

I highly recommend all of you visit this great little museum. We had the best tour guide, too. Learned a lot about the history of fire fighting in Houston, and a lot about fire safety. I'll be sleeping with my bedroom door closed from now on, that's for sure! They also did a wonderful job restoring the old building. I'm looking forward to our next visit.

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Deputy hits, kills man after chase in northeast Harris County

A high-speed chase in northeast Harris County ended when investigators said a deputy hit and killed a man.

Investigators said they first tried to stop the man for speeding on Beltway 8 North at about 10:15 p.m. Saturday. Authorities say his speed exceeded 90 miles per hour.

Instead, they said he led them on a chase, reaching speeds of up to 120 miles per hour. The suspect also drove without headlights.

Investigators said he lost control and crashed into some trees.

They said he tried to run away on foot. There were muddy conditions on the ground, and the suspect fell in front of a patrol vehicle. The officer attempted to stop, but the car skidded in the mud and struck the suspect.

The man became lodged under the vehicle and was dragged around 10 feet.

The deputies performed life-saving measures, but the man was later pronounced dead at the hospital.

Authorities are still working to determine why the man evaded authorities in the first place.

Anyone with additional information is asked to call Crime-Stoppers, 713-222-TIPS or the Harris County Sheriff's Department.



AIRLINE LIBRARY NEWS. Wednesday Tween Spark: Sticker Sheets. Wednesday, April 30, 2025, 4:30pm - 5:30pm. Saturday Free Comic Book Day! Saturday, May 3, 2025, 10:00 AM - 2:00 PM. Lobsters in Libraries Saturday, May 3, 2025, 2:00 PM - 3:00 PM. Basic Computer Classes Thursday, May 1, 2025, 5:00 PM - 6:30 PM. Ology: Games Thursday, May 1, 2025, 6:00pm - 7:00pm.

High Meadows Branch Library. UPCOMING EVENTS .APR 8- APR 12TH. APR 8 11 AM TODDLER TIME, 3 PM POKEMON CLUB. APR 9 1 PM CONVERSATIONAL ESL, 3:30 PM KRAFTY KIDS, 5 PM READING WONDERLAND, 5:30 PM MAGIC OF COLOUR. APR 10 11AM CITIZENSHIP, 3:30 PM GAME ZONE. APR 12 10 AM WORLD OF WORDCRAFT. IMPORTANT NEWS DUE TO NEW LIBRARY RENOVATIONS THE LIBRARY WILL BE CLOSED STARTING APRIL 14- 27.

SCHOOL NEWS PAGE



Dr. LaTonya M. Goffney
Superintendent of Schools

A Message From The Superintendent, Dr. LaTonya M. Goffney.

Dear Aldine ISD Community,
Her name was Kathleen Bradford, and I wanted to be just like her. She dressed nicely, treated others with kindness and respect, and I knew she cared about me.

You see, she was my 4th-grade teacher and one of the most influential women in my life. Some will say teaching is noble — and it is — but it's more than that. It's life-shaping and life-changing. I am a testament to that.

First, I want to express my heartfelt gratitude for the outpouring of congratulations following my appointment as AASA President-Elect. I am humbled and honored to represent Texas and our Aldine ISD family on the national stage. This recognition is not just mine — it belongs to all of us who believe in the power of public education to change lives.

With the STAAR testing season underway, our teachers have done an outstanding job ensuring our students are prepared and ready to succeed. Speaking of STAAR tests, on Thursday, April 24, 2025, the TEA will release school and district ratings for the 2022-23 school year. These scores, however, do not reflect the current growth our students are experiencing this year due to the hard work of our teachers and staff. The ratings are based on performance on the STAAR test; graduation rates; and college, career, and military readiness outcomes. The ratings

examine student achievement, school progress, and whether districts and campuses are closing achievement gaps among various student groups. The ratings in 2023 were the first under the new accountability system and are considered a baseline moving forward. I'm so proud of the work being done this school year and look forward to seeing that growth on the 2024-25 ratings this summer.

From high schools' top graduates preparing to soar to the inspiring young musicians who lit up the Strings Festival stage to the 773 scholars earning dual credit cords through UT OnRamps — Aldine ISD students are paving the way for a brighter tomorrow. We celebrated our unified track and field team from Nimitz advancing to state. We admired the Nimitz Lady Cougars for winning the District 14-6A Varsity Track and Field Championship. We cheered on our athletes headed to the UIL Region II 6A Championships. We also celebrated our CTE students who competed at the SkillsUSA State Conference in Corpus Christi — the future is bright, and it's happening now.

We also launched the Lighthouse Mentorship Project this school year, a new initiative to guide and support our students through meaningful connections.

All means all in Adine when we talk about preparing students for their future. I encourage families of high school seniors receiving special education services to take part in our upcoming Liftoff to Lone Star College event. Thank you to the families that

joined us at our PreK Expo & Enrollment Fair earlier this month. If you didn't get a chance to go, there is still time to register your eligible 3- and 4-year-old for prekindergarten for the 2025-2026 school year!

I encourage you to cheer on our student-athletes, attend the upcoming Creative Pursuit art show, or our Festival de Primavera — know that you are part of something special.

We are Aldine. We are educators like Grace Lewis, head director of orchestras at Carver High School. Grace recently received the Houston Symphony's Spec's Charitable Foundation Award for Excellence in Music Education. We are students like the group from Aldine High School like the group from Aldine High School recognized by the Mexican Consulate in Houston for their hard work in civic academics and engagement. We are novice teachers who dedicate their Saturdays to professional growth, highlighting their passion for education and their dedication to our students. And we are staff like Shelby Bobb and Crystal Martínez who work their campus front lines, becoming known as the face of the schools and a trusted contact for families.

Together, we are making an #AldineImpact. Thank you for all you do to make Aldine ISD a place where every student can thrive.

With Aldine Pride,
Dr. LaTonya M. Goffney
Superintendent of Aldine ISD

AISD Students Advance to National History Day After Top Finish at State Contest



Blanson CTE High School and MacArthur High School students show off their medals at the 2025 Texas History Day contest.



Raquel Longoria (center of left picture) of Stovall Middle School is the 2025 David C. DeBoe Texas History Day Teacher of the Year Award. In the image to the right, Anthony Guardado López of Orange Grove Elementary School is pictured with his medal.

Several Aldine ISD students earned top honors at the 2025 Texas History Day Contest, with two teams advancing to the National History Day competition in June.

The contest, held Saturday, April 5, in Austin, featured student projects from across the state centered on "Rights and Responsibilities in History." Only first — and second-place entries in each category qualify for the national competition, which will take place in June 2025 at the University of Maryland.

Blanson CTE High School students Jasmeet Singh, Marilyn Turcios, Emily Cox, and Luz González-Cisneros captured first place in the Senior Group Exhibit category with their project "Taming the Urban Jungle: The Fight for Public Health and the Passage of the Pure Food and Drug Act." Teacher Samantha Yonan guided the students.

MacArthur High School students Eric Gallegos, Jennifer Gámez, Hailey Mullikin, and Jocelyn García will join them at nationals. Their exhibit, "The Shirtwaist Fire: A Spark for Labor's Rights," earned second place in the same category. Their teacher is Caitlyn Soden.

Several other Aldine ISD students also placed at the state level:

Orlean Antoinette Macalalad of Young Women's Leadership Academy finished fourth in the Senior Individual Exhibit category with her project on the United Farm Workers Movement. Teacher Zara Dehri supported her.

Jesua Trejo of Blanson CTE High School placed fourth in Senior Individual Performance for "Affirmative Action: Balancing Rights and Responsibilities in Education," under the direction of teacher Vanessa Guerra.

Anthony Guardado López of Orange Grove Elementary School placed fourth in the Elementary Individual Poster category with his project on the Chernobyl disaster. His teacher is Daniela Correa.

In addition to the student awards, Raquel Longoria of Stovall Middle School was honored with the prestigious David C. DeBoe Texas History Day Teacher of the Year Award for her outstanding dedication to history education.

In addition to the state placements, Abigail Flores of Shotwell Middle School received the Dr. Charles Pipes History of Veterinary Medicine Award for

her Junior Division Individual Website, "European Rabbit's Invasion of Australia." Her teacher is Nicole McCray.

Sarahí Orellana, also from Blanson High School, was named a finalist in the Senior Individual Exhibit category for her project "Rights and Responsibilities: The Legacy of El Salvador's Civil War." Samantha Yonan is her teacher.

Texas History Day is affiliated with National History Day and is coordinated by the Texas State Historical Association. Students present original research through exhibits, performances, documentaries, websites, and papers based on an annual theme. The contest encourages students to develop critical thinking, research, and public speaking skills through hands-on, inquiry-based learning.

Aldine ISD students compete in History Day each year as part of the district's commitment to academic excellence and civic engagement. National History Day is a highly competitive, nationwide academic program that draws thousands of students from across the country to showcase their work

SHABE Honors Aldine ISD Students, Educators at 2025 Banquet



Lucía Tamez

Kennia Monsivais Mendiola

The Suburban Houston Association for Bilingual Education (SHABE) celebrated excellence in bilingual, ESL and foreign language education during its 2025 banquet, held on April 4 at the Houston City Place Marriott at Springwoods Village. The event drew more than 700 attendees and honored students, teachers and community leaders from across the Houston area, including several from Aldine ISD.

Four Aldine ISD students received scholarships in recognition of their academic achievements and dedication to language learning.

Lucía Tamez, a senior at Victory Early College High School, was awarded a scholarship donated by JYEmpowerment, an organization co-founded by two former Victory ECHS students — Jonathan Bush and Yoselyn Owolabi. Lucía plans to attend Texas A&M University in the fall.

Three seniors from La Promesa also earned scholarships. Katia Ramirez and Franklin Ochoa both plan to attend Sam Houston State University. Katia's scholarship was donated by Aldine ISD Superintendent Dr. LaTonya M. Goffney, while Franklin's was made possible by J.C. Harville, a retired Spring ISD principal, former director of the Aldine ISD Multilingual Services Department, and recipient of the Diana Garcia Marion Award.

La Promesa classmate Kennia Monsivais Mendiola, who also plans to attend Texas A&M University, received a scholarship donated by Sandra Mercuri.

In addition to student honorees, several Aldine ISD educators were recognized for their impact in the classroom. Mackenzie Klima of Dunn Elementary was named SHABE Bilingual Teacher of the Year, and Laura Andree of Carmichael Elementary was named Elementary ESL Teacher of the Year. Andree was named Aldine ISD's 2025 Elementary Teacher of the Year at the Educators of the Year Breakfast in March.

At the secondary level, Joseph McGuinness of Grantham Middle School placed third in the Secondary ESL Teacher of the Year category. Juan Flor of MacArthur High School placed third for Foreign Language Teacher of the Year.

Founded in 1987, SHABE was revitalized in 2000 with support from Aldine ISD and leadership from Harville. The organization has grown significantly since then, with this year's banquet marking its 25th year of scholarship giving. SHABE is now working toward its goal of awarding 25 scholarships annually to deserving students across the region.

To learn more about SHABE and see photos from the event, visit shabetexas.org or follow @SHABE4biESL on X.

Aldine High School Student Diana Puente Accepted Into Prestigious Western Art Academy

Diana Puente, an 11th-grade student at Aldine High School, has achieved a remarkable feat by securing a spot in the Western Art Academy (WAA) Class of 2025 at Schreiner University. This prestigious honor, bestowed upon only a select few standout student artists each year, underscores the exclusivity and high standards of the WAA. Diana was chosen from a pool of more than 250 applicants for the highly competitive program, which takes place June 15 through July 12 on the Schreiner University campus in Kerrville, Texas. The immersive summer experience is a partnership between Schreiner University, the Houston Livestock Show, and Rodeo, Schools Art Program. This opportunity will challenge you as



an artist and will be something you will never forget. You wrote WAA Captain Christine Taylor in a letter to Diana announcing her acceptance. Students accepted into the academy embark on a comprehensive fine arts training, engaging in classes and research events held six days a week. The depth of this training is further enhanced by planned Sunday activities. Upon completing the program, partici-

pants earn three hours of college credit. Before the summer session begins, Puente will attend a mandatory meet-and-greet on May 18 at the NRG Center. There, she will meet fellow academy members, sign the required paperwork, and receive important details about transportation and Parent, A&S Weekend, which is scheduled for the weekend of June 28. The academy will culminate in a graduation ceremony, art exhibition, and sale on July 12. For Diana, being selected is not just an academic achievement, it's a recognition of her talent, dedication, and potential as a young artist. Her art teacher is Birgit Langhammer.

More information about the Western Art Academy is available at westernartacademy@schreiner.edu or www.westernartacademy.com

OPINION PAGE

OPINION

By State Senator Carol Alvarado



Texas Democrats oppose Voucher Bill SB2

AUSTIN, TX – The Texas Senate Democratic Caucus released the following statement on the final passage of Senate Bill 2:

The Texas Senate Democratic Caucus stands united in strong opposition to Senate Bill 2, a deeply flawed voucher scheme that diverts billions of taxpayer dollars from Texas public schools and channels them into private hands— with no guarantee of better outcomes, no public accountability and no protections for the children who need the most support.

With a \$24 billion budget surplus, Texas has a historic opportunity to put our children first by making the bold, long-overdue investments our public schools desperately need.

When this bill was first considered in the Texas Senate and subsequently in the Texas House, Democrats offered numerous amendments to protect students with disabilities, uphold anti-discrimination standards for participating private schools, ensure fiscal accountability and basic transparency, prevent program cost overruns and limit eligibility to families who truly need assistance.

If this program truly were designed to support students with disabilities or those at risk, it would require participating private schools to meet the same standards as public schools and prohibit them from cherry-picking which students to accept.

In rural Texas, where private schools are few and far between, vouchers offer no real options— only funding cuts to local schools that often are the heart of their communities and among their largest employers.

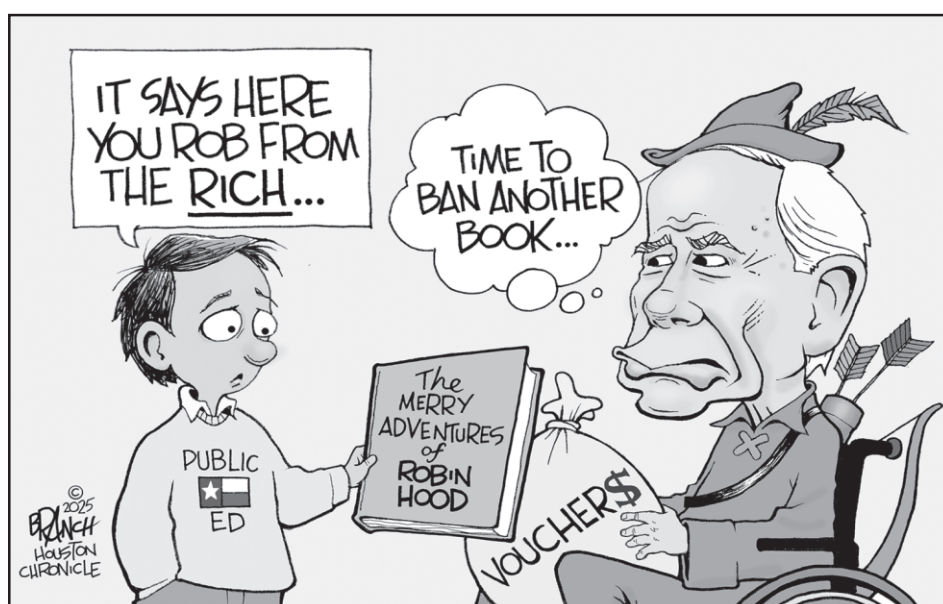
Furthermore, S.B. 2 makes future investments in public education—like reducing class sizes, raising teacher pay and improving student outcomes—far less feasible.

Finally, other states' voucher programs provide cautionary tales. Costs skyrocket, fraud occurs and public education is slashed, inevitably leading to higher taxes.

Let's be clear: S.B. 2 is not about "school choice." It's about public subsidization of private schools' choice.

Senate Democrats remain steadfast in our fight for fully funded public schools, support and respect for educators and a future in which every child has a fair opportunity to succeed.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Opinions expressed here are not necessarily that of this newspaper or its staff. YOUR OPINION is welcome. Send a letter for possible publication to Grafikpress Newspapers, 5906 Star Lane, Houston TX 77057 or an email to GRAFIKSTAR@aol.com.



STATE CAPITAL HIGHLIGHTS

By Gary Borders



House Passes School Voucherbill

The Texas House on Thursday passed Gov. Greg Abbott's school voucher bill after a years-long campaign by the governor and his allies, the Austin American-Statesman reported.



an "excessive amount" of fluoride. Health officials assert fluoride has protected against tooth decay and resulted in fewer cavities over the decades it has been added to public water systems.

HOUSE CUTS LOTTERY COMMISSION BUDGET TO ZERO

The budget for the Texas Lottery Commission was reduced to zero in the 2026-2027 budget passed by the House, the Statesman reported.

SENATE BILL WOULD BAN FLUORIDE IN WATER SYSTEMS

A bill filed by state Sen. Bob Hall, R-Edgewood, would ban adding fluoride to public drinking water, a cause being championed by U.S. Health Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr.

HOUSE AGREES TO GIVE PAXTON BACK PAY

Largely along party lines, the House agreed to urge budget writers to give Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton nearly \$64,000 in back pay to cover the period when he was suspended while impeached.

that he's been acquitted, if you broke it, you bought it." The House and Senate versions of the budget still have to be reconciled.

MIDDLETON JUMPS INTO TEXAS AG'S RACE

Republican state Sen. Mayes Middleton, R-Galveston, has jumped into the race to replace Paxton, who is pursuing a primary challenge to U.S. Sen. John Cornyn.

NATE PAUL FINED \$1 MILLION, CONFINED TO HOME

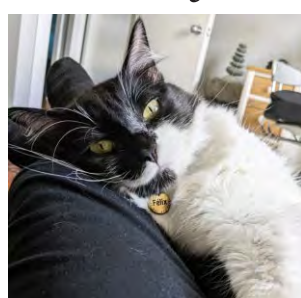
Real estate developer Nate Paul was fined \$1 million and sentenced to four months of home confinement after pleading guilty to making false financial statements.

IT'S LOOKING LIKE A WARM SPRING

The departure of the La Niña climate pattern makes it likely much of the state is in for a warm, dry spring, the Statesman reported.

THE POSTSCRIPT By Carrie Classon

A Day like Yesterday



Only after you've had a day like yesterday do you really know you married the right person.

The day started out fine. We were flying back from Mexico to the U.S. My husband, Peter, books all our flights, and he had arranged it so we did not have to get up at "the crack of stupid," as he would say.

It was only as we were getting off the first plane in the U.S., headed toward our connecting flight, that I suspected something might be wrong.

"Felix smells!" I told Peter. Felix is our cat. He had made a small noise a few minutes before landing, but I had thought nothing of it.

"What do we do?" Peter asked.

Peter had never had a cat before Felix, and so he considers me the resident cat expert, but my previous cat ownership was of no use in this situation.

"Maybe we can hit a bathroom before the next flight."

Unfortunately, the security line was very long, and as I slowly wound through the line, I was anticipating having to take this cat out of the carrier and walk through the screening.

"How long do we have?" I asked Peter when we finally got through security with our very smelly cat.

"Do you think we can find a family bathroom?"

We did. I will spare you the details—but bathing a cat on a tight schedule is not something I would recommend if you have any choice in the matter.

"Look innocent!" Peter said as we walked out. He started to laugh as we raced through the terminal.

It was very late when we got home, and I knew the first thing I had to do was shampoo a cat.

"Why is the carpet wet?" Peter yelled from the bedroom. I was in no position to investigate.

"Oh, no," I heard. And then, "Oh, NO!"

A sprinkler pipe had broken in the bedroom wall. The floor flooded with water. The walls were soaked.

"Should we put on life preservers?" I asked Peter.

It was now nearly morning. But before I fell asleep, what I remembered about this day was how much I had laughed.

I had laughed because, as bad as it had been, nothing that had happened was truly terrible. I had laughed because I knew we would make it through.

Till next time, Carrie

Americanisms



"You know, doing what is right is easy. The problem is knowing what is right." — Lyndon B. Johnson

NORTHEAST NEWS

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Voucher Bill Passed, sent to Governor Abbott

Program will officially start in the 2026-2027 School Year

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

made a final rallying cry before the bill's approval, raising concerns about the bill's exclusion of undocumented Texans, while questioning whether a voucher program strips public schools of funding and resources to the benefit of children already enrolled in private schools.

Sen. Molly Cook, D-Houston, at one point proclaimed that "Democrats did not vote for this," while also criticizing the GOP-dominated Legislature for not allowing voters to decide whether the state should have a voucher program. Last week, the House rejected an amendment that would have placed vouchers on a statewide ballot in November.

"This is my message to the public of Texas: A Republican Legislature is passing this policy, and it is statewide Republican leadership that wore you down," Cook said.

Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick, who controls the Senate, dismissed Cook's remarks and said the first-year legislator "crossed the line" by making such a political statement.

"We'll forgive you — you're a freshman," Patrick said. "And we do fully fund public education, and many people in your district support school choice."

Patrick's response to Cook fell in line with the message echoed by Sen-

ate Republicans on Thursday — that parents should have the right to choose the form of schooling best suited for their child and that the state will continue investing in public education. Both the House and Senate are considering a multibillion-dollar public school funding package that includes additional money for, among other things, teacher salaries and special education.

Texas ranks 38th among states in per-student funding, according to a 2024 report from the National Center for Education Statistics. A Texas Tribune analysis found that the state's share of the funds that schools receive for each child significantly decreased in the last decade until more recently.

Schools also missed out on \$7.6 billion last legislative session, which Abbott held hostage when vouchers failed to gain the support needed to pass. School officials have called attention to the hard choices districts all over Texas have had to make since then — from adopting budget deficits and hiring uncertified teachers to closing schools — as evidence that the state has not invested enough in public education.

Most families participating in the voucher program would receive an amount equal to 85% of

what public schools get for each student through state and local funding — roughly somewhere between \$10,300 and \$10,900 per year for each child, according to a recent legislative budget analysis.

Children with disabilities would be eligible for the same funding as other students, plus up to \$30,000 in additional money, an amount based on what the state would regularly spend on special education services for that student in a public school. Home-schoolers could receive up to \$2,000 per year.

Almost any school-age child eligible to attend a public school — including those already enrolled in a private school — could participate in the program. Only U.S. citizens or people lawfully in the country could receive funding under the initiative.

The proposal would limit the state to spend no more than \$1 billion on the program during the first biennium. If public demand exceeds the funding available, the bill would give priority eligibility to students with disabilities and families it considers low income. The measure would also prioritize students who exit public schools over those already enrolled in private schools.

Unlike public schools, which are generally re-

quired by law to educate every child in their community who seeks admission, the bill would not require private schools to accept certain students who do not meet their admissions standards. That means private schools can still deny any child the state places first in line for eligibility. Higher-income families whose children were already attending private schools have primarily benefited from the large-scale voucher programs enacted in other states.

SB 2 also does not require that participants take the same state standardized tests administered to public school students each year — the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness, or STAAR. Some voucher critics and school officials have said that distinction creates an unfair playing field because the state often uses those exams to judge the effectiveness of districts and educators.

The voucher bill does require that participating students take a nationally recognized exam. It also mandates an annual report from the state that would include data on participating children's demographics, testing results, and preparedness for college, career and the military.

--Texas Tribune

Details of the SB2 Voucher Bill:

Senate Bill 2 (SB2), a Texas legislative proposal, establishes an Education Savings Account (ESA) program, allowing families to use public funds to cover approved educational expenses. SB2 initially allocated \$1 billion over two years for ESAs, with individual accounts potentially reaching \$10,892 per student. The program prioritizes students with disabilities and those from low-income families, with up to 80% of funding going to these groups.

Key Features of SB2:

Education Savings Accounts: SB2 creates ESAs where families can deposit public funds to cover approved educational expenses.

Eligibility: Almost any school-age child eligible to attend a public school could participate. The bill defines "low income" as an annual income at or below 500% of the federal poverty guidelines.

Prioritization: 80% of funding is prioritized for students with disabilities and families with incomes at or below 500% of the federal poverty line.

Voucher Amount: The Senate version initially set aside \$10,000 for each eligible student and \$11,500 for students with disabilities.

Approved Expenses: Families can use ESA funds for private school tuition, textbooks, transportation, therapy, and other related expenses.

Accountability: SB2 mandates strict oversight by the Texas Comptroller, including pre-approval of educational providers and vendors, routine audits, and the ability to suspend or close accounts for misuse.

Accountability: Students participating in the program are required to take either the state-required assessment or a nationally norm-referenced exam.

Special Education Accommodations: Private schools that accept ESA funds are required to post a notice stating they are not required to comply with federal special education laws.

Universal Eligibility: SB2 initially included universal eligibility for all school-aged children, with priority given to students with disabilities or those from low-income families.

Funding: SB2 initially included \$1 billion over two years to fund the ESA program.

School Ratings: Aldine ISD ranked at Bottom of Area Schools,

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

system will do little to dispel that complaint.

In the Houston area, the five larger districts serving the fewest lower-income students — Conroe, Clear Creek, Katy, Pearland and Tomball ISDs — saw small drops in their ratings relative to the rest of the region.

Tomball scored the third-highest rating out of the state's 100 largest districts, earning a rare A grade. Katy and Pearland lost their A grades from 2022, though they still scored 88 and 89 overall, respectively.

Aldine fell to the Bottom

Among the 100 largest districts in Texas, none scored worse than Aldine ISD in 2023. The district carded a 63 rating, down from 77 the prior year.

Districts that serve high percentages of lower-in-

come, emergent bilingual and at-risk students are much more likely to score lower ratings under Texas' accountability system. But as the Houston Landing documented last year, Aldine has fallen behind districts serving similar types of students since the arrival of Superintendent LaTonya Goffney in 2018.

Aldine board members and many community members remain supportive of Goffney, a popular leader across the state and nation. The district made moderate progress on its standardized test scores in 2024, though it's not yet clear whether the growth is enough for the district to shed its D grade.

Galena Park, Pasadena shined

The two eastern Harris County districts serving large numbers of lower-in-

come Hispanic and emergent bilingual students topped many similar districts by earning B grades.

Galena Park ISD, home to roughly 21,000 students, lost its A grade but saw its overall score modestly slip from 91 to 85.

Pasadena ISD, which serves nearly 50,000 students, narrowly kept its B grade as its score fell from 86 to 81.

KIPP, IL Texas took a dive

For decades, many charter school advocates have pointed to above-average test scores as evidence that charters outperform traditional public schools.

But two of the Houston area's largest charter operators — KIPP Texas Public School and International Leadership of Texas — posted sharp drops in accountability ratings that resulted in D

grades. The two networks received scores of 69 and 68, respectively, in 2023 after both notching 86 ratings the prior year.

The tumble followed some of the state's worst rates of growth on math and reading test scores, historically an area of strength for KIPP Texas in particular.

KIPP Texas runs 32 schools in the Houston area and 22 other campuses spread across the state. Greater Houston is home to 11 of International Leadership of Texas' 26 schools.

Three of the state's largest charter networks with a Houston footprint — YES Prep Public Schools, IDEA Public Schools and Texas College Preparatory Academies — each scored B ratings.

--Houston Landing

Superintendent Goffney Response,

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

these results remain on hold. However, what's most important is the release of current school year ratings. We expect these ratings to be released by mid-August and will share them with you at that time.

Please know that Aldine ISD remains committed to its mission of ensuring that all students receive a rigorous and enriching educational experience that prepares them for success in college, career, and life. As such, the district is always working to improve so that we can best support our students. Along with STAAR results, we also focus on things that matter

deeply to our community, like providing students with choices and opportunities, supporting great teaching, building strong student support systems, staying connected with families, and using resources wisely. These are the values that guide everything we do.

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to reach out to your campus principal or our Office of Accountability, Assessment, and Analytics at 281-985-6432.

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BIBLE TRIVIA

By Wilson Casey

1. Is the book of Obadiah (KJV) in the Old or New Testament or neither?
2. Which Babylon king went insane living in the fields eating grass? Nebuchadnezzar, Solomon, Daniel, Herod
3. From Genesis 23, what was the first land purchase in the Bible? Garden, Hilltop, Cave, River shore


4. Which apostle was foreordained to minister to the Gentiles? Thomas, Paul, Andrew, John
5. According to Song of Solomon 1:2, what is love better than? Food, Wine, Money, Song
6. Which son of the dying Jacob did he compare to a vicious lion? Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah

ANSWERS: 1) Old, 2) Nebuchadnezzar, 3) Cave, 4) Paul, 5) Wine, 6) Judah
Hardcore trivia fan? Visit Wilson Casey's subscriber site at www.patreon.com/triviaguy.
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THE ILLUSTRATED BIBLE

He who finds a wife finds a good thing, and obtains favor from the Lord.

PROVERBS 18:22



Detail of "Queens of Persia at the Feet of Alexander" by Gerard Edelinck, 1675

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Jacob Elordi stars in "The Narrow Road to the Deep North."

"The Narrow Road to the Deep North"

"The Narrow Road to the Deep North" (TV-MA) — Based on the novel of the same name by Richard Flanagan, this Australian war-drama miniseries is led by the talented Jacob Elordi ("Saltburn"). Starring as the young version of Dor-rigo Evans, an Australian doctor and prisoner of war, Elordi lost all the weight that made him into a convincing high school football player in "Euphoria" to become a bone-thin soldier who gets captured in the Pacific during World War II. Ciaran Hinds ("Game of Thrones") plays the older version of Dor-rigo, and Hinds' scenes recount his war experiences while Elordi acts them out for us. All five episodes are out now! (Amazon Prime Video)

In Case You Missed It "Stanley Tucci: Searching for Italy" (TV-PG) — Italian-Amer-

ican actor Stanley Tucci ("Conclave," "The Devil Wears Prada," "Spotlight") wanted to go back to his roots for his travel and food show, and this included heading overseas to Italy to explore each region that the beautiful country has to offer. Beginning in Naples and the Amalfi Coast, the first season highlighted some of the food and culture we've come to love from popular cities like Rome, Milan and Tuscany. But as the second season takes off, less-popular regions like Puglia, Liguria and Umbria take the stage, and the culture that gets discovered there might delightfully surprise you. While this lifestyle show only lasted for two seasons, both of which are available to watch now, Tucci filmed more episodes of a similar show that will eventually come out, called "Tucci: The Heart of Italy." (Netflix)

"The Florida Project" (R) — Before Sean Baker scored big at this year's Academy Awards with "Anora," he wrote and directed this tragic coming-of-age drama taking place in a budget motel in Kissimmee, Florida, near Disney World. The film logs the treks of a 6-year-old girl named Moonee, who spends most of her days getting into shenanigans with her fellow kids who live in the motel. While her young and lost mother, Halley (Bria Vinaite), grasps at straws to find any way of income after losing her job as a stripper, Moonee is left unsupervised around the motel, causing its manager Bobby (Willem Dafoe) to step in and save them from disaster. This one's not an easy watch but has an exhilarating ending that will stay with you well after the credits roll. Out now. (Max)

"The Worst Person in the World" (R) — This Norwegian romantic-drama film led by Renate Reinsve ("A Different Man") landed her an award for Best Actress at the Cannes Film Festival in 2021 — an amazing feat for what would be considered her breakout role. The film follows Julie (Reinsve), a young woman in her late 20s as she tries to find her footing in the world. At a loss for what to do in her professional life, Julie bounces from medicine to psychology to photography, never landing on one for good. This is a theme that is mirrored in her romantic life as well; Julie jumps from relationship to relationship, hoping to find the one man who doesn't make her feel uncertain. But only through more experience and more time in life will Julie truly find the answers that she's looking for. Out now. (Hulu)

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Q: Is it true that Billy Ray Cyrus is dating Elizabeth Hurley? I thought he was married. — K.S.

A: The "Achy Breaky Heart" singer and father of Miley Cyrus recently went public with his new romance with actress Elizabeth Hurley ("Runaways"). Billy Ray Cyrus was married to Tish Cyrus for 29 years before they split. He then wed a singer named Firerose who was 29 years his junior, but they divorced less than a year later.

His relationship with Firerose seemed to cause a rift between him and his children. Perhaps Hurley can be the bridge that brings them back together. Her 23-year-old son, Damian, publicly gave his approval of their relationship with a heart emoji after the couple went Instagram official. ***

Q: Whatever happened to Marvel's "Blade" series? Did it just get delayed, or has it been scrapped altogether? — D.D.

A: The 1998 film "Blade," which was originally a Marvel comic, starred Wesley Snipes as a half-vampire/half-mortal. It inspired two more sequels, and Snipes also made a cameo as Blade in "Deadpool & Wolverine" last year. Since 2019, there's been plans for a "Blade" reboot film (not a series, at least not yet) starring Oscar-winning actor Mahershala Ali.

Actor Delroy Lindo, who currently appears in another vampire flick "Sinners," was among the cast for the new "Blade" and spoke to Entertainment Weekly about the delayed project. He eventually left the film during its development process after it "went off the rails."

He stated that Marvel "seemed to be really interested in my input" and that conversations with the producers, writer and director at the time was "all leading into it being very inclusive." But creative differences prevailed, and Lindo moved on to other projects like "Sinners."

Marvel pulled "Blade" from its 2025 release calendar after production got pushed back by the pandemic and the Hollywood industry strikes. Meanwhile, Kevin Feige, president of Marvel Studios, says that he remains committed to Ali's take on the character and that the character "will be



Elizabeth Hurley "Runaways"

coming to the MCU."

Ali, who won respective Oscars in 2017 and 2019 for "Moonlight" and "Green Book," can be seen in the upcoming "Jurassic World: Rebirth" and has several other projects lined up. ***

Q: Did the actor who played the judge on "Elsbeth" once appear on "Lost"? I had never seen him before this show, but it's got to be him. — S.E.

A: Yes, Michael Emerson joined the hit mystery-drama series "Lost" in 2006, in what was initially a short-term role. However, he became a full-time cast member beginning in season three. He then starred in another hit series "Person of Interest" on CBS with Jim Caviezel, which lasted five seasons. Then he landed another hit — "Evil" on Paramount+.

I'm willing to bet that his favorite acting gig so far has been playing a villain opposite his real-life wife of 26 years, Carrie Preston, on "Elsbeth." About filming their final scene together, he told TV Insider, "We were ready for writing this strong, and when we got it, we could play it."

Send me your questions at NewCelebrityExtra@gmail.com, or write me at KFWS, 628 Virginia Drive, Orlando, FL 32803.

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ENTERTAINMENT

Amber Waves

Comic strip by Dave T. Phipps featuring a pig and a bear. Panels include: "DAVIS, DEAR, WHERE ARE YOU, SON? IT'S TIME FOR YOUR MONTHLY BATH!", "COME OUT, COME OUT WHEREVER YOU ARE...", "YOU CAN'T HIDE FOREVER. YOU KNOW I'LL FIND YOU SOONER OR LATER.", "SHE'LL NEVER THINK TO LOOK IN HERE."

Comic strip by Bud Blake featuring a baseball game. Panels include: "READY? FIRST GAME OF THE SEASON!", "HERE'S THE FIRST PITCH OF THE SEASON!", "FIRST HIT OF THE SEASON!", "FOUL! FIRST HOMER OF THE SEASON!", "FOUL TIGER", "FAIR", "THAT WAS FOUL!", "IT WAS FAIR!", "FIRST ARGUMENT OF THE SEASON"

Comic strip by Jeff Pickering featuring a man and a woman. Panels include: "DO YOU KNOW ANY GOOD 'TREE' FUNS?", "NO... I'M 'STUMPED.'"

Weekly SUDOKU grid with numbers and empty boxes.

Trivia test by Fifi Rodriguez with 10 questions on television, movies, geography, food, science, literature, and astronomy.

HOCUS-FOCUS by Henry Boltinoff featuring a man and a woman. Instruction: Find at least six differences in details between panels.

Answers for the HOCUS-FOCUS puzzle.

April 28, 2025 Posting Date King Crossword

King Crossword grid with clues for Across and Down.

Answers for the King Crossword puzzle.

Trivia Test Answers: 1. Kelsey Grammer for "Wings," "Cheers" and "Frasier"; 2. George C. Scott, for "Patton"; 3. Naples, Italy; 4. Carbon dioxide; 5. Nucleus; 6. Gene Sarazen, Ben Hogan, Gary Player, Jack Nicklaus, Tiger Woods and Rory McIlroy; 7. The arora; 8. Short stories; 9. Alpha Centauri; 10. Eight.

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Lone Star College electrical technology program rated 'exemplary'

HOUSTON – The Lone Star College-North Harris Electrical Technology program received an Exemplary Program Award from the National Council of Workforce Education (NCWE) for its work in preparing students to become skilled with credentials of value capable of addressing growing needs in the electrical field. LSC-North Harris earned the award in the Credit Workforce Development Program category.

“Lone Star College-North Harris is honored to be recognized nationally for our work,” said Michael Burns, Ph.D., LSC-North Harris vice president, Instruction. “We are committed to providing high-quality electrical education and training programs.”

The NCWE selects two colleges each year for its exemplary award based on various criteria, including potential economic impact, student outcomes and partnerships. The LSC-North Harris Electrical Technology program meets those requirements through its proactive approach to meeting industry and community needs. The program offers the education and training necessary for a city facing a labor shortage in the electrical industry and frequently affected by various challenges, including natural disasters.

“The NCWE award exemplifies our commitment to ensuring that students receive the education, training and wraparound resources they need,” said Cruz Casiano, Ed.D., LSC-North Harris director, Career and Applied



The Lone Star College-North Harris Electrical Technology program earned a National Council for Workforce Education Exemplary Program Award. Pictured with the plaque are Osvaldo Caballero, LSC-North Harris director, Construction Technologies and Cruz Casiano, Ed.D., LSC-North Harris director, Career and Applied Technology Division.

Technology Division. “We offer a comprehensive college-to-career experience, with holistic support designed to help students succeed.”

LSC-North Harris electrical technology started in fall 2017 and boasts a 98% completion rate. Students like Brian Schepper are learning how to install, maintain and repair electrical wiring, equipment and fixtures. Schepper enrolled in the program to achieve a brighter future beyond being a busser and dishwasher.

“I have always wanted to work in the electrical field and Lone Star College-North Harris is helping me achieve that dream,” said Schepper. “In the Electrical Technology Program, I am learning techniques to diagnose an electrical problem when working with generators and motors. I am confident that my time at Lone Star College will help me excel in my future career.”

LSC-North Harris electrical technology is a two-year program in which students can earn an associate of applied science degree or relevant certificates. Graduates of this program are equipped with the expertise to pursue careers across a range of advanced industries, including construction and maintenance and emerging sectors driven by automation, smart systems and control technologies.

“Lone Star College-North Harris has created a program that trains electricians and develops electrical technicians who are shaping the future of the electrical industry,” said Osvaldo Caballero, LSC-North Harris director, Construction Technologies.

The Lone Star College Electrical Technology program is also available at LSC-Tomball and LSC-Creekside Center. Learn more at LoneStar.edu/Electrical-Technician-AAS.

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